

FOLLOWING CHRIST: A FAMILY AFFAIR

The story of the Martyr SOPHIA and her three daughters FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE is a stellar example of following Christ, no matter what the cost. The pious family lived in Rome in the early part of the 2nd century. Sophia was a widow, and she had the undaunting task of raising her three children as Christians in a pagan society. While many at that time professed their faith secretly, Sophia and her children – ages 12, 10, and 9 – practiced it openly. Their brazenness led to their arrest.

Brought before the Emperor Hadrian, these 4 brave Christians were ordered to offer incense to the Roman gods. When they refused, the cruel Roman leader had the children subjected to severe torture, forcing their mother to watch. Sophia encouraged Faith, Hope, and Love to remain strong – this they did until the bitter end, when they were beheaded before their mother’s very eyes.

As one final act of inhumanity, Sophia had to take the lifeless bodies of her children for burial herself. She took them outside the city limits and remained at their graves for three days. After this, she, too, fell asleep in the Lord, undoubtedly dying of a broken heart. For all that she was called upon to endure, St. Sophia is also viewed as a martyr by the Church, earning her “crown” through her silent suffering and forbearance. She loved her children but she loved Christ more, remembering her Saviour’s words: “He who loves mother or father or children more than Me is not worthy of Me.”