

## **Saint Olympias, the Deaconess of Constantinople**

Commemorated on July 25

Saint Olympias the Deaconess was born in the year 361 in Antioch or Constantinople. She was a Christian Roman noblewoman of Greek descent, the daughter of the senator Anicius Secundus. When she was still very young, her parents betrothed her to a nobleman. The marriage was supposed to take place when St Olympias reached the age of maturity, but the bridegroom died, and St Olympias did not wish to enter into another marriage, preferring a life of virginity.

After the death of her parents she inherited great wealth, which she began to distribute to all the needy: the poor, the orphaned and the widowed. She also gave generously to the churches, monasteries, hospices and shelters for the downtrodden and the homeless.

Holy Patriarch Nectarius (381-397) appointed St Olympias as a deaconess. The saint fulfilled her service honorably and without reproach. St Olympias provided great assistance to hierarchs coming to Constantinople, among whom were Gregory the Theologian and St Basil the Great's brother, Peter of Sebaste. She did not regard her wealth as her own but rather God's, and she distributed not only to good people, but also to their enemies.

St John Chrysostom had high regard for St Olympias, and he showed her good will and spiritual love. When this holy hierarch was unjustly banished, St Olympias and the other deaconesses were deeply upset. Leaving the church for the last time, St John Chrysostom called out to St Olympias and the other deaconesses Pentadia, Proklia and Salbina. He said that the matters incited against him would come to an end, but scarcely more would they see him. He asked them not to abandon the Church, but to continue serving it under his successor. The holy women, shedding tears, fell down before the saint.

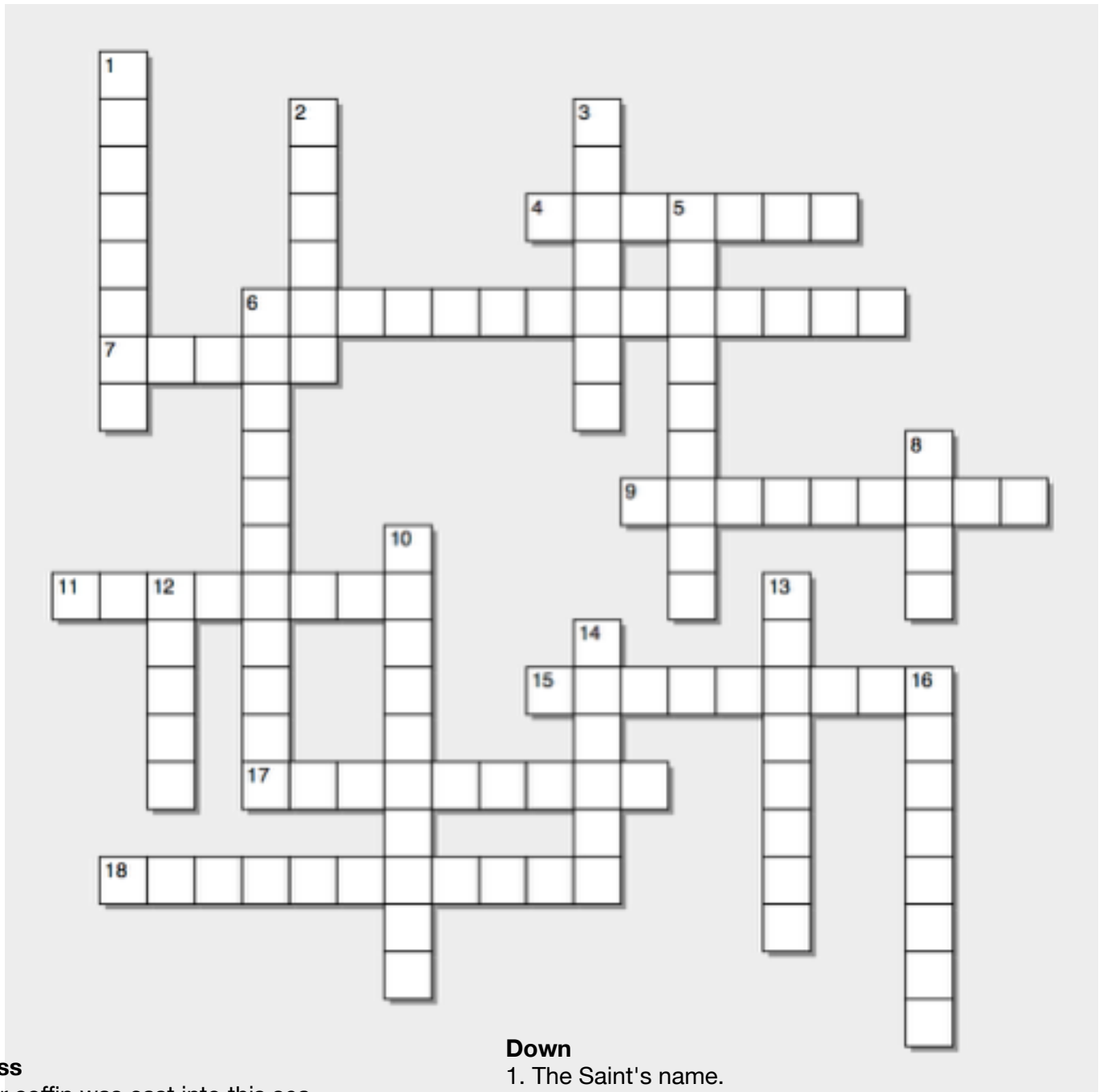
Patriarch Theophilus of Alexandria, had repeatedly benefited from the generosity of St Olympias, but turned against her for her devotion to St John Chrysostom. She had also taken in and fed monks who were arriving in Constantinople and whom Patriarch Theophilus had banished from the Egyptian desert. He levelled unrighteous accusations against her and attempted to cast doubt on her holy life.

