

# Holy Empresses

by [Walt Garlington](#) (November 2023)



*Byzantine Lady*, Vanessa Bell, 1912

Holy Adelaide,  
Powerful ruler  
Of many Western lands,  
In the vicissitudes  
Of your life—two times  
Of buffeting  
Followed by two times  
Of calm and blessing—  
Are reflected the history  
Of all the West:  
The cruelties of pagan  
Rome's idolatry,  
The rise of Orthodoxy,  
The fall away from Grace.  
The latter continues apace;  
Will we see another  
Peaceful Christian age?  
May God grant it!  
And may it be  
As steadfast in virtue  
As the Empress Theophano,  
Whose throne was in the East,  
In the City of Constantine,  
Who served the poor,  
And slept on the floor,  
And still works wonders  
For those pressed under.

Though she appears dead,  
There is hope yet for the West,  
Through the pure prayers of these empresses.

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