

## **SAINT TAISIA (the former harlot)**

**— Commemorated October 8th —**

The extraordinary repentance of blessed Taisia is very beneficial for everyone, as it provides much consolation and hope, and it confirms that the Lord accepts, honors, and glorifies every sinful person who sincerely repents.

Blessed Taisia was an exceptionally beautiful young girl. Unfortunately, she was led astray by her licentious mother who encouraged her to immorality from a very young age, and who ultimately handed her over into a house of prostitution when she was seventeen years old. Talk of her beauty spread very quickly, and she became highly sought-after by countless men, many of whom would sell off all their belongings in order to fulfill their desire.

When Saint Serapion heard about Taisia, he was moved to pray for her to God with these words: **“Lord Jesus Christ, our God Who desires that all people be saved and come to the knowledge of truth: implant Your holy fear within her heart, so that she may return, repent, and be saved.”** Having completed this prayer, he wore layman’s clothes over his monastic garments, he took a gold coin with him, and proceeded to the harlot’s residence. When he arrived, he introduced himself as a soldier and handed Taisia the gold coin, which she happily accepted. Then Taisia said, “Let us go into my bedroom.” “Let us go,” replied Saint Serapion. Upon entering, Taisia went and sat upon the bed that had been prepared and then invited the saint to join her. Saint Serapion asked, “Is there another room in the back?” “Yes there is,” replied Taisia. “Let us then go and sit there for a bit,” suggested the Saint. To this Taisia responded, **“Since there is no person here who can see us, it is better for us to speak and fulfill our desire here; because no matter where we go, God still sees us.”**

When the Saint heard this statement, he asked her, “So, you are aware that God exists? And that there is judgement, and repayment for one’s deeds, and a Kingdom of Heaven, and Hell?” “Yes, I am aware,” she answered. Then the saint remarked, “Since you are aware that all these things exist, why do you destroy the sons of men?” After advising her with many other examples, he showed her his monastic garments, which he was wearing underneath, and also revealed to her the real reason he had come to meet her. Taisia, in turn, fell to

the feet of the saint and with uncontrollable tears said, **“O reverend father: do you know if repentance exists for them who have sinned? Will God accept me if I repent?”** Saint Serapion replied, **“God is compassionate and charitable, and He accepts everyone who repents. And there is much joy that takes place in heaven on account of one sinful person who repents (Lk. 15:7).”** Then, Taisia said to him, **“Father, wait just three hours for me, and then do with me whatever you think is best in order for me to be forgiven for all the sins I have committed. Because I know that God sent you to me.”** After identifying the location where he would be waiting for her, Saint Serapion left. Taisia, in the meantime, took everything she had acquired through prostitution and set it on fire in the city square, as she cried out, **“Come all ye who fornicated with me: see how I have set on fire everything that I sinfully acquired.”** The value of the items that she burnt were equivalent to six-hundred liters of gold, excluding her wardrobe.

After this, Saint Taisia went and met Serapion, who led her to a women’s convent, and ordered that she remain in a room with a small window, through which she would receive food. Saint Serapion instructed the Abbess of the convent to give her dry bread and water every two days, and as he was about to leave, blessed Taisia said to him from the window, “Pray for me, venerable Father, so that God may forgive the multitude of my sins, which I the wretch committed.” Saint Serapion then advised her, “Keep your mind on God, and don’t say anything other than this verse: **‘You, O Lord, Who have created me, have mercy on me.’”**

Blessed Taisia lived like this for three years. Seeing her deep repentance, Saint Serapion went to Saint Anthony the Great to ask him if God had forgiven her sins. After relating to him all the events surrounding blessed Taisia, Saint Anthony called all his disciples and ordered them to go to their cells and to pray all night for God to reveal to them the answer to Saint Serapion’s question. And so, each monk did as Saint Anthony ordered. During that night, as Saint Paul the Simple (the greatest of Saint Anthony’s monks) was praying, he saw a bed that had been prepared in heaven, enveloped with indescribable honor and glory, and three young maidens, each holding a candle, standing as guards in front of the bed. Above the bed was an exquisite wreath. As Saint Paul the Simple marveled at this, he thought to himself, **“This glorious bed and magnificent wreath certainly belongs to none other than my Father Anthony.”** As he

thought this, he heard a voice saying, **“Paul, these do not belong to your Father Anthony but to Taisia, the former harlot!”** In the morning, Saint Paul related what he had seen and heard to all the fathers, and thus everyone was assured that God had accepted blessed Taisia’s repentance.

Having returned from Saint Anthony, Saint Serapion entered the convent with great joy and immediately went to the room where blessed Taisia stayed, wanting to open the door and bring her out. But when Taisia realized what he was about to do, she beseeched him, **“Venerable Father, please allow me to remain in this room for the rest of my life. Because my sins are many, and so that God may forgive me.”** Saint Serapion replied, **“God has already been merciful to you on account of your humility, and He has accepted your repentance.”** Then Taisia said, **“Believe me, venerable Father, when I tell you that from the moment I entered this room, I set all my sins before my eyes. And just as I never stopped breathing, similarly I never stopped thinking of my sins for even a second up until now.”**

After such incredible repentance, Saint Serapion proceeded to bring Taisia out of her room and numbered her amongst the other nuns, with whom she lived for only fifteen days. Because after the fifteenth day, blessed Taisia fell asleep in the Lord, and was led by angels to His Heavenly Kingdom, where she was crowned with incomprehensible honor and eternal glory.

Through her holy prayers, may we all be deemed worthy of it. Amen.