



Roman Martyrology: At Catania, in Sicily, in the time of the emperor Decius and the judge Quinctian, the birthday of St. Agatha, virgin and martyr. After being buffeted, imprisoned, tortured, racked, dragged over pieces of earthenware and burning coals, and having her breasts cut off, she consummated her sacrifice in prison while engaged in prayer.

Etymology: Derived from Greek meaning "good".

SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Agatha was born in Sicily, of rich and noble parents—a child of benediction from the first, for she was promised to her parents before her birth, and consecrated from her earliest in fancy to God. In the midst of dangers and temptations she served Christ in purity of body and soul, and she died for the love of chastity.

Quintanus, who governed Sicily under the Emperor Decius, had heard the rumor of her beauty and wealth, and he made the laws against the Christians a pretext for summoning her from Palermo to Catania, where he was at the time. 'Jesus Christ!' she cried, as she set out on this dreaded journey, "All that I am is thine; preserve me against the tyrant."

And Our Lord did indeed preserve one who had given herself so utterly to Him. He kept her pure and undefiled while she was imprisoned for a whole month under charge of an evil woman. He gave her strength to reply to the offer of her life and safety, if she would but consent to sin, "Christ alone is my life and my salvation'

When Quintanus turned from passion to cruelty, and cut off her breasts. Our Lord sent the Prince of his apostles to heal her. And when, after she had been rolled naked upon potsherds, she asked that her torments might be ended, her spouse heard her prayer and took her to Himself.

St. Agatha gave herself without reserve to Jesus Christ she followed him in virginal purity, and then looked to Him for protection. And down to this day Christ has shown His tender regard for the very body of St. Agatha. Again and again, during the eruptions of

Mount Etna, the people of Catania have exposed her veil for public veneration, and found safety by this means; and in modern times, on opening the tomb in which her body lies waiting for the resurrection, they beheld the skin still entire, and felt the sweet fragrance which issued from this temple of the Holy Ghost.