



Saint Agatha of Sicily
Virgin Martyr
Feast Day 5 February
c. 231-251 AD

St. Agatha is the patron saint of bell founders, breast cancer patients, bakers, wet nurses, jewelers, rape victims, single laywomen, and victims of torture and the people of Catania, Gallipoli, and Molise in Italy; Malta; San Marino; and Zamarramala and Escatron in Spain. She is invoked against sterility, natural disasters, fire, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions.

Fifteen-year-old Agatha, from a wealthy and noble family, made a vow of virginity and rejected the advances of a Roman prefect during the persecutions of Decius. Knowing she was a Christian, the spurned prefect reported her to the authorities. She was sent to a brothel, imprisoned, stretched on a rack, torn with iron hooks, burned with torches, whipped, and had her breasts torn off with tongs. Steadfast in her devotion and resolve, Agatha was then sentenced to be burnt at the stake. An earthquake prevented this, and she was instead sent to prison, where St. Peter the Apostle appeared to her and healed her wounds. Agatha died in prison.



Saint Bona of Pisa
Feast Day 29 May
c. 1156-1207

St. Bona is the patron saint of travelers, couriers, guides, pilgrims, and flight attendants and the people of Pisa, Italy.

An Augustinian tertiary, Bona, at 14, made the first of her many journeys, going to see her father who was a crusader near Jerusalem. Returning home, she was captured by Muslim pirates, wounded, and imprisoned. Ransomed by some of her countrymen, she completed her trip home. Shortly afterwards, she set out with a large number of other pilgrims on the long and dangerous journey to Santiago de Compostela, where St. James the Greater is honored. She had a special devotion to this saint, who had appeared to her as a child. Along the way, she helped with difficulties, encouraged those who were discouraged, provided medical aid, and invited all to prayer and penance. She was made one of the official guides of this route by the Knights of St. James and successfully completed this trip nine times. She also made pilgrimages to Rome and to the Shrine of Monte Sant'Angelo sul Gargano. Her body is preserved in the Church of San Marino in Pisa.



Saint Catherine of Alexandria
Virgin Martyr
Feast Day 25 November
c. 287-305 AD

St. Catherine is the patron saint of single women, potters, spinners, wheelwrights, archivists, dying people, educators, girls, jurists, knife sharpeners, lawyers, librarians, maidens, milliners, nurses, philosophers, preachers, scholars, students, schoolchildren, scribes, secretaries, spinsters, and theologians.

The daughter of the governor of Alexandria, Catherine, from a young age, devoted herself to study. A vision of the Virgin Mary and the child Jesus persuaded her to become a Christian. When the persecutions began under the emperor Maxentius, she went to him and rebuked him for his cruelty. He summoned 50 of his best pagan philosophers and orators to debate with her, hoping that they would refute her Christian beliefs, but Catherine won every argument. Several were so taken with her eloquence they declared themselves Christians and were put to death at once.

Catherine was then imprisoned and scourged so cruelly and for so long that her whole body was covered in wounds. Spectators wept with pity, but Catherine stood with her eyes raised to heaven without giving sign of suffering or fear. The emperor ordered her to be imprisoned without food. During her incarceration, angels tended her wounds, and she was fed daily by a dove from Heaven. Christ visited her, encouraging her bravery and promising her the crown of everlasting glory. More than 200 people came to see her, including Maxentius' wife. All converted to Christianity and were subsequently martyred. Twelve days later, when her dungeon was opened, a bright light and fragrant perfume filled it. Catherine came forth even more radiant and beautiful. Maxentius then tried to win the beautiful and wise princess by proposing marriage, but she refused, declaring that her spouse was Jesus Christ. The furious emperor condemned Catherine to death on a spiked breaking wheel, but at her touch, it shattered. She was then ordered beheaded, and at her execution a milk-like substance, rather than blood, flowed from her neck.



Saint Dymphna
Virgin Martyr
Feast Day 30 May
c. 7th century AD

St. Dymphna is the patron saint of those suffering mental illness, anxiety, depression, those who have lost their parents, mental health professionals, runways, and victims of incest and domestic abuse.

Born in Ireland to a devout Christian mother and a pagan king, Dymphna, at 14, consecrated her life to Christ. Shortly thereafter, her mother died, and in deep mourning, her father suffered a mental decline. Pressed to remarry, the king finally agreed on the condition his bride would be as beautiful as his wife had been. Searching fruitlessly, the king began to desire his daughter. When Dymphna learned of her father's intentions, she swore to uphold her vows and fled to Belgium where she built a hospice for the poor and sick. Learning of her whereabouts, the king pursued her, and when she refused his incestuous advances, he struck off her head. She died at 15.



Saint Eulalia of Merida
Virgin Martyr
Feast Day 10 December
c. 290-304 AD

St. Eulalia is the patron saint of runaways, torture victims, and widows and the people of Merida and Oviedo, Spain. She is invoked against inclement weather.

A devout Christian, Eulalia, age 14, professed her faith, insulted the pagan gods and the emperor, and challenged the authorities to martyr her. This they did. She was stripped, tortured with hooks and torches, and finally burnt at the stake. She taunted her torturers all the while, and when she finally expired from smoke inhalation, a dove flew from her mouth, and a miraculous snow covered her naked body: its whiteness an indication of her sainthood.



Saint Frideswide
Fest Day 19 October
c. 650-727 AD

St. Frideswide is the patron saint of Oxford University and the people of Oxford, England.

The child of King Didan and Safrida, Frideswide was brought up in holiness. When she refused the hand of the Saxon King Algar, he attempted to abduct her, despite her vow of chastity. Frideswide cut her hair and hid in a pig's cote for three years, using it as her monastic cell. Here her prayers brought forth a spring of healing water. Algar continued to pursue her. Eventually, upon finding her, he was struck blind. Frideswide restored his sight when he vowed to leave her in peace.



