

SAINT TIMOTHY AND HIS WIFE MAURA



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Saints Timothy and Maura suffered for the faith during the persecution under the emperor Diocletian (284-305). St Timothy came from the village of Perapa, near Antinou (Egyptian Thebaid), and was the son of a priest named Pikoipossos, who brought up his son in Christian piety.

Timothy from his first years as a youth served during his father's term in the rank of reader and the keeper of liturgical books. St. Timothy read sacred books daily at home. But he read them with special inspiration in church assemblies on Saturdays and Sundays. For his distinct, intelligent and reverent reading during the divine services St. Timothy was respected by Christians.

Another obligation of his rank as reader, was the writing of sacred books. For Timothy, the writing of sacred books was not only an obligation but also was a hobby. He called the copied books his children, his expensive treasure that he also shared with the Christians of his church community.

St. Timothy married a 17 year old maiden Maura, a devout Christian woman from a very pious and prosperous family. He found in her who also had a distinguished Christian education a friend for life, capable of empathizing with his moods. She respected the calling of her husband and she empathized with him, inspiring him with what he read in the sacred books in the church. She also liked to read sacred books, knew them so well that she could expound their sayings by heart.

St. Timothy was known for his great piety and knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. Many times at night after the day's work, villagers would gather around Timothy where he would read to them from the Scriptures.

After only 20 days of marriage, a terrible trial came to them: the persecution of Christians had arrived. Diocletian made a decree that required the confiscation of sacred books from Christians in order to burn them. Timothy was summoned to the pagan governor Arianos, to be brought to trial for his Christian teaching and missionary work. At first, he was asked to surrender all of his sacred books in order for them to be destroyed. Timothy refused, for he knew their value and power. "If a father who loves his children," he said, "and who obeys the natural law does not deliver up to death his fleshly children, how can I give over my spiritual children, the sacred books, into your polluted hands?" Arianos subjected the saint to horrible tortures for his refusal to obey the command. They shoved two red-hot iron rods into his ears, from which the sufferer lost his eyesight and became blind. He regarded the tortures as honours, since they would bring him eternal bliss.

St Timothy bravely endured the pain and he gave thanks to God, for granting him to suffer for Him. The torturers hung the saint head downwards, putting a piece of wood in his mouth, and they tied a heavy stone to his neck. St Timothy's suffering was so extreme, that even those who tortured him implored the governor to ease up on the torture.

About this time they informed Arian that Timothy had a young wife named Maura, whom he had married only twenty days before. Arian ordered Maura to be brought, hoping that with her present, they could break St Timothy's will. She was asked to use her "womanly gifts" to persuade her husband to deny Christ. At the request of Maura, they removed the piece of wood from the mouth of the martyr, so that he could speak. St Timothy urged his wife not to fear the tortures, but to follow his path. St Maura answered, "I am prepared to die with you," and she boldly confessed herself a Christian. Arianos commanded that the hair be torn from her head, and to cut the fingers off her hands.

St. Maura underwent her tortures with joy and even thanked the Governor for the pain which she endured so that her sins might be forgiven. Arianos then gave orders to throw St. Maura into a boiling cauldron, but she did not feel any pain and remained unharmed. Suspecting that the servants had filled the cauldron with cold water out of sympathy, Arianos ordered the saint to splash him on the hand with the water from the cauldron. When St. Maura did this, Arianos screamed with pain and drew back his scalded hand. Momentarily admitting the power of the miracle, Arianos confessed God in Whom Maura believed as the True God, and he ordered her to be released.

However, the devil still held great power over the governor, and soon he again began to urge St. Maura to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. Having gotten nowhere, Arianos was overcome all the more by a satanic rage, and he came up with new tortures. The people then began to murmur and demand a stop to the abuse of the innocent woman. But St. Maura, turning to the them, said, "Let no one defend me. I have one Defender, God, in Whom I trust."

During all of these tortures, the saints both saw visions of angels which comforted them. As they were both led to their death by crucifixion, they both kissed their crosses on which they were to be martyred. Nailed to their crosses facing each other, each comforted the other for nine days as they hung. During the 9 days of suffering on the cross they courageously preached Christ, talked about the Lord and eternal life.

After nine days of hanging on their crosses glorifying the Lord, these newlyweds gave up their souls and entered eternal life. They beheld a vision

of angels pointing to thrones in heaven next to Jesus Christ waiting for them.

These events occurred in 286. Later, a solemn celebration of the holy martyrs Timothy and Maura was instituted at Constantinople, and a church was built in their honour.

