



**THE LIFE and MARTYRDOM of the  
HOLY VIRGIN and GREAT MARTYR  
SAINT TATIANA**

**DEACONESS of ROME**

**Whom the Holy Church Celebrates**

**On January 12 .**

Down through the centuries there has always been a great veneration for Saint Tatiana especially in Russia and the Balkans. History records that the Byzantine Church held her in great honor, and her head was in Constantinople in the Periblepta Church. Her holy relic (head) was brought by Prince Neagoe Basarab to the Monastery of Curtea de Arges in 1517; and in 1949, the entire shrine (with the relics of other Saints) was moved to the Oltenia Cathedral of Saint Demetrius, Craiova, Romania. Saint Tatiana's Parish in Moscow, attached to Moscow University, was founded in 1755 as Moscow Imperial University by Empress Elizaveta Petrovna. The first church was built

**SAINT TATIANA**

in 1791 but burned during the Napoleonic invasion of 1812. The present church was consecrated in 1837 by Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow and Kolomna (Drozdov). It was closed in 1919 and reportedly used as a theatre during the Soviet reign. Reopened in 1995, it contains two relics of Saint Tatiana: one in an icon and another in a reliquary. In Russia St. Tatiana is revered as a special patron to the intelligentsia for culture and enlightenment; and before the Soviet terror, there were widespread celebrations and public parades by the youth on her feast day.

Except for our Mission Parish in Sunnyside, New York there are no parishes dedicated to her memory in the western hemisphere. It is, therefore, most fitting that this holy virgin, great martyr, and deaconess will serve as the protector and guide of the first mission established in the Metropolitan New York area, for although it is the world-wide epicenter of art, culture, and finance New York is sorely lacking in the witness to Christ.

The society in which Saint Tatiana lived was very much like our own, not only in power in influence but also in its values and morality. Rome was the most powerful nation in the known world. Self-gratification was the standard of behavior; political corruption and materialism prevailed; violence, hooliganism,

murder and the abuse of women and children were part of everyday life; babies were murdered on a grand scale; the poor and needy were neglected and hidden away; abortion, promiscuity and unnatural sexual behavior were acceptable and legally protected; men and women dressed like peacocks and outward, physical beauty was extolled; the goddess of luck and chance was worshipped as were the stars; and superstition was rampant. Ironically, then as now, Orthodox Christians were persecuted *not for being Christians*, but for refusing to believe that *all other gods are equal to Christ*. Indeed, third-century Rome and 21<sup>st</sup>- century America have much in common.<sup>1</sup>

In our Saints like Saint Tatiana, Christians today have valiant examples of how to follow Christ in our daily lives even if we live in a society that has not only abandoned Christ but also wants to relegate Him to insignificance. Now our beloved Saint Tatiana is present with us as an intercessor in holiness to guide us and to protect our families. In these sorrowful days she emboldens us to give witness that Christ lives, reigns and reclaims what is His through His holy Church and faithful believers. In her *virginity* she is our boast and shield against the temptations of the evil one; in her *martyrdom* she is our conscience; in her *confession of faith* she is our example and defender; in her office as a *deaconess* she reminds us of our Christian obligation to serve others.

**S**AIN TATIANA was born of eminent parents in Rome about the year 200. Her father, who held high government positions and was a well-known consul, was secretly a Christian. He educated his daughter in piety and faith and in a thorough knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. By the time Saint Tatiana had developed into a fully grown young woman she had decided to devote her entire life to God. With ardent love, she served Him alone with prayer, fasting, and remembrance of God. Her life was so worthy that she was made a Deaconess, serving lovingly in her tasks of preparing women for Holy Baptism, cleaning and adorning the Church, visiting the sick and prisoners, and unselfishly caring for orphans and the poor. Like the bodiless Angels, she served God in the flesh.

On the throne at that time was the 16 year-old Alexander Severius, successor to the impious Antoninus Heliogabel who was killed and thrown into the Tiber river for his monstrous acts. Although taught by his Christian mother to respect Christ, Alexander did not have faith in Him, but continued to worship idols, the ancient Roman gods. In his courtyard were images of Christ, Abraham, and Moses, together with the heathen gods Apollo, Orpheus, and many others. Alexander did not persecute Christians, but his guardians brutally did. Due to

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<sup>1</sup> Please see the "2004 NATIVITY ENCYCLICAL OF METROPOLITAN MOSES" also quoted in the December, 2004, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 6 (1543) ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WITNESS.

his age, the government was administered by several consuls, the chief one being Ulpan, a well known judge but a man of disgusting morals and a great enemy of Christians. He followed to the letter the laws against Christians promulgated by the wicked Trajan. In the name of the Emperor, these consuls sent out orders commanding all Galileans (as Christians were called) to bow down before the Roman gods or be severely punished—even killed. To enforce these orders special groups were formed of those who hated Christians. In Rome, and in all districts of the Empire, Christian blood flowed as water.