Saint Genevieve
Feast Day 3 January
c. 420-512

St. Genevieve is the patron saint of the French National Gendarmerie, young girls, and the people of Paris, France. She is invoked against disasters and fever.

Born in Nanterre, near Paris, Genevieve was only seven years old when she was singled out in a crowd by St. Germain, who told her of her future sanctity. He led her to a church and consecrated her as a virgin to God. She led a life of prayer and charity, as well as self-imposed austerity. In 451, as Attila the Hun approached the city, Genevieve led the Parisians in prayer and fasting. Miraculously the army turned away. She later prevented famine by penetrating a military blockade with boatloads of grain.



Saint Hildegard of Bingen

Doctor of the Church

Feast Day 17 September

c. 1098- 1179 AD

St. Hildegard is the patron saint of ecologists, musicians, and writers.

Also known as the Sibyl of the Rhine, and considered by scholars to be the founder of scientific natural history in Germany, Hildegard was a true polymath. She was a writer, composer, philosopher, mystic, and visionary. As abbess, she led a community of nuns and founded two monasteries. She wrote theological, botanical and medicinal works as well as letters, hymns, and antiphons for the liturgy. She wrote poems and supervised the miniature illuminations in the manuscript of her first work. She is one of the best-known composers of sacred monophony (songs without harmony), the most recorded in modern history. There are more surviving chants by Hildegard than by any other composer from the Middle Ages and one of the few to have written both music and words. While regional calendars of the Roman Catholic Church have listed her a saint for centuries, she was named a Doctor of the Church in 2012 “in recognition of “her holiness of life and the originality of her teaching.”



Saint Ia of Cornwall
Virgin Martyr
Feast Day 3 February
c. 5 Century AD

St. Ia is the patron saint of the people of St. Ives, Cornwall, England

With the intention of spreading the word of Christ, Irish princess Ia made plans to travel to Cornwall with Saints Fingar and Piala. Fearing she was too young for such a hazardous journey, they left without her. Grief-stricken, Ia noticed a small leaf floating in the water. Touching it with her rod, she watched as it grew larger. Trusting God, she embarked upon the leaf and was carried across the Irish Sea, reaching Cornwall before the others. She set up an anchorage not far from where she landed and lived an austere and prayerful existence. She was martyred under the persecutions of Breton prince Tewdwr.



Saint Julien of Norwich
Feast Day 13 May
c. 1343-1416

St. Julien is the patron saint of contemplatives and cats.

“All shall be well and all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well.”

Julien was a theologian, anchoress, mystic and author.
Revelations of Divine Love is the first book in any form of English known to have had a female author.



Saint Kateri Tekakwitha
Feast Day 14 July
c. 1656-1676 AD

St. Kateri Tekakwitha is the patron saint of ecologists, the environment, people in exile, orphans, outsiders, people ridiculed for their piety, and Native Americans. She is the Protectress of Canada.

Known as “the Lily of the Mohawks,” Kateri was the daughter of an Algonquin mother and a Mohawk chief. Smallpox ravaged her village when she was four years old, killing her family and leaving her scarred (a source of humiliation) and with impaired vision. She was adopted by her aunt whose husband was a prominent figure in the Turtle Clan of the Mohawk nation. She became skilled at beadwork and basket-weaving and undertook all handiwork for the community. As was custom, she was engaged at 13, but she made clear her wish to remain single. At 18 she began instruction with a Jesuit priest, who wrote that she did everything she could to stay holy in a secular society, often causing conflicts with her longhouse residents. Her retention of Iroquois ascetic practices, which in many cases exceeded the severity of European Catholic penances of the same time period, also caused controversy. She is quoted as saying, “I will willingly abandon this miserable body to hunger and suffering, provided that my soul may have its ordinary nourishment.” She broached the idea of forming a Native religious order, but it was rejected by the Jesuit missionaries. Kateri’s health failed, and she died at 24. Her scars disappeared and her beauty restored. In the weeks after her death, she is said to have appeared to her mentor, to a friend, and to a priest. Pilgrimages to the site of her tomb began, and healing miracles were attributed to her.



Saint Lutgardis
Feast Day 16 June
c. 1182-1246 AD

St. Lutgardis is the patron saint of birth, blind people, childbirth, disabled people, and the Flemish National Movement and the people of Flanders, Belgium.

The first known woman stigmatic, Lutgardis was a mystic and a visionary. She was admitted into a Benedictine monastery at 12 because her dowry had been lost, and the cloister represented an acceptable alternative to the disgrace of an unmarried life. At 20, she was visited with a vision of Christ and made her vows. Accounts of her life state that she experienced ecstasies, levitated, and dripped blood from her forehead and hair when entranced. She was known to have shown gifts of healing and prophecy, and was adept at teaching the Gospels. When, in a visitation, Christ asked what gift she should desire, she asked for His heart. Christ then removed her heart and replaced it with His own, at the same time hiding her heart within His breast.



Saint Martha
Feast Day 29 July
died c. 80 AD

St. Martha is the patron saint of butlers, cooks, dietitians, domestic servants, homemakers, housemaids, housewives, innkeepers, laundry workers, servants, single laywomen, and travelers, and the people of Tarascon and Villajoyosa, Spain; and Pateros, Malagasang Secundo, Imus, and Cavite, Philippines.

The sister of Lazarus and Mary, Martha was an early and faithful follower of Christ. “Worried and troubled” by the responsibilities of serving Jesus and his disciples, she complained that her sister was sitting at