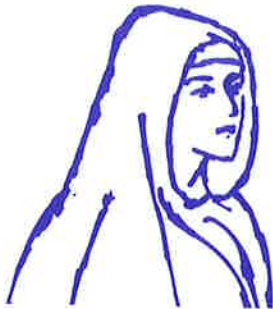


qualifications a bishop must have? To be apt to teach, patient, holding fast the faithful word in doctrine. What trouble and pains does this require? And then others do wrong and he bears all the blame! Let him be angry, let him laugh, or let him but dream of a moment's relaxation, there are many to scoff, many to be offended, many to lay down the law, many to bring to mind the former bishops and abuse the present one; not that they wish to sound the praise of those—no, it is only to carp at him that they bring up the mention of fellow bishops. In short, the bishop is distracted on every side, and is expected to do many things that are beyond his power. If he does not know how to speak, there is great murmuring; and if he can speak, then he is accused of pride. If he cannot raise the dead, he is worthless, they say; so-and-so is pious, but this man is not. If he eats a moderate meal, for this he is accused, he ought to be strangled, they say. In fine, he ought not to look upon the sun!"

*From Daily Life of Early Christians
by J. G. Davies*



WOMEN WHO FOLLOWED THE LORD

This month: Saint Dorothea, a fourth-century martyr

The life of Saint Dorothea gives us a special insight into two things: how a Christian person's witness could change the lives of pagans and non-believers around her, and how violent was the feeling against Christians in the pagan Roman Empire.

Dorothea was born in a city familiar to all who know the life of St. Gregory the Illuminator: Caesarea in Cappadocia. She was from an eminent family but her parents had lost their lives in one of the persecutions of Christians. The hatred and fear of Christians was very strong in the early Roman Empire, mostly because these upstarts who refused to worship the pagan gods were seen as troublemakers who might bring dissension and upheaval into the ordered life provided by Roman law. Nobody was looked on with more disfavor, in Rome, than people who would not go along with the way things were expected to be done. This certainly included the followers of Jesus Christ, who would not do what everyone else did: accept the Emperor as a god, and worship the rest of the gods with him. Many people did it without an ounce of conviction that the Emperor *or* the gods were really

worthy of worship. But the Christians were dangerous because they refused to "play the game" and many Romans felt they put the whole social order at risk by this refusal.

So the efforts to make sure Dorothea did not follow her parents' path of unyielding Christian belief were very strong efforts indeed. Sapricius, administrator of the district where she lived, gave her into the care of two pagan sisters named Christina and Kallista in the hope that they would turn her from the faith. But these plans came to an unexpected end when Dorothea was able to bring the sisters to Christianity.

Sapricius, like many of the thwarted pagans who refused to understand the conversion of others, ordered all three young women to be burned. In the midst of the flames, Dorothea's heart was filled with the kind of joy that martyrs, as we know from eyewitness accounts, often express. She called out, "Thank you, Lord Christ, for calling me to Your paradise and leading me to Your most holy court!" Among those present was a lawyer named Theophilus, who often came to taunt and deride Christian martyrs as they died. He laughingly said to Dorothea, "Here, you bride of Christ, send me apples and wild roses from your bridegroom's paradise." Dorothea replied that she would do so.

But it is unlikely that Theophilus expected ever to see a young man appear at his side with apples and roses. Seeing that young man and those gifts, he recognized that he had been visited by a messenger and angel of God. Theophilus was filled with fear, and suddenly nothing seemed right. Everything was confusion, doubt, terror. But Theophilus came out of his time of testing resolved to become a Christian himself. He was to end his life by being tortured and killed for the sake of Christ, and we may believe that he met Dorothy again in the paradise he had at first ridiculed. He was at least the third person whom Saint Dorothy, in her simple girlish faith, had brought to the faith. How many others may secretly have been affected by her witness, and been drawn to the faith through it, we will never know.

*Published monthly except July and August
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Diocese of the Armenian Church
Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate*

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Subscription: \$5.00 a year.
Bulk rates for parishes and schools are available
and will be furnished upon request.