At this time the holy virgin was taken by the pagans to Apollo's temple to force her to prostrate before the idol. But she refused. As she prayed to the true God, suddenly a terrible earthquake shook the temple. The idol fell, breaking into many pieces, destroying part of the temple and crushing many pagans to death. The demon who lived in the idol ran out of the temple with a loud wail, heard by all, and many saw its shadow rushing through the air.

After the destruction of the temple, Saint Tatiana was taken to the place of torture where they began to beat her face and tore at her eyes with iron hooks. She was beaten and tortured for some time but refused to worship idols. Saint Tatiana bore with a martyr's patience the blows and fervently prayed to God, asking him to show the light of truth to her persecutors. Her prayers were heard! For the torturers saw four angels standing around the holy Tatiana and heard a voice from heaven speaking to her. Thereupon, they fell down before her and begged: *"Forgive us, servant of the True God; pardon us, for we brought suffering upon you unwillingly."* Filled with rage, the judge ordered the repentant executioners seized and put to death. All eight of them confessed Christ, were baptized in their blood, and are celebrated by the Church as martyrs.

The following day, the renowned judge Ulpan renewed the persecution of Tatiana. When she was brought from the prison she stood before her torturers but no trace of the wounds and injuries of the previous day were visible. Her face was calm and joyful. Ulpan tried to convince the holy virgin to make offerings before the gods, but his efforts were firmly refused. He then ordered that she be denuded and cut with a razor. The virgin's body was white as snow, and when they began to cut her, blood and milk ran from the wounds, fragrant as perfume. The holy Tatiana lifted up her eyes and prayed faithfully during all her sufferings. Then she was laid on the ground and for a long time was like a rod, during which time many of her persecutors repented. For, as before, the invisible angelic host of God stood near Tatiana, catching the blows directed at her by the evil ones, and turning them on the tormentors, causing some of them to fall, looking as though they had been hit by iron bars. The holy virgin then said boldly to the judge and his servants that their gods were nothing but breathless idols, but she was the servant of the One True God.

As evening neared the holy Tatiana was placed in prison. Here she spent the whole night praying to God and chanting praises to Him. A heavenly light appeared to her, and an Angel of God chanted praise together with her. With the morning light, Tatiana was again taken to court. Seeing her more radiant and fresh than she had been the previous day, all were greatly amazed. At first they said amongst themselves that she should make an offering to the goddess Diana. Looking as if she agreed with the suggestion, Saint Tatiana let herself be led into the temple of Diana. The demon living inside the idol sensed the presence of the saint and called out: "This is grievous to me, this is grievous to me! Where can I run from your Spirit, O heavenly God, for fire is chasing me from all corners of this temple?" Tatiana crossed herself with the sign of the Cross, raised her eyes to heaven and began praying. Suddenly a frightful roar of thunder was heard, followed by flashes of lightning. Fire, falling from heaven, burned down the temple with its idol, offerings, and priests. Many of the idolaters were struck with lightning and fell to the ground.

After this, Saint Tatiana was cruelly tortured and then confined to prison where once again an Angel of God appeared to her, cured her wounds and with her praised God. In the morning Tatiana was led to an arena, with the intention of having a lion kill her. However, in the midst of the circus the ferocious beast did not touch her but came and lovingly lay down at her feet. Of the astonished spectators, one Eymenius, a famous dignitary, stepped into the arena personally to carry out the desire of the crowds for her death. The lion fiercely attacked and killed him. Later other attempts were made to torture the holy Tatiana but none were successful. The pagans thought her power was of magic and not of Christ, and that her strength was in her hair. Therefore they shaved her head, and thinking that by losing her hair she had lost her power and could no longer harm their gods, they placed her in the temple of Jupiter. She was confined there for two days, comforted by a heavenly light which always shone upon her. On the third day idolatrous priests came with their people bringing sacrifices to the god Jupiter and found their idol fallen and broken, and Saint Tatiana standing radiant with joy and praying to the Heavenly God. She was then brought to the courtroom.

Not knowing what else could be done to her, the impious Ulpian sentenced her to be beheaded by the sword in 225/230. Her father was sentenced with her for being a Christian, and he was deprived of his titles and estates. Thus, they were beheaded together for the name of Christ, being thought worthy by our Lord of the crowns of martyrdom.

Blessed is our God.

Amen.

The only relics known to us are the following: her *right hand* at the holy Dormition Pskov Pecherska Monastery in Russia; her *head* together with the head and left hand of Saint Niphon, Patriarch of Constantinople, and the heads of the martyrs Serge and Bacchus at the shrine in Craiova, Roumania; two *relics* at Moscow University Church of Saint Tatiana; and a small *relic* in an Athonite reliquary at The Holy Transfiguration Monastery Brookline, Massachusetts.

