

People of Faith

FaIth Matters

**Being left out in the cold?**

***The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste***

In the "Thundering Legion," stationed near Sebaste in Armenia (now Sivas in Turkey), forty soldiers refused to renounce Christianity. The year was 320, Constantine was Emperor of the West and Licinius of the East. Licinius, under pressure from Constantine, had agreed to legalize Christianity in his territory, and the two made an alliance (cemented by the marriage of Licinius to Constantia the sister of Constantine), but now Licinius broke the alliance and made a new attempt to suppress Christianity. He ordered his soldiers to renounce Christianity on pain of death. Promises, threats, and beatings failed to persuade them. Finally they were stripped naked and led onto the middle of a frozen lake, and told, "You may come ashore when you are ready to deny your faith." Many things were done to tempt them, fires were built on shore, warm baths waited, blankets, clothing, and hot food and drink were close by. Even the mother of the youngest soldier encouraged her son from the bank. As night progressed, thirty-nine men stood firm, while one broke and ran to the shore. However, one of the soldiers standing guard on shore was so moved by the steadfastness of the Christians that he stripped off his clothes and ran out to join them. They welcomed him into their company, and so the number of the martyrs remained at forty, and by morning, all were dead of exposure. (One source says that the few in whom a little life remained were stabbed to death at dawn.)

 What things are tempting you to leave your faith?

 Were these men of faith truly left out in the cold?