



St. Agatha, also known as Agatha of Sicily, is one of the most highly venerated virgin martyrs of the Catholic Church. It is believed that she was born around 231 in either Catania or Palermo, Sicily to a rich and noble family.

From her very early years, the notably beautiful Agatha dedicated her life to God. She became a consecrated virgin, a state in life where young women choose to remain celibate and give themselves wholly to Jesus and the Church in a life of prayer and service. That did not stop men from desiring her and making unwanted advances toward her.

However, one of the men who desired Agatha, whose name was Quintianus, because he was of a high diplomatic ranking, thought he could force her to turn away from her vow and force her to marry. His persistent proposals were consistently spurned by Agatha, so Quintianus, knowing she was a Christian during the persecution of Decius, had her arrested and brought before the judge. He was the Judge.

He expected her to give in to his demands when she was faced with torture and possible death, but she simply reaffirmed her belief in God by praying: "Jesus Christ, Lord of all, you see my heart, and you know my desires. Possess all that I am. I am your sheep: make me worthy to overcome the devil." With tears falling from her eyes, she prayed for courage.

To force her to change her mind, Quintianus had her imprisoned - in a brothel. Agatha never lost her confidence in God, even though she suffered a month of assaults and efforts to get her to abandon her vow to God and go against her virtue. Quintianus heard of her calm strength and ordered that she be brought before him once again. During her interrogation, she told him that to be a servant of Jesus Christ was her true freedom.

Enraged, Quintianus sent her off to prison instead of back to the brothel -- a move intended to make her even more afraid, but it was probably a great relief to her.

Agatha continued to proclaim Jesus as her Savior, Lord, Life and Hope. Quintianus ordered her to be tortured. He had her stretched on a rack to be torn with iron hooks, burned with torches, and whipped. Noticing Agatha was enduring all the torture with a sense of cheer, he commanded she be subjected to a worse form of torture? This evil man ordered that her breasts be cut off.

He then sent her back to prison with an order of no food or medical attention. But the Lord gave her all the care she needed. He was her Sacred Physician and protector. Agatha had a vision of the apostle, St. Peter, who comforted her and healed her wounds through his prayers.

After four days, Quintianus ignored the miraculous cure of her wounds. He had her stripped naked and rolled over naked over hot coals which were mixed with sharp shards. When she was returned to prison, Agatha prayed, "Lord, my 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."

Agatha is believed to have passed into Heaven around the year 251.

She is commonly featured in religious art with shears, tongs, or breasts on a plate.

St. Agatha is the patron saint of Sicily, bell founders, breast cancer patients, Palermo, rape victims, and wet nurses. She is also considered to be a powerful intercessor when people suffer from fires. Her feast day is celebrated on February 5.

**Prayer:**

Saint Agatha, you suffered sexual assault and indignity because of your faith and purity. Help heal all those who are survivors of sexual assault and protect those women who are in danger. Amen



Paul was the son of a Japanese military leader. He was born at Tounucumada, Japan, was educated at the Jesuit college of Anziquiama, joined the Jesuits in 1580, and became known for his eloquent preaching. He was crucified on February 5 with twenty-five other Catholics during the persecution of Christians under the Taiko, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, ruler of Japan in the name of the emperor. Among the Japanese layment who suffered the same fate were: Francis, a carpenter who was arrested while watching the executions and then crucified; Gabriel, the nineteen year old son of the Franciscan's porter; Leo Kinuya, a twenty-eight year old carpenter from Miyako; Diego Kisai (or Kizayemon), temporal coadjutor of the Jesuits; Joachim Sakakibara, cook for the Franciscans at Osaka; Peter Sukejiro, sent by a Jesuit priest to help the prisoners, who was then arrested; CosmasTakeya from Owari, who had preached in Osaka; and Ventura from Miyako, who had been baptized by the Jesuits, gave up his Catholicism on the death of his father, became a bonze, and was brought back to the Church by the Franciscans. They were all canonized as the Martyrs of Japan in 1862. Their feast day is February 6th.

**SAINTS FUN FACTS** by John Sheppard

St. Paul Miki was the son of a Japanese military leader. He became a Jesuit in 1859 and was known for his eloquent preaching. He and twenty five other Catholics were crucified on February 5th during the persecution of Christians in the name of the Japanese emperor.

They were all Canonized as the Martyrs of Japan in 1862 and their feast day is February 6th.

