



Saint Olympias the Deaconess

December 17

When St. Olympias was still very young, her parents betrothed her to a nobleman. However, the bridegroom died, and St. Olympias did not wish to enter into another marriage, preferring a life of virginity. She inherited great wealth upon the death of her parents, which she began to distribute to the needy, the orphaned and the widowed. She also gave generously to churches, monasteries, hospices and shelters for the poor and homeless.

In the fourth century, Patriarch Nectarius made St. Olympias a deaconess. She fulfilled her service honorably and without reproach. St. Olympias provided great assistance to the hierarchs who came to Constantinople – She attended to them all with great love. She did not regard her wealth as her own but rather God’s and she distributed not only to good people, but also to her enemies.

St. John Chrysostom had high regard for St. Olympias, showing her good will and spiritual love. When he was unjustly banished, St. Olympias was deeply upset. Leaving the church for the last time, he called out to St. Olympias and the other deaconesses saying that the matters incited against him would come to an end, but scarcely more would they see him. He asked them not to abandon the Church, but to continue serving it under his successor. Shedding tears, St. Olympias fell down before him.

After St. John Chrysostom’s banishment, someone set fire to a large church, and after this a large part of the city burned down. St. John Chrysostom’s supporters came under suspicion, and they were summoned for interrogation.

St. Olympias was summoned for trial and was rigorously interrogated. She was fined a large sum of money for the crime of arson, despite her innocence and the lack of evidence against her. Afterwards, she left Constantinople and traveled to Kyzikos on the Sea of Marmara. However, her enemies did not cease their persecution. In 405, she was sentenced to prison at Nicomedia, where she underwent much grief and deprivation. St. John Chrysostom wrote to her from exile, consoling her in her sorrow.

In 409, St. Olympias entered into eternal rest. Afterwards, St. Olympias appeared in a dream to the Bishop of Nicomedia and commanded that her body be placed in a wooden coffin and cast into the sea. “Wherever the waves carry the coffin, there let my body be buried,” she told him. The coffin was brought by the waves to a place named Brokthoi near Constantinople. The inhabitants, informed of this by God, took the holy relics of St. Olympias and placed them in the Church of the Holy Apostle Thomas. Many miracles and healings occurred from her relics.¹

¹ www.oca.org