FEASTS OF THE SAINTS:

Anglican: May 3

Eastern Orthodox: May 3 (May 16 for Old Calendar)

First Sunday of July: Discovery of miracle working icon.

Catholic: March 16

Coptic: There is no definite feast for the martyrs in our Synaxarion but there is a brief entry in the Ethiopian Synaxarium on the 27th day of the month of Athor (December 6/7)

HYMNS OF VENERATION:

ANGLICAN:

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God,
Who didst strengthen thy blessed martyrs Timothy and Maura
With the virtue of constancy in faith and truth:
Grant us in like manner for love of thee
To despise the prosperity of this world,
And to fear none of its adversities;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

EASTERN ORTHODOX:

Troparion (Tone 4)

Your holy martyrs Timothy and Mavra, O Lord,
Through their sufferings have received incorruptible crowns
from You, our God.
For having Your strength, they laid low their adversaries,
And shattered the powerless boldness of demons.
Through their intercessions, save our souls!

Kontakion (Tone 4)

You accepted many humiliations,
And deserved to be crowned by God.
Great and praiseworthy Timothy and Maura,
Intercede with the Lord for us:
That we may celebrate your most pure memory;
That He may grant peace to our land and people,
For He is a powerful stronghold for the faithful!

SLAVIC RITE:

Let us assemble, all who love the martyrs!
Together let us praise with faith today
Maura and Timothy, courageous among martyrs.
They suffered greatly and slew the enemy.
They loved Christ and hated the world.
They are worthy citizens of the spiritual Zion!

Timothy, your body was tied,
Your eyes gouged out and spikes driven into your ears.
You were weighed down with a heavy stone.
Thus you threw down the enemy
And were carried up to divine glory, glorious one!
Therefore we come together with faith
And praise you with entreaties,
Glory and boast of the martyrs!

You suffered in purity, glorious Maura,
With brilliant radiance you cast the enemy into darkness!
You were trampled by horses and your fingers cut off.
You were crucified and burned with torches.
You passed over to divine rest
Where the choir of martyrs ever rejoices

It is sad that there is no doxology or a veneration for these holy martyrs in
our Coptic church, their own church!

ST. MAURA'S CHURCH:

A church dedicated to St. Maura can be found on the island of Zakynthos, Greece. St. Maura's miracle-working icon is located there. The icon was originally from Egypt. In Zakynthos, a shepherd had found the icon in a small ravine when he saw a bright light emanating from the area. Three times he took the icon with great reverence back to his village but each time it would miraculously return to the spot where he had found it. It was determined that it should be left there and a church should be built on that spot, where it still stands today (the village of Maherado).

The present church was rebuilt in 1631 after a great earthquake destroyed most of the original church. In 1953 another great earthquake damaged the church, but it was rebuilt by the devout Christians of the island. Along with the feast day on May 3, the island of Zakynthos also celebrates another feast for the saints on the Sunday after Pentecost.



*The church of St Maura at the
village of Macherado, Zakynthos,
Greece*

SAINT MAURA
A POEM BY THE BRITISH POET CHARLES KINGSLEY
(12 June 1819 – 23 January 1875)

Thank God! Those gazers' eyes are gone at last!
The guards are crouching underneath the rock;
The lights are fading in the town below,
Around the cottage which this morn was ours.
Kind sun, to set, and leave us here alone;
Alone upon our crosses with our God;
While all the angels watch us from the stars.
Kind moon, to shine so clear and full on him,
And bathe his limbs in glory, for a sign
Of what awaits him! Oh look on him, Lord!
Look, and remember how he saved thy lamb!

Oh listen to me, teacher, husband, love,
Never till now loved utterly! Oh say,
Say you forgive me! No—you must not speak:
You said it to me hours ago—long hours!
Now you must rest, and when to-morrow comes
Speak to the people, call them home to God,
A deacon on the Cross, as in the Church;
And plead from off the tree with outspread arms,
To show them that the Son of God endured
For them—and me. Hush! I alone will speak,
And while away the hours till dawn for you.
I know you have forgiven me; as I lay
Beneath your feet, while they were binding me,
I knew I was forgiven then! When I cried
'Here am I, husband! The lost lamb returned,
All re-baptized in blood!' and you said, 'Come!
Come to thy bride-bed, martyr, wife once more!'
From that same moment all my pain was gone;
And ever since those sightless eyes have smiled
Love—love! Alas, those eyes! They made me fall.
I could not bear to see them, bleeding, dark,
Never, no never to look into mine;
Never to watch me round the little room
Singing about my work, or flash on me

Looks bright with counsel.—Then they drove me mad
With talk of nameless tortures waiting you—
And I could save you! You would hear your love—
They knew you loved me, cruel men! And then—
Then came a dream; to say one little word,
One easy wicked word, we both might say,
And no one hear us, but the lictors round;
One tiny sprinkle of the incense grains,
And both, both free! And life had just begun—
Only three months—short months—your wedded wife
Only three months within the cottage there—
Hoping I bore your child. . . .
Ah! husband! Saviour! God! think gently of me!
I am forgiven! . . .

