

St. Lea

Daily Saints / Saints

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A letter which St. Jerome wrote to St. Marcella provides the only information we have about St. Lea, a devout fourth century widow. Upon the death of her husband, she retired to a Roman monastery and ultimately became its Superior. Since his correspondence was acquainted with the details of St. Lea's life, St. Jerome omitted these in his letter. He concentrated instead on the fate of St. Lea in comparison with that of a consul who had recently died. "Who will praise the blessed Lea as she deserves? She renounced painting her face and adorning her head with shining pearls. She exchanged her rich attire for sackcloth, and ceased to command others in order to obey all. She dwelt in a corner with a few bits of furniture; she spent her nights in prayer, and instructed her companions through her example rather than through protests and speeches. And she looked forward to her arrival in heaven in order to receive her recompense for the virtues which she practiced on earth. "So it is that thence forth she enjoyed perfect happiness. From Abraham's bosom, where she resides with Lazarus, she sees our consul who was once decked out in purple, now vested in a shameful robe, vainly begging for a drop of water to quench his thirst. Although he went up to the capital to the plaudits of the people, and his death occasioned widespread grief, it is futile for the wife to assert that he has gone to heaven and possesses a great mansion there. The fact is that he is plunged into the darkness outside, whereas Lea who was willing to be considered a fool on earth, has been received into the house of the Father, at the wedding feast of the Lamb. "Hence, I tearfully beg you to refrain from seeking the favors of the world and to renounce all that is carnal. It is impossible to follow both the world and Jesus. Let us live a life of renunciation, for our bodies will soon be dust and nothing else will last any longer." Her feast day is March 22.