



The First Female Martyr

Saint Thekla

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We all know that Saint Stephen is considered the first male martyr in Christianity. But have you ever thought who is the first female martyr?

St. Thekla is one of St. Paul's disciples. When St. Paul left Antioch and came to a city named Iconium in the year 45AD, he stayed at the church, which was in the house of Onesiphorus. St. Thekla lived next door to Onesiphorus house where St Paul was preaching. Virgin St. Thekla, who knew nothing about Christ at that time, sat at a certain window in her house. From there, she both day and night heard Paul's sermons concerning God. St. Thekla, who was only eighteen years old, was uniquely beautiful and betrothed to a man named Thamyris.

When she heard the words of St. Paul her heart was touched. She met St. Paul and became his disciple. She then refused to marry Thamyris and



St. Thekla

preferred her virginity instead, which was very strange in that idol-worshipping society. She was put under severe pressure from both her mother and Thamyris but she refused to obey their will.

At last, Thamyris accused her before the governor, after she confessed her faith in Christ. When she was brought before the governor she refused to denounce her faith. The governor therefore ordered that she be burned to death. The soldiers therefore, took off her clothes and threw her in the fire. But God, who does not

forget his faithful children, sent heavy rains that quenched the fire and she was set free.

After that, St. Thekla left the city and went to Antioch to see St. Paul, who rejoiced greatly after he heard about God's work in her life. In Antioch another man, Alexander, seeing her beauty, desired her. When she refused to give up her purity, Alexander became furious and accused her before the governor of the city.



Upon refusing the governor's request to offer incense to his gods, he ordered that she be thrown to the wild beasts. Again they took off her clothes and threw her to the beasts in a big arena, where many spectators were sitting watching. The lions however bowed down at the saint's feet and did not touch her. Then God sent flames that surrounded her naked body, preventing people from looking at her.

On the next day, the governor ordered that she be tied to wild bulls and set them free to run around and hurt her body. St. Thekla was severely injured but God's hand intervened, when He broke the rope that tied her to the bulls. The governor, not knowing what to do, decided to throw her into a den full of

poisonous snakes. The saint, however, was not harmed and everyone glorified God.

The confused governor did not know what to do after he saw God's hand working against him so he set her free.

After her failure to convince her mother to worship the true God, St. Thekla pursued a life of seclusion in a cave. This cave is now a big monastery after her name. St. Thekla preached and led many to the right faith. Her life was full of service and worship until her death. St. Thekla has a great place in the church around the entire world. Even though she died a normal death without the shed of blood, she is still considered the first female martyr because of all the pain she endured.



St. Thekla Chapel at the Antiochian Village

O glorious Thekla, companion of Paul the divine, you were enflamed with the love of your Creator, by the teaching of the divine preacher. You despised the passing earthly pleasures, and offered yourself to God as an acceptable and pleasing sacrifice, disregarding all suffering. Intercede with Christ your Groom to grant us His great mercy.