

Saint for December 19 - Lillian Trasher (1887-1961), Missionary in Egypt

*Observed 19 December*



Lillian Trasher's family background seems to have been Quaker and Roman Catholic, but her personal spiritual journey later took her into the Pentecostal movement. She went to Bible college, did some traveling evangelism, and served as a local pastor, but found her most meaningful ministry in an orphanage in the south. Her heart was devoted to the care of 'the least of these' in Christ's name. She became engaged, but, before her marriage, experienced a strong call to do the Lord's work in Africa. Her evangelist fiancé did not feel similarly called, so she left him shortly before the wedding and went to Egypt with very little money and no family support. At first, she did not know what her ministry was to be, but soon she began to be given babies to care for and used her previous experience to found the first orphanage in Egypt. She returned to the United States looking for support and funding and was there ordained by the young Assemblies of God denomination, which shared her sense of God's mission. Her orphanage grew and she became widely known and loved as a saver of children in her adopted country. Her tireless, selfless work was a great inspiration and she came to be widely known as 'the Mother of the Nile'. By the time of her death, the orphanage housed 1200 children. Today the 13-acre complex (still in the original village of Assiut) houses 650 orphans, widows, and blind women. Most of the orphans are like the very first baby, children whose mothers have died in childbirth. Lillian was buried near the orphanage and it has been reported that after her death a Muslim man from the village said, "I believe that when she dies, in spite of the fact that she is a woman and a Christian, God will take her directly to paradise."

Videos made during the 1950s to help raise funds for the orphanage can be seen on YouTube. There you can see Mother Trasher as she looked in her later years, hear her talk about her love for God and for 'the babies of Egypt', see the orphanage and many of its children. There are also recent videos of ministry at the orphanage today.

*Lessons* Genesis 21:8-21; Psalm 10:12-19; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; Luke 17:1-6

*Collect* God, whose everlasting arms support the universe: We thank you for moving the heart of Lillian Trasher to heroic hospitality on behalf of orphaned children in great need, and we pray that we also may find our hearts awakened and our compassion stirred to care for your little ones, through the example of our Savior Jesus Christ and by the energy of your Holy Spirit, who broods over the world like a mother over her children; for they live and reign with you, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.