## ARCHDEACON PHOTIOS Of Blessed Memory

Text: Original text by Archdeacon Photios of blessed memory prepared for St. Tatiana's Mission Parish bulletin.  
The above text has been edited for this Virtual Parish presentation.  
Icon: Courtesy Holy Nativity Convent Brookline, Massachusetts 02445

### *Dismissal Hymn of the Martyr. Fourth Tone* *Joseph was amazed*

**O**RDAINED as a Deaconess, thou didst serve Christ with all fear; and strengthened in soul, thou didst confess His all-holy Name, Tatiana of great renown. By thy holy labours in God's Church and in contest, thou didst cast down Belial and gain life unending. O far-famed Virgin Martyr defend, increase, and save thy flock.

### *Kontakion of the Martyr. Fourth Tone* *On this day Thou hast appeared*

**T**hou didst shine resplendently, \* Martyr Tatiana, \* in thy sacred sufferings \* and in the crimson of thy blood, \* soaring to heaven like a fair dove: hence, ever pray Christ for all them that honour thee.

## SYNAXARION

On the twelfth of this month we commemorate the holy Martyr Tatiana of Rome, the Deaconess.

### *Verses*

For Tatiana, who was in all things resplendent  
The bright sword gave her head a resplendent laurel.

On the twelfth they trimmed Tatiana's neck.

**I**MITATING Thy worshipful and blessed Passion, she that by  
dispassion was united with Thee suffered eagerly as she was cut  
asunder piecemeal, O Christ, Giver of Life, and she cried to Thee:  
I know none other God than Thee.

Matins Ode Five Troparion

*The Menaion* © 2005 The Holy Transfiguration Monastery Boston, Massachusetts 02445



## THE HOLY ICONS HAVE THEIR BASIS IN HOLY TRADITION

The Holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council teach that Holy Tradition is the basis for the existence of the Icons. We can comment here that the holy Scriptures are a product of Holy Tradition as well. When Saint Peter preached his sermon at Pentecost, “then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). No copies of the New Testament were available at Pentecost. The New Testament had yet to be written. The glib Protestant dictum of *Sola Scriptura* fails here, and if it fails at any point, it fails everywhere. The Church lived according to Holy Tradition for many years after the Lord’s Resurrection.

The Mystery of the Church is sustained, as Christ has so appointed, objectively, by “the uninterrupted mystagogical<sup>2</sup> succession, the continuity of the hierarchy which confesses Apostolic Truth.” Loyalty to the Apostolic Tradition is the subjective side; “a life spent according to this tradition, as in a living realm of truth.”<sup>3</sup>

The Orthodox Icon was born in and lives in this “living realm of truth”, to borrow Fr. George’s trenchant phrase.

The 350 Fathers assembled for the second time in Nicea to condemn iconoclasm brought forward, as a touchstone, the God given standard of Holy Tradition. Holy Tradition is saving measure of spiritual things. It has universal application throughout the life of the Church. We are explicitly taught by the

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<sup>2</sup> The word ‘mystagogical’ is derived from *Mystagogy*. The meaning of this term is the unfolding of a mystery and guidance into its understanding. Such is the irreplaceable power resident in the hierarchy which resolutely confesses Apostolic Truth.

<sup>3</sup> See “‘Sobornost’: The Catholicity of the Church” in *The Church of God*, ed. E. L. Mascall SPCK London 1934. pp. 53-74; By Father George Florovsky.

Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council to respect avenues other than written Tradition as conveyers of Christ's wisdom.

Saint John of Damascus is explicit:

"The apostles passed on many things without having them written down. The Apostle to the Gentiles is a witness to this: "Stand firm, then, brethren, and keep the traditions that we taught you, whether by mouth or by letter" (2 Thess 2:15). And to the Corinthians, he writes: "I congratulate you for remembering me so consistently and for maintaining the traditions (τάς παραδόσεις)<sup>4</sup> as I passed them on to you" (I Cor 11:2). *On the Orthodox Faith* 4:16.



### SAINT LUKE PAINTING AN ΕΛΕΟΥΣΑ ICON OF THE MOST HOLY ΤΗΕΟΤΟΚΟΣ.

Above is an Icon depicting Saint Luke painting an icon of the Mother of God while she is still in this life. "We follow Paul...and the whole divine circle of the Apostles," say the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. In maintaining Iconography as part of the tradition of the Church, we simply keep iconography where it has always been. We only need to remember the frescoed icons on the walls of the catacombs and various images carved into the sarcophagi used for Christian burial in the first centuries after the Resurrection of Christ.

And to our God be glory.

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<sup>4</sup> The Protestant translators of the King James New Testament in 1611 had little use for the word 'tradition' other than to designate an unacceptable human custom. But at I Cor 11:2 where St. Paul commends his flock for keeping something he had entrusted to them, the KJV translators use the word 'ordinances' in place of the correct translation 'traditions.' So the translation at I Cor. 11: 23 should read: "For I have been **traditioned** from the Lord that which also I **traditioned** unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread:" Holy Tradition does help us to count our blessings, doesn't it?