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During this week of November 7th and the preceding weeks, the Church remembers several families, or groups, who became saints. Near the end of October, for example, we commemorate the Martyr Arethas and his Companions, as well as Terrence, Neonilla and their children. Today we remember Thirty-three Martyrs of Melitene.

In 1984, writer and director Robert Benton made a movie about families, and a group that becomes a family, called *Places in the Heart*. It's set in the 1930's in a small Texas town where most people are struggling to keep going in the midst of the Great Depression. They also must be prepared for the tornadoes that occasionally ravage the land.

Edna Spalding, played by Sally Field, is suddenly widowed and finds herself with no means or skills to support herself, her two young children, and their debt-ridden forty-acre farm. In her desperation she agrees, at first with great reluctance, to hire an itinerant black laborer named Moze who comes to her door looking for work. He recognizes the difficulty of her circumstances, and convinces her that he knows how to raise cotton and can help her grow and sell enough of it to save her home.

Then the local banker, who is threatening foreclosure and has suggested that Edna send her children to stay with relatives, brings her another opportunity. Partly through charity and partly to get rid of an unwanted burden, he visits Edna with his irascible blind brother-in-law, who has been staying in his home. He offers Edna the chance to take the man in as a boarder.

This disparate group—Edna and her children, Moze, and Mr. Will the blind boarder-- gradually come to know and care about each other. They share backbreaking work to harvest the cotton, and fearful hours huddled in their tornado shelter with a storm directly overhead, rattling the shelter's doors and spilling dirt into the crevices. They become a kind of family.

The movie shows the huge social divide between blacks and whites in the South of the 1930's. When Moze notices and dares to tell Edna that the white merchants are trying to sell her inferior cotton seed at an inflated price, they come a few nights later in their Klan hoods and beat him severely. He leaves the farm, both to save himself and to spare her more trouble.

The closing scene of the movie is a fantasy in which all the main characters, including those who have died and those responsible for death, are united by receiving Communion together in church. It's a striking and beautiful image of oneness in Christ. We might call it a cinematic reflection on one of the readings for this day: "For He is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility...So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God..." (Ephesians 2: 14, 19).

#### Kontakion - Tone 4

Podoben: "As You were voluntarily raised..."  
The universe rejoices at the honorable commemoration of the martyrs:  
Terence the most-wise, his wife Neonilla, and their children.  
Therefore, let us hasten that we may receive healing;  
for he has received grace from the Holy Spirit  
to cure the sicknesses and ills of our souls.