

Mollie Brant (Konwatsijayenni)

April 16

Matron among the Mohawks, 1796 — Commemoration

Today we recall Mollie Brant, an eighteenth-century Mohawk woman known among her own people as Kon-wat'si-ja-yen'ni, who sustained them with her example of loyalty to the British Crown and the Anglican Church when they were forced to make a new homeland in Canada.

She was born into a family of chieftains and attended an Anglican mission school where she learned to speak English as fluently as her native tongue. In 1759 she became the companion of Sir William Johnson, the British agent for Indian affairs, and soon afterwards they were married according to Mohawk rites. Though the union was not recognized by English law, the white community admired her dignity and wisdom in the ways of two cultures, and continued to treat her with immense respect even after Sir William's death in 1774.

Mohawk matrons have an influential voice in the councils of their nation, and Mollie Brant played a decisive role in convincing her people to remain loyal to the British Crown during the American Revolution. But she and her family paid a terrible price for their loyalty, because the rebels destroyed her home and forced her to take her clan into exile. She eventually settled at Kingston, where the British government built her a new house and gave her a generous pension. She became a founding member of St. George's Anglican parish and died at Kingston on this date in 1796, sincerely mourned by United Empire Loyalists as well as her own people.

Sentence

Where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge;
your people shall be my people, and your God my God.

Ruth 1.16

Collect

Lord our God,
you endued your servant Mollie Brant
with the gifts of justice and loyalty,
and made her a wise and prudent mother
in the household of the Mohawk nation.
May we ever give thanks to you, our Maker,
and nurture one another
in the knowledge of your power;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Readings

Ruth 1.6-18 Psalm 80.1-7

Refrain Restore us, O God of hosts.

Matthew 12.46-50

Prayer over the Gifts

Eternal God, who made your servant Mollie Brant
a leader among her own people,
cast from this household all works of strife
and keep every harm from this table,
that our worship may accord with your will
and our gifts may befit your purpose;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Preface of a Saint

Prayer after Communion

Maker and Lover of all creation,
who strengthened Mollie Brant
to gather and guide an exiled people,
draw us towards the goal of our faith,
that we may attain the full dignity of our nature
in our true native land on high.
We ask this in the Name of Jesus Christ the Lord.