

## HERE FOLLOWETH THE LIFE OF ST. DOROTHY

**T**he glorious virgin and martyr St. Dorothy was born of the noble lineage of the senators of Rome, her father hight Theodore. In that time the persecution of the Christian people was great about Rome, wherefore this holy virgin St. Dorothy, despising the worshipping of idols, counselled her father, her mother, and her two sisters, Christine and Celestine, to forsake their possessions, and so they did, and fled into the realm ol Cappadocia, and came into the city of Caesarea wherein they set St. Dorothy to school, and soon after she was christened of the holy bishop St. Appollinarius, and he named her Dorothy. And she was fulfilled with the Holy Ghost, and in great beauty above all the maidens of that realm.

And she despised all worldly vanities, and burned in the love of Almighty God, and loved poverty, and was full of meekness and chastity, whereof the fiend having envy at her blessed living, provoked and set afire in her love the provost, so that he would have her to his wife, and anon sent for her in all haste, and when she came he desired to have her to his wife, and promised to her riches of worldly goods without number. And when this holy virgin understood his desire and request she refused it, and denied it utterly, and all his riches setting at nought; and moreover she acknowledged herself to be Christian, and that she had vowed her virginity unto Jesu Christ, whom she had chosen to her spouse, and would never have other.

*St. Dorothy is in Caxton but not in the original of the Golden Legend.*

### DOROTHY IS TORTURED FOR HER FAITH

#### The Tun of Burning Oil

**A**nd when the provost Fabricius heard this he was nigh from himself for anger, and commanded that she should be put in a tun of burning oil, wherein she was preserved by the power of her spouse Jesu Christ that she felt none disease ne harm, but a precious ointment of balm. And when the paynims saw this great miracle, many of them were thereby converted to the faith of Jesu Christ.

#### The Prison

And the tyrant said that she did all this by enchantment, and did do put her in a deep prison nine days long without meat or drink, but she was that while fed by angels' food of our Lord, so that at the end of nine days she was nothing appaired.

Then the judge sent for her, supposing that she had been nigh dead and feeble, but when she came she was fairer and brighter to look on than ever she was before, whereof all the people

marvelled greatly. Then the judge said to her: But if thou wilt worship and do sacrifice to the idols thou shalt not escape the torment of the gibbet.

Then she answered to the judge: I worship Almighty God that made all things, and despise thy gods that be fiends. And then she fell down flat to the earth and lifted up her eyes to Almighty God, beseeching him that he would show his power tofore the people that he was only Almighty God and none other.

### The Idol on the Pillar

Then Fabricius the judge let set up a pillar on high, and thereon he set his god, an idol, and anon there came a multitude of angels from heaven and cast down this idol, and all to-brake it, and anon the people heard a great noise of fiends crying in the air, saying: O Dorothy, why cost thou destroy us and tormentest us so sore?

And for this great miracle many thousands of paynims were turned to the faith of Jesu Christ and were baptized, and after received the crown of martyrdom for the acknowledging of the name of Jesu Christ.

### Hanged on the Gibbet

Then the judge commanded that this holy virgin should be hanged on the gibbet, her feet upward and the head downward, and then her body was all to-rent with hooks of iron, and beaten with rods and scourges, and burnt her breasts with hot fiery brands, and as half dead she was set again into prison, and after, when she was brought again, she was all whole and strong, without any disease or hurt. Whereof the judge had great marvel, and said to her: O fair maid, forsake thy God and believe on our gods, for thou mayst see how merciful they be unto thee, and preserve thee, therefore have pity of thy tender body, for thou hast been tormented enough.

### Her Two Sisters

And then the provost sent for her two sisters which were named Christine and Celestine, which for fear of death forsook the faith of Jesu Christ, and went to St. Dorothy and counselled her to obey to the provost's desire and forsake her faith. But this holy virgin rebuked her sisters. and after informed them by so fair and sweet language, that she withdrew them from their blind errors and established them in the faith of Jesu Christ; in such wise that when they were come to the judge they said they were Christian and believed on Jesu Christ.

And when Fabricius heard that, he was mad for anger, and commanded that the tormentor should bind their hands, and bind them both together back to back, and cast them in the fire so bound, and burnt them.

## THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. DOROTHY

And then he said to the virgin Dorothy: How long wilt thou trouble us with thy witchcraft? Or do sacrifice to our gods or else anon thy head shall be smitten off.

And then said the holy virgin with a glad semblant: Do to me what torment thou wilt, for I am all ready to suffer it for the love of my spouse Jesu Christ, in whose garden full of delices I have gathered roses, spices, and apples.

And when the tyrant heard that he trembled for anger, and commanded that her fair visage should be beaten with stones so that there should appear no beauty in her visage, but all disfigured, and so to be put in prison till the next day. And on the next day she came forth all so whole and sound as though she had suffered no disease, and was more fairer for to look on than ever she was tofore, by the grace of her blessed spouse Jesu Christ, for whose love she took on her these great and sharp torments.

### “Send Me Some of Thy Roses”

And then this cursed judge commanded to smite off her head; and as she was led to the place assigned where it should be done, a scribe of the realm, named Theophilus, said to her in scorn: I pray thee to send me some of thy roses and apples that thou hast gathered in the garden of thy spouse that thou praisest so much. And she granted to him his desire.

### St. Dorothy's Final Prayer

And this was in the cold winter time when there was both frost and snow. And when she came to the place where she should be beheaded, she kneeled down on her knees and made her prayers to our Lord Jesu Christ, beseeching him that all they that worship her passion that they might be kept steadfast in the faith, and to take their tribulation patiently, and specially to be delivered from all shame, great poverty, and false slander, and at their last end to have very contrition, confession, and remission of all their sins. And also women with child that call to her for help to have good deliverance, the children to be christened and the mothers to be purified. Also she prayed to God that where her life was written or read in any house, that it should be kept from all peril of lightning and thunder, and from all perils of fire, from perils of thieves, and from sudden death, and to receive the sacraments of holy church at their last end for their most sovereign defence against their ghostly enemy the fiend.

### “Come to Me, My Dear Spouse”

And when she had ended her prayer there was a voice heard from heaven that said: Come to me, my dear spouse and true virgin, for all thy love is granted to thee that hast prayed for, and also whom thou prayest for shall be saved; and when thou hast received the crown of martyrdom thou shalt come to the bliss of heaven without end, for thy labour.

And this holy virgin bowed down her head, and the cruel tyrant smote it off.

## The Basket of Roses

But a little before this appeared before her a fair child barefoot, clothed in purple, with crisp hairs, whose garment was set full of bright stars, bearing in his hand a little basket shining as gold, with roses and apples, to whom the virgin said: I pray thee, bear this basket to Theophilus the scribe.

And thus she suffered death and passed and Lord full of virtues, the sixth day of February, the year of our Lord two hundred and eighty-eight, by Fabricius, provost under Diocletian and Maximian, emperors of Rome.

And as this said Theophilus stood in the palace of the emperor, this child came to him and presented to him the basket, saying: These be the roses and apples that my sister Dorothy hath sent to thee from Paradise, the garden of her spouse.

And then this child vanished away. Then he, considering the marvellous work of God in this holy virgin, said anon with a stern voice, praising the God of Dorothy for that great miracle which was showed to him of roses and apples that time, that "he that sent to me these things is of great power, and therefore his name be blessed world without end, Amen." And then he was converted to the faith of Jesu Christ, and the most part of the people of the city.

And when Fabricius knew this, anon, with great malice, he tormented Theophilus the scribe with many divers torments, and at the last hewed him into small pieces, and the pieces were cast to birds and beasts to be devoured. But he was first baptized and received the holy sacrament, and followed the holy virgin Dorothy into the bliss of heaven.

Then let us devoutly pray to this blessed saint Dorothy that she be our special protectress against all perils of fire, of lightning, of thundering, and all other perils, and that at our end we may receive the sacraments of the church, that after this short life may come unto bliss in heaven whereas is life and joy perdurable, world without end. Amen

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The [iconography of St. Dorothy](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

Scanned by Robert Blackmon. [bob\\_blackmon@mindspring.com](mailto:bob_blackmon@mindspring.com).

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[halsall@fordham.edu](mailto:halsall@fordham.edu)

Reformatted with paragraphs, rubrics, italics, and explanatory insertions by Richard Stracke, [rstracke@aug.edu](mailto:rstracke@aug.edu)