

Agatha of Sicily

Saint Name: Saint Agatha

Dates: 231-251 A.D.

Location: Sicily

Feast Day: February 5

Agatha of Sicily was born around 231 in either Catania or Palermo, Sicily to a rich noble family. She is one of the most highly venerated virgin martyrs of the Catholic Church. From a young age, Agatha dedicated her life to God and vowed to remain celibate and give herself only to Jesus and the Church. Agatha was a very desirable woman - her vow of chastity did not stop men from making unwanted advances toward her. One such man was Quintianus, a Roman prefect. He thought he could persuade her to marry him; when all his advances were rebuffed, he had Agatha arrested and brought before the judge (he himself was the judge). Quintianus expected Agatha to give in to his demands instead of facing torture and possible death, but to his consternation, she refused to renounce her vow to God. Quintianus had her imprisoned in a brothel during which she was repeatedly raped for over a month. Agatha kept calm and true to God during her torment. When Quintianus heard of her calm strength, he brought her before him again. She told him during her interrogation that to be a servant of Jesus Christ was her true freedom. Enraged, he sent her to a prison to be further tortured, hoping to instill more fear in her - this only made her stronger. Agatha was stretched on a rack, torn with iron hooks, burned and whipped. When this form of torture did not convince her to turn against Jesus, Quintianus had her breasts removed. He then sent her back to prison with orders not to be fed or administered medical attention. During the next four days, Agatha had visions of St. Peter, who comforted her and healed her wounds through God. Quintianus ignored the miraculous cure of her wounds and had her stripped naked and rolled over hot coals. Agatha prayed, "Lord, thy Creator, you have ever protected me from the cradle; You have taken me from the love of the world and given me patience to suffer: receive now my soul."



Saint Agatha died around the year 251 at 20 years old. She is the patron of breast cancer, fire, rape victims, and wet nurses. Her feast day is celebrated on February 5. Saint Agatha is one of seven women who, along with the Blessed Virgin Mary, are commemorated by name in the Canon of the Mass.