

**SAINT PELAGIA THE PENITENT**

**The remarkable story that comes to us from the spiritual treasury of the saints is that of Pelagia the Penitent. She was a woman of striking beauty who led life of debauchery in the city of Antioch. The world was her home: she was an actress and dancer, dressed in the finest silk, covered with jewels, scented with the most fragrant of perfumes – and not a thought about sin, soul or salvation.**

**But one day her entourage passed by the church of the Martyr Julian, where there was a man of great sanctity and zeal for Christ, Bishop Nonnos. He happened to be preaching outside the doors, and Pelagia heard him. She was stricken in heart at the message of the Gospel, and could not contain her tears as she sobbed at his feet. The Bishop soon exorcised her, baptized her, fed her the Bread of Life, and rejoiced at the rebirth of this penitent soul.**

**News of her transformation spread quickly throughout the city, and a crowd gathered at the church. They complained to the Bishop and beseeched Pelagia to return to her former way of life. But she persevered in faith. Then she took her fancy clother, jewelry and gold and gave it all to the Church for distribution to the poor. She free her servants, bidding them to escape from the bondage of this sinful world.**

**On the eight day after baptism, when she laid aside her white Baptism robe, Pelagia dressed herself in a simple garment of repentance and made her way to the Holy Land. There, near the Garden of Gethsemane, she dwelt in a solitary cell and was never seen again in Antioch. She was found one day by an ascetic of the desert, asleep in Christ, and then was buried by the faithful. People came from near and far to praise God for this sinner who became a saint.**