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Jerome Emiliani lay chained in the dark dirty dungeon. Only a short time before he had been a military commander for Venice in charge of a fortress. He didn't care much about God because he didn't need him -- he had his own strength and the strength of his soldiers and weapons. When Venice's enemies, the League of Cambrai, captured the fortress, he was dragged off and imprisoned. There in the dungeon, Jerome decided to get rid of the chains that bound him. He let go of his worldly attachments and embraced God.

When he finally was able to escape, he hung his metal chains in the nearby church of Treviso -- in gratitude not only for being freed from physical prison but from his spiritual dungeon as well.

After a short time as mayor of Treviso he returned his home in Venice where he studied for the priesthood. The war may have been over but it was followed by the famine and plague war's devastation often brought. Thousands suffered in his beloved city. Jerome devoted himself to service again -- this time, not to the military but the poor and suffering around him. He felt a special call to help the orphans who had no one to care for them. All the loved ones who would have protected them and comforted them had been taken by sickness or starvation. He would become their parent, their family.

Using his own money, he rented a house for the orphans, fed them, clothed them, and educated them. Part of his education was to give them the first known catechetical teaching by question and answer. But his constant devotion to the suffering put him in danger too and he fell ill from the plague himself. When he recovered, he had the ideal excuse to back away, but instead his illness seemed to take the last links of the chain from his soul. Once again he interpreted his suffering to be a sign of how little the ambitions of the world mattered.

He committed his whole life and all he owned to helping others. He founded orphanages in other cities, a hospital, and a shelter for prostitutes. This grew into a congregation of priests and brothers that was named after the place where they had a house: the Clerks Regular of Somascha. Although they spent time educating other young people, their primary work was always Jerome's first love -- helping orphans. His final chains fell away when he again fell ill while taking care of the sick. He died in 1537 at the age of 56.

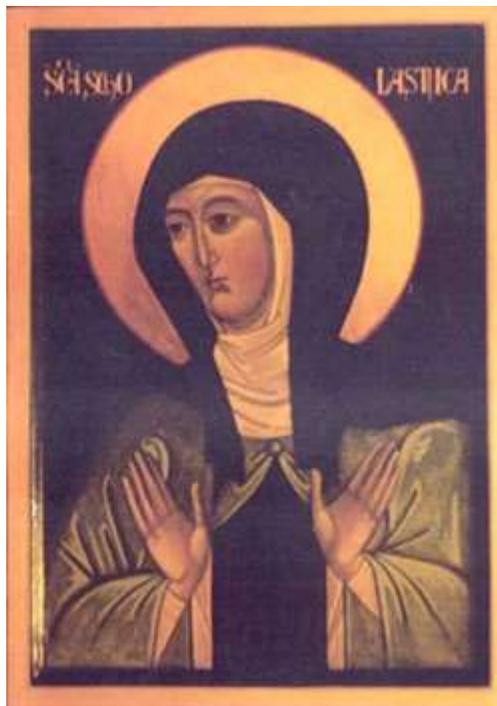
He is the patron saint of abandoned children and orphans.

#### **In His Footsteps:**

Become a foster parent. Millions of children need the love and care of a foster family. Contact your local Family Services agency or Catholic Charities to find out how you can help.

#### **Prayer:**

Saint Jerome Emiliani, watch over all children who are abandoned or unloved. Give us the courage to show them God's love through our care. Help us to lose the chains that keep us from living the life God intended for us. Amen



St. Scholastica, sister of St. Benedict, consecrated her [life](#) to [God](#) from her earliest youth. After her brother went to Monte Cassino, where he established his famous monastery, she took up her abode in the neighborhood at Plombariola, where she founded and governed a monastery of nuns, about five miles from that of St. Benedict, who, it appears, also directed his sister and her nuns.

She visited her brother once a year, and as she was not allowed to enter his monastery, he went in company with some of his brethren to meet her at a house some distance away. These visits were spent in conferring together on spiritual matters. On one occasion they had passed the [time](#) as usual in [prayer](#) and pious conversation and in the evening they sat down to take their reflection. [St. Scholastica](#) begged her brother to remain until the next day. [St. Benedict](#) refused to spend the night outside his monastery.

She had recourse to [prayer](#) and a furious thunderstorm burst so that neither [St. Benedict](#) nor any of his companions could return home. They spent the night in spiritual conferences. The next morning they parted to meet no more on earth.

Three days later [St. Scholastica](#) died, and her holy brother beheld her [soul](#) in a vision as it ascended into heaven. He sent his brethren to bring her body to his monastery and laid it in the [tomb](#) he had prepared for himself. She died about the year 543, and [St. Benedict](#) followed her soon after.

Her [feast day](#) is February 10th.