



## Saint Catherine—November 25th

Saint Katherine was endowed with extraordinary gifts, including striking beauty and a great capacity for learning. She came from a distinguished and learned family and possessed great wealth. Her vast properties and wealth were confiscated later by the state. Katherine was very devout, a genius in absorbing vast amounts of knowledge. She studied what is known today as philology. Greek and Latin, philosophy, oratory, mathematics, poetry and music. She was well-versed in the Christian Truths, and could converse on dogmas on a par with outstanding theologians. Katherine was just 18 when she surprised the philosophers with her knowledge. She devoted herself to learning, rejecting many proposals of marriage from young men of distinguished families. When Katherine was converted to Christianity, she accepted completely all the Truths, practicing them fully in her everyday life. She became a fervent herald of the Christian Truths, and drew many people to Christianity through her example and preaching.

Katherine's name became famous, challenging the status-quo of King Maxentius. He wanted Katherine to abandon her faith and return to the pagan religion. He asked 50 philosophers and orators of the area to convince Katherine to return to the religion of her fathers. She turned this encounter into a debate, and day after day she won ground, convincing them to accept Christianity, "For by the power of the Spirit she silenced brilliantly the nobility of liars". Instead of converting her to paganism, the religion of her ancestors, the philosophers were converted to Christianity. This infuriated Maxentius, who ordered the philosophers burned at the stake and Katherine thrown in prison and tortured. It is said that when Maxentius was away from Alexandria, his queen — followed by 200 watch guards and soldiers, including officers under the command of Prophyrius

— visited Katherine in prison to convince her to relent. Instead the queen came away with admiration for Katherine's virtues and wisdom.

Prophyrius and his soldiers were so deeply impressed by Katherine's thoughtful and convincing defense of the Christian faith that they were converted to Christianity, and embraced her with respect. They were all baptized and became Christians. When Maxentius learned of this mass conversion of his officers and soldiers, he ordered them beheaded. They heard of their fate with courage, being inspired by Katherine from her prison cell. The king was so infuriated by this that he ordered Katherine severely beaten and then tied to a rolling spiked wheel. Katherine miraculously survived this atrocious torture, making King Maxentius even more furious. He then ordered her beheaded, and she died in 307. Katherine's martyrdom was the result of her constant and persistent confession of faith in the Christian Truths and her confession of Christ as Savior, Whom she invoked and Whose help she had felt throughout her life. She was bestowed with a crown of martyrdom, wisdom and virginity — a triple crown which gives the meaning of the name Katherine.

Katherine's body was miraculously transferred to an impassable place on the highest peaks of Mt. Sinai. In the year 549, Emperor Justinian founded a monastery on Mt. Sinai, and built a church named The Transfiguration of the Savior. Some 400 years later the monks of the monastery found the body of Saint Katherine and placed it in a sepulcher in the katholikon of the monastery, enshrined for veneration. The monks found on the surface of the granite on which her body lay, an impression of the form of her body. After her body was enshrined in the monastery, the monks renamed the church Saint Katherine. According to ancient usage, Saint Katherine (along with St. Mercurius the Great-martyr) was celebrated on November 24, whereas the holy Hieromartyrs Clement of Rome and Peter of Alexandria were celebrated on the 25th.

### **Apolytikion of Great Martyr Catherine in the Plagal of the First Tone**

Let us praise the most auspicious bride of Christ, the divine Katherine, protectress of Sinai, our aid and our help. For, she brilliantly silenced the eloquence of the impious by the sword of the spirit, and now, crowned as a martyr, she asks great mercy for all.

### **Kontakion of Great Martyr Catherine in the Second Tone**

O friends of martyrs, now divinely raise up a renewed chorus, praising the all-wise Katherine. For, she proclaimed Christ in the arena, trampled on the serpent, and spat upon the knowledge of the orators.