And then another dream;
A flash—so quick, I could not bear the blaze;
I could not see the smoke among the light—
To wander out through unknown lands, and lead
You by the hand through hamlet, port, and town,
On, on, until we died; and stand each day
To glory in you, as you preached and prayed
From rock and bourne-stone, with that voice, those words,
Mingled with fire and honey—you would wake,
Bend, save whole nations! would not that atone
For one short word?—ay, make it right, to save
You, you, to fight the battles of the Lord?
And so—and so—alas! you knew the rest!
You answered me. . . .

Ah cruel words! No! Blessed, godlike words.
You had done nobly had you struck me dead,
Instead of striking me to life!—the temptress! . . .
‘Traitor! apostate! dead to God and me!’—
‘The smell of death upon me?’—so it was!
True! true! well spoken, hero! Oh they snapped,
Those words, my madness, like the angel’s voice
Thrilling the graves to birth-pangs. All was clear.
There was but one right thing in the world to do;
And I must do it. . . . Lord, have mercy! Christ!

Help through my womanhood: or I shall fail
Yet, as I failed before! . . . I could not speak—
I could not speak for shame and misery,
And terror of my sin, and of the things
I knew were coming: but in heaven, in heaven!
There we should meet, perhaps—and by that time
I might be worthy of you once again—
Of you, and of my God. . . . So I went out.

Will you hear more, and so forget the pain?
And yet I dread to tell you what comes next;
Your love will feel it all again for me.
No! it is over; and the woe that's dead
Rises next hour a glorious angel. Love!
Say, shall I tell you? Ah! your lips are dry!
To-morrow, when they come, we must entreat,
And they will give you water. One to-day,
A soldier, gave me water in a sponge
Upon a reed, and said, 'Too fair! too young!
She might have been a gallant soldier's wife!'
And then I cried, 'I am a soldier's wife!
A hero's!' And he smiled, but let me drink.
God bless him for it!

So they led me back:
And as I went, a voice was in my ears
Which rang through all the sunlight, and the breath
And blaze of all the garden slopes below,
And through the harvest-voices, and the moan
Of cedar-forests on the cliffs above,
And round the shining rivers, and the peaks
Which hung beyond the cloud-bed of the west,
And round the ancient stones about my feet.
Out of all heaven and earth it rang, and cried,
'My hand hath made all these. Am I too weak
To give thee strength to say so?' Then my soul
Spread like a clear blue sky within my breast,
While all the people made a ring around,
And in the midst the judge spoke smilingly—
'Well! hast thou brought him to a better mind?'

'No! He has brought me to a better mind!'—
 I cried, and said beside—I know not what—
 Words which I learnt from thee—I trust in God
 Nought fierce or rude—for was I not a girl
 Three months ago beneath my mother's roof?
 I thought of that. She might be there! I looked—
 She was not there! I hid my face and wept.
 And when I looked again, the judge's eye
 Was on me, cold and steady, deep in thought—
 'She knows what shame is still; so strip her.' 'Ah!'
 I shrieked, 'Not that, Sir! Any pain! So young
 I am—a wife too—I am not my own,
 But his—my husband's!' But they took my shawl,
 And tore my tunic off, and there I stood
 Before them all. . . . Husband! you love me still?
 Indeed I pleaded! Oh, shine out, kind moon,
 And let me see him smile! Oh! how I prayed,
 While some cried 'Shame!' and some, 'She is too young!'
 And some mocked—ugly words: God shut my ears.
 And yet no earthquake came to swallow me.
 While all the court around, and walls, and roofs,
 And all the earth and air were full of eyes,
 Eyes, eyes, which scorched my limbs like burning flame,
 Until my brain seemed bursting from my brow:
 And yet no earthquake came! And then I knew
 This body was not yours alone, but God's—
 His loan—He needed it: and after that
 The worst was come, and any torture more
 A change—a lightening; and I did not shriek—
 Once only—once, when first I felt the whip—
 It coiled so keen around my side, and sent
 A fire-flash through my heart which choked me—then
 I shrieked—that once. The foolish echo rang
 So far and long—I prayed you might not hear.
 And then a mist, which hid the ring of eyes,
 Swam by me, and a murmur in my ears
 Of humming bees around the limes at home;
 And I was all alone with you and God.
 And what they did to me I hardly know;
 I felt, and did not feel. Now I look back,

