

MEANWHILE, BACK IN BYZANTIUM



by Kathryn Reetzke

St Placilla the Empress Example of Charity, Kindness, Humility

The wife of Emperor Theodosius lived a life of charity, kindness, and humility. Her feast day is this month, on September 14th, the same as the Elevation of the Holy Cross. May we also remember her and look to her life as an example of the Holy Virtues. Empress Placilla was born in March of 356 and reposed in 386 AD, St Gregory of Nyssa preached her funeral oration.

Born in Spain as Aelia Flavia Flaccilla, she didn't begin her marriage as Empress but as a middle class governor's daughter. She and her husband Theodosius lived in the countryside and she bore 3 children before her husband ascended, by chance, to the Eastern Roman Throne (Byzantine).

Devoted to the Nicene Creed, she upheld the teachings of the faith despite the popular teachings of the Arians at the time of her husband's reign. Now known as Empress Placilla, she even prevented Arian teachers from having an audience with her husband. In doing so, she defended the Creed, encouraged her husband to remain vigilant, and secured the faith within the Empire.

In appreciation of the riches and power God had given her, the Empress also devoted her time and resources to helping the poor and disabled of Constantinople. She personally travelled (at times without an escort) to the poorest neighborhoods in the city to give medicines and food to those suffering. It is written that she herself held bowls of broth to the lips of the poor and ill. Empress Placilla also served in church kitchens where she washed dishes, cooked food, and distributed food with gladness.

To read more about her life; visit <https://charlotteriggle.com/placilla-empress/>



Bust, supposedly of the Empress
(public access photo: Wikimedia)

May St. Placilla guide us! "Throughout her life, Saint Placilla served God in chastity, meekness, charity and prayer, and departed in peace to eternal life in 386 (or 385), having brought to those who encountered her a pledge of the Resurrection and of endless joy." The Synaxarion