



Saint Juliana the Merciful (January 2)

Righteous Juliana of Lazarevo and Murom (in Russia) is an astonishing example of a married woman who was sanctified by selflessly living out the Christian life. She was born in the 1530s, the daughter of a nobleman. After having been orphaned at the age of 12, she went to live with relatives who did not understand her and even laughed at her as she lived devoutly, kept the fasts, and set aside the majority of her time for prayer. Juliana bore everything with patience and without complaint and kept to herself. She cared for the sick and sewed for the poor.

Yurii Osoryin was attracted by her piety and industry and soon married her, taking her to live in his family home. Her in-laws initially resented her extreme piety, but having grown to love her they eventually left the running of the household in her hands. Domestic concerns did not disrupt her spiritual efforts. She always found time for prayer, and she was always prepared to feed the hungry. During a harsh famine, Juliana herself remained without food, having given away her last morsel to a beggar. When an epidemic began, Juliana devoted herself completely to the nursing of the sick.

Righteous Juliana had ten sons and three daughters of whom four sons and two daughters died in childhood. After the death of two of her adult sons, she wanted to withdraw to a monastery, but her husband reminded her of her marriage vows and persuaded her to remain in the world and to continue to raise their children. In committing herself to this, she became all the more demanding of herself. She intensified her fasting and prayer, and slept no more than two hours at night.

Upon the death of her husband, Juliana distributed her inheritance to the poor. Living in extreme poverty, she was nonetheless vivacious, cordial, and in everything she thanked the Lord. She fell ill on December 26 and reposed on January 2, 1604. She was buried beside her husband. In 1614, her relics were uncovered. Her body was incorrupt and exuded fragrant myrrh from which many received healing. Saint Juliana is commemorated on January 2.

Scenes in the Icon

Saint Juliana and her family

Saint Juliana is seen standing with her husband and several of her children before an icon during family prayer time. Each is dressed appropriately: Juliana as a noblewoman, her husband as a soldier of the tsar, and the children in clothing of the era.

Saint Juliana working during the night

Saint Juliana was never idle and is seen embroidering in her kitchen with a candle burning. She is focused on her task. She then sold her goods and gave alms to the poor.

Saint Juliana is visited by Saint Nicholas

On one occasion while praying at night the demons frightened her, threatening to destroy her if she did not give up her life of prayer and fasting. She begged help from the Theotokos and Saint Nicholas and fell into a deep sleep. Saint Nicholas appeared, blessed her and drove away the demons. The saint awoke to see him leaving her bed chamber.

Saint Juliana makes bread

During a horrible famine when people were starving and dying by the thousands, Saint Juliana intervened. She asked her few remaining servants to gather pigweed and to strip the bark from a certain species of elm tree. With these she prepared bread. Multitudes came to her for this food, and after eating described it as more sweet and tasty than any bread they had ever eaten.

Saint Juliana cares for the sick

A deadly contagious disease had struck the area. Those who were not sick were frightened and sought to protect themselves by staying in their homes and avoiding those who were infected. Yet the merciful Juliana, unbeknown to her husband's parents, washed the sick in the bathhouse on

the estate, treated them as far as she was able, and prayed for their recovery.

Saint Juliana's repose

At daybreak on January 2, Saint Juliana received Holy Communion and then spoke with her children and servants about living a God-pleasing life. She bid them farewell, signed herself with the Cross three times, and uttered her final words: "Glory to God for all things! Into Thy hands, O Lord, do I commit my spirit." She then fell asleep in the Lord.

Troparion of Saint Juliana (Tone 4)

*By your righteous deeds you revealed to the world
an image of the perfect servant of the Lord.
By your fasting, vigil and prayers,
you were inspired in your evangelical life,
feeding the hungry and caring for the poor,
nursing the sick and strengthening the weak.
Now you stand at the right hand of the Master, Christ,
O holy Juliana, interceding for our souls.*

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