

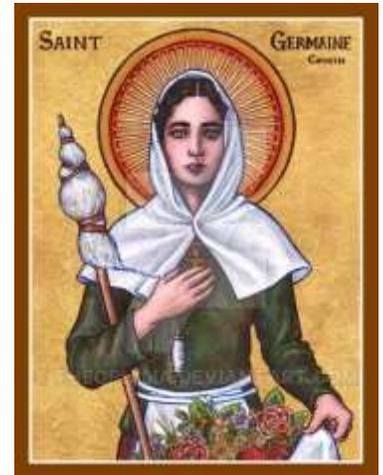
Germaine Cousin

Saint Name: Saint Germaine Cousin

Dates: 1579 – June 15, 1601

Location: France

Feast Day: June 15



Germaine was born in the remote French village of Pibrac in 1579. From birth her life was filled with sickness and suffering. Born with a deformed hand and left without a mother until her father remarried, she received no affection from either her father or stepmother, Hortense. She was despised and abused her both physically and mentally. Given cast-off rags to wear and no shoes to protect her, her feet were frost-bitten in the winter and bloody in summer. Her father pretended not to notice that Germaine had been given so little food that out of necessity she had learned to crawl to the dog's dish to eat or drink. Her abuse includes being left in a drain while her mother tended to other matters. The lack of care that Germaine endured as a young child is mortifying. Her father did not protect her nor did he speak out when Hortense poured boiling water on Germaine's legs. This neglect and abuse continued as Germaine grew from toddler to child. It was not surprising that she became even more ill. Her suffering did not stop with abuse and neglect; she was also afflicted with a disease known as scrofula, a kind of tuberculosis that causes the neck glands to swell. Sores began to appear and in her weakened health she fell prey to every disease of the times due to the unsanitary conditions under which she lived. The more Germaine's health declined, the more she was resented. She was shunned by children her own age and ignored by adults. The only education she received was instructions required to make her First Holy Communion. She was at peace only when she was at Mass, which she attended daily. When Germaine was older, she was entrusted with the keeping of the sheep. She spent long days in the field but instead of being lonely, she found a friend in God. She knew only the basics of her faith, but very day without fail, she would leave her sheep and go to Mass. She made a simple knotted rosary and prayed a simple prayer: "*Dear God, please don't let me be too hungry or too thirsty. Help me to please my mother. And help me to please you.*" Out of Germaine's simple and pure trust in God grew a profound holiness in her. No matter how little Germaine had, she shared it with others. Her scraps of food were given to beggars. But most startling of all was that Germaine found forgiveness and love for the woman she should have hated. Hortense, furious about her daughter's holiness and kindness spied on her to catch her doing something wrong. One cold day, after throwing out a beggar the Germaine had let sleep in the barn, Hortense caught Germaine carrying something bundled up in her apron. Certain the Germaine had stolen bread to feed the beggar, Hortense chased and screamed at the child then beat her senseless. Germaine's apron fell open and there in the folds of her apron laid beautiful flowers that no one had expected to see for months. When asked where she found them, Germaine's answer was "Please accept this flower, Mother - God sends it to you in sign of his forgiveness." The village people began to talk about this holy child, even Hortense began to soften in her feelings toward her. Hortense eventually invited Germaine back to sleep in the house, but Germaine preferred her straw bed and continued to sleep in it. Germaine was found dead at the age of 22 on June 15, 1601. She lived a simple, humbling life.

When her body was exhumed forty years later, it was found to be undecayed - as is often the case with incorruptible bodies of saints. After her body was found in this state, the villagers started to speak again of what she had been like and what she had done. Soon miracles were attributed to her intercession and the clamor for her canonization began. The most unlikely of saints became recognized by the Church. Germaine did not martyr herself or build a church. What she did do was to live a life devoted to God and her neighbors no matter what happened to her. This is all God asks of anyone. St Germain is the Patron of child abuse, the disabled and disfigured. She was Beatified May 7, 1864 and canonized by Pope Pius IX on June 29, 1867. We celebrate her feast day on June 15.