

I SPY IN MY LITTLE ICON



By Kh. Jocelyn Abyad



her, so much so that they often referred to her as “King Tamara” instead of Queen to show that she was no less worthy to be the absolute ruler of their country even though she wasn’t a man.

In her icon, we see her dressed in ornate robes and a crown, indicating her royalty in this life. Her right hand points to the crosier in her left hand. The crosier is normally held by a bishop, abbot or abbess in icons and symbolizes life, resurrection, and the cross. On occasion, as we see here with St. Tamara, someone who is not an official leader of the Church is depicted holding the crosier. In her case, it signifies her leadership and personal sacrifice for her country and many contributions to the Church.

You may notice the jewels and rubies that adorn her robes and belt as well. St. Tamara was a talented seamstress and embroidered many of her own outfits. One night, she was busy attaching rubies to a new belt. While she was working, one of her attendants told her that there was a man begging outside of the castle. St. Tamara did not immediately go to help the man but instead finished working on her belt and then went to find him. By then, the beggar was gone. The Queen was so distraught that her vanity had stolen her opportunity to help someone in need that she immediately took off the belt and gave it to the monastery in Gelati.

As we navigate the storms of life, we can take St. Tamara’s advice when she said, “My brothers! Do not allow your hearts to tremble before the multitude of enemies, for God is with us.... Trust God alone, turn your hearts to Him in righteousness, and place your every hope in the Cross of Christ and in the Most Holy Theotokos!” St. Tamara, pray for us!

This month we study the icon of Saint Tamara, Queen of Georgia. Among the many Kings and Queens of history, Queen Tamara stands out not only in our Church as a saint and role model of care for others but also as a powerful political ruler. During her reign from 1184 to 1212, the Kingdom of Georgia improved in every way; it defended itself from multiple enemies seeking to overtake their land, many ornate palaces and churches were built, agriculture improved, and scientific and literary advances were made. Her subjects were incredibly loyal to her and respected