

MEANWHILE, BACK IN BYZANTIUM

ST. OLYMPIA THE DEACONESS

by Katie Reetzke



she became very discouraged with the leadership in Constantinople. This led to her retreat to the island and a period of sadness. In his godly wisdom St. John wrote to St. Olympia:

"Dost thou see the abundance of resource belonging to God? His wisdom, His extraordinary power, His loving-kindness and care? Be not therefore dismayed or troubled but continue to give thanks to God for all things, praising, and invoking Him; beseeching and supplicating; even if countless tumults and troubles come upon thee."

St. John Chrysostom

Letters to Olympias



Have you ever visited an island? Perhaps you've visited the ocean for vacation, rest, or fun? Sometime before 405 AD, St. Olympia went to Kyzikos on the Sea of Marmara for prayer, reflection, and an escape from spiritual despair in Constantinople. She had already donated her wealth and possessions to the poor, orphans, and widows. Before this time, Patriarch Nectarius (381-397 AD) appointed

her as a deaconess to help serve the hierarchs in Constantinople because of her piety and almsgiving.

St. Olympia was not only generous to the poor and homeless, but also to monasteries, churches, and traveling pilgrims. She continued to donate her wealth and resources, providing meals for visiting monks and church officials.

St. Olympia was also a very close friend to St. John Chrysostom. When he was exiled by a rival,

She followed St. John's advice and continued to live giving to others, even when she was falsely accused of burning a church and was imprisoned in Nicomedia. She reposed in 409 AD after a difficult time in prison. Afterwards, she appeared to the Bishop of Nicomedia and told him to throw her coffin into the sea. From there her relics appeared on the beach of Brokthoi (near Constantinople) and upon discovery they were placed in the church of St. Thomas. Her relics survived a fire there and were eventually placed in the St. Olympia convent.

Pray for us, St. Olympia, in times of sadness or when we are discouraged!

