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**On December 22 we remember a woman to whom the Church gives the title of Greatmartyr: Anastasia of Rome.**

Her father, a prominent member of the Roman Senate from an old and established family, was a pagan. Her mother, Fausta, was a Christian whose faith was very important to her, but in order to preserve her marriage she practiced that faith quietly. She did make sure that Anastasia was baptized, and saw to it that the little girl learned about Jesus Christ and the Gospel teachings.

Fausta also gave her daughter the example of charity to people in need, and taught her to be steadfast in her beliefs even though there were many, like her pagan father, who would never share her faith.

Anastasia's father arranged a marriage for his daughter that she did not welcome, but as an obedient child of her times she married the rich landowner, Publius, who had been chosen for her. There was really no love in the marriage, and Anastasia knew that her husband, a pagan, was indifferent to any questions of faith so that she probably would never bring him to the faith.

She also knew that he would never approve of her actions as a Christian. It was a time of persecution for believers; Christians were tortured and imprisoned for the flimsiest reasons. Anastasia would dress in rags, so as not to be identified and anger her husband, and would go to the jails to encourage those who were suffering for the faith, washing their wounds and praying with them. She also gave food, clothing, and large amounts of money to the poor. Though it was her own money, part of her large inheritance, Publius would have considered it wasteful and unnecessary.

Publius discovered her secret work, and punished her harshly for mixing with undesirables in the Roman prisons. He ordered her to be locked up and denied food. It was only when Publius was sent by the Roman Emperor on a mission and drowned at sea that her terrible ordeal ended.

Some time after her husband's death, Anastasia went to Macedonia and ministered to Christians there. She stayed for a while with a young widow named Theodota, who joined her in caring for prisoners. Theodota and her children were burned to death for fearlessly confessing their faith in Christ, and Anastasia herself was imprisoned once again.

During the dark days in prison, Anastasia had visions of her friend Theodota. The younger woman always encouraged and comforted her, but the visions were a secret between them. It was not until Anastasia was condemned to death that Theodota showed herself to other people in an amazing way.

Anastasia and other Christians were put on a small boat. The plan was that soldiers would capsize it and drown the believers. But Theodota suddenly was seen walking on the water, and pulled the leaky little craft safely to shore.

#### **Troparion - Tone 4**

Your lamb Anastasia, calls out to You, O Jesus, in a loud voice:  
"I love You, my Bridegroom, and in seeking You I endure suffering.  
In baptism I was crucified so that I might reign in You, and I died so that I might live with You.  
Accept me as a pure sacrifice,  
for I have offered myself in love."  
Through her prayers save our souls, since You are merciful.

Anastasia was eventually martyred. The Church on this day honors her and Theodota openly, not in secret, as true saints.