



St. Kyriake

July 7

St. Kyriake was the only child of Dorotheus and Eusebia. Not only was Kyriake young and beautiful, but her parents were wealthy. Thus a magistrate wished to betroth Kyriake to his son in order to control her wealth. He went to her parents to request her hand, but Kyriake told him that she wished to remain a virgin, as she had dedicated herself to Christ. The magistrate became angry and denounced Kyriake and her parents as Christians to Emperor Diocletian.

Upon Diocletian's orders, soldiers arrested the family and brought them before him. He asked why they would not honor the pagan gods, and they replied that his gods were false ones, and Christ the one true God. Dorotheus was beaten until the soldiers grew tired and were unable to continue. Since neither flattery nor torment had any effect, Diocletian sent Dorotheus and Eusebia to Melitene. He sent Kyriake to Nicomedia to be interrogated by his co-ruler, Maximian.

Maximian urged Kyriake not to throw her life away, promising her wealth and marriage to one of Diocletian's relatives if she agreed to worship the pagan gods. Kyriake replied that she would never renounce Christ, nor did she desire worldly riches. Enraged by her answer, Maximian ordered that she be flogged. The soldiers who administered the torture eventually became tired, and had to be replaced three times.

Shamed by his failure to convince the young woman, Maximian sent Kyriake to Hilarion, the eparch of Bithynia. Hilarion was no more successful. Kyriake challenged him to do his worst, because Christ would help her to triumph. She was suspended by her hair for several hours while soldiers burned her body with torches. Not only did she endure all this, she also seemed to become more courageous under torture. Finally, she was taken down and thrown into prison.

That night Christ appeared to her and healed her wounds. When Hilarion saw her the next day, he announced that she had been healed by the gods because they pitied her. Hilarion then urged Kyriake to go to the temple to give thanks to the gods. She told him that she had been healed by Christ, but agreed to go to the temple anyway. Hilarion rejoiced, thinking that he had defeated her.

In the temple, Kyriake prayed that God would destroy the soulless idols. Suddenly, there was a great earthquake which toppled the idols, shattering them to pieces. Everyone fled in

fear, leaving Hilarion behind. Instead of recognizing the power of Christ, he blasphemed the true God as the destroyer of his pagan idols. He was struck by a bolt of lightning and died on the spot.

Kyriake was tortured again by Apollonius, who succeeded Hilarion. When she was cast into a fire, the flames were extinguished. When she was thrown to wild beasts, they became tame and gentle. Apollonius then sentenced her to death by the sword. She was given time to pray; she asked God to receive her soul and to remember those who honored her martyrdom. Just as St. Kyriake ended her prayers, angels took her soul before the soldiers could strike off her head. Pious Christians took her relics and buried them in a place of honor.¹

¹ www.antiochian.org

