

Helping Our Children Reach the Kingdom

This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.



On April 3 we remember a young but very determined Christian woman who was martyred for the faith. She is St. Theodosia, a native of Tyre in Phoenicia.

Theodosia was born in the late third century, and her loving parents raised her to be a devout Christian, as they were. She was deeply influenced by her upbringing, so much so that by her middle teens she had already pledged to live as a virgin and dedicate herself to Christ.

It was during those same years, while a teenager, that she traveled to Caesarea in Palestine. This was one of the places where Christians were being savagely persecuted. Theodosia saw a group of believers, bound with rope and obviously having already been beaten and mistreated, waiting to be interrogated by the pagan governor. She approached them and congratulated them on their steadfastness, urging them to remain strong and asking them to pray for her.

This act of solidarity with such notorious religious criminals was enough to get the young woman arrested by guards. When the guards presented her to the governor, she infuriated him by her cheerful manner and the absence of fear she displayed. He didn't hesitate to subject her to terrible tortures. But she maintained her composure and addressed him directly: "By your cruel actions, O governor, you are insuring that I will have the great happiness of the Kingdom. I rejoice to see that I am called to this crown, and I thank God that He has granted it to me."

No matter what ugly tortures he invented, the governor could not shake Theodosia's faith or make her beg for an end to the pain. He finally had her beheaded.

Theodosia's parents were like many who love their children. They wanted her to be a good Christian, but wanted to spare her any suffering. Knowing that those in power hated Christianity, they had tried to dissuade her from declaring her faith in public and risking great trouble.

After her martyrdom, they had a vision of their daughter dressed in bright, shining garments and holding a gleaming golden cross. Theodosia said to them, "Behold the glory of which you wanted to deprive me!" She said this, perhaps, not to rebuke them but to show them they need not lament the choice she had made.

All parents can be tempted to urge their children not to speak out about their faith when doing so might be dangerous or isolating. On this same day, we remember another daughter whose parents had to accept that she would proclaim her faith, suffer, and experience extraordinary things.

Today is the feast day of the icon of the Theotokos called "Unfading Bloom." It shows the Mother of God and Christ surrounded by bright flowers, which represent Mary's ever-bright purity. Theodosia, like Mary, chose to attend to God's will rather than the dictates of this world. She chose the unfading glory that so many saints find after suffering in the present world that is, every minute, fading away.