It was not after all so very sharp:
So do not pity me. It made me pray;
Forget my shame in pain, and pain in you,
And you in God: and once, when I looked down,
And saw an ugly sight—so many wounds!
'What matter?' thought I. 'His dear eyes are dark;
For them alone I kept these limbs so white—
A foolish pride! As God wills now. 'Tis just.'
But then the judge spoke out in haste: 'She is mad,
Or fenced by magic arts! She feels no pain!'
He did not know I was on fire within:
Better he should not; so his sin was less.
Then he cried fiercely, 'Take the slave away,
And crucify her by her husband's side!'
And at those words a film came on my face—
A sickening rush of joy—was that the end?
That my reward? I rose, and tried to go—
But all the eyes had vanished, and the judge;
And all the buildings melted into mist:
So how they brought me here I cannot tell—
Here, here, by you, until the judgment-day,
And after that for ever and for ever!
Ah! If I could but reach that hand! One touch!
One finger tip, to send the thrill through me
I felt but yesterday!—No! I can wait:—
Another body!—Oh, new limbs are ready,
Free, pure, instinct with soul through every nerve,
Kept for us in the treasures of God.
They will not mar the love they try to speak,
They will not fail my soul, as these have done!

Will you hear more? Nay—you know all the rest:
Yet those poor eyes—alas! they could not see
My waking, when you hung above me there
With hands outstretched to bless the penitent—
Your penitent—even like The Lord Himself—
I gloried in you!—like The Lord Himself!
Sharing His very sufferings, to the crown
Of thorns which they had put on that dear brow
To make you like Him—show you as you were!

I told them so! I bid them look on you,
And see there what was the highest throne on earth—
The throne of suffering, where the Son of God
Endured and triumphed for them. But they laughed;
All but one soldier, gray, with many scars;
And he stood silent. Then I crawled to you,
And kissed your bleeding feet, and called aloud—
You heard me! You know all! I am at peace.
Peace, peace, as still and bright as is the moon
Upon your limbs, came on me at your smile,
And kept me happy, when they dragged me back
From that last kiss, and spread me on the cross,
And bound my wrists and ankles—Do not sigh:
I prayed, and bore it: and since they raised me up
My eyes have never left your face, my own, my own,
Nor will, till death comes! . . .

Do I feel much pain?
Not much. Not maddening. None I cannot bear.
It has become like part of my own life,
Or part of God's life in me—honour—bliss!
I dreaded madness, and instead comes rest;
Rest deep and smiling, like a summer's night.
I should be easy, now, if I could move . . .
I cannot stir. Ah God! these shoots of fire
Through all my limbs! Hush, selfish girl! He hears you!
Who ever found the cross a pleasant bed?
Yes; I can bear it, love. Pain is no evil
Unless it conquers us. These little wrists, now—
You said, one blessed night, they were too slender,
Too soft and slender for a deacon's wife—
Perhaps a martyr's:—You forgot the strength
Which God can give. The cord has cut them through;
And yet my voice has never faltered yet.
Oh! do not groan, or I shall long and pray
That you may die: and you must not die yet.
Not yet—they told us we might live three days . . .
Two days for you to preach! Two days to speak
Words which may wake the dead!

Hush! is he sleeping?
They say that men have slept upon the cross;
So why not he? . . . Thanks, Lord! I hear him breathe:
And he will preach Thy word to-morrow!—save
Souls, crowds, for Thee! And they will know his worth
Years hence—poor things, they know not what they do!—
And crown him martyr; and his name will ring
Through all the shores of earth, and all the stars
Whose eyes are sparkling through their tears to see
His triumph—Preacher! Martyr!—Ah—and me?—
If they must couple my poor name with his,
Let them tell all the truth—say how I loved him,
And tried to damn him by that love! O Lord!
Returning good for evil! and was this
The payment I deserved for such a sin?
To hang here on my cross, and look at him
Until we kneel before Thy throne in heaven!

Eversley, 1852.



**Miracle working Icon of Saint Maura
In her church in the village of Macherado
Island of Zakynthos, Greece**