After the banishment of St John Chrysostom, someone set fire to a large church, and after this a large part of the city burned down. All the supporters of St John Chrysostom came under suspicion of arson, and they were summoned for interrogation. They summoned St Olympias to trial, rigorously interrogating her. They fined her a large sum of money for the crime of arson, despite her innocence and a lack of evidence against her. After this the saint left Constantinople and set out to Kyzikos, a town on the Sea of Marmara. But her enemies did not cease their persecution. In the year 405 they sentenced her to prison at Nicomedia, where the saint underwent much grief and deprivation. St John Chrysostom wrote to her from his exile, consoling her in her sorrow. In the year 409 St Olympias entered into eternal rest.

St Olympias appeared in a dream to the Bishop of Nicomedia and commanded that her body be placed in a wooden coffin and cast into the sea. "Wherever the waves carry the coffin, there let my body be buried," said the saint. The coffin was brought by the waves to a place named Brokthoi near Constantinople. The inhabitants, informed of this by God, took the holy relics of St Olympias and placed them in the church of the holy Apostle Thomas. Afterwards, during an invasion of enemies, the church was burned, but the relics were preserved. Under the Patriarch Sergius (610-638), they were transferred to Constantinople and put in the women's monastery founded by St Olympias. Miracles and healings occurred from her relics.

(Adapted from <http://oca.org/saints/lives/2015/07/25/102087-holy-woman-olympias-olympiada-the-deaconess-of-constantinople>)

## 1. Crossword



### Across

4. Her coffin was cast into this sea.
6. The Deaconess left this major city.
7. Malicious burning to destroy property.
9. Patriarch who appointed her a deaconess.
11. Bishop.
15. Her position in the church.
17. City where the detention center was located.
18. Unjust

### Down

1. The Saint's name.
2. Correctional institution.
3. She had properties and money.
5. She founded this place.
6. Her friend offered it to her while she was imprisoned.
8. She was forced to pay a large sum of money.
10. Saint whose name means "Mouth of Gold."
12. This saint had been sent away.
13. She was not guilty.
14. Miracles occurred from them.
16. She was called to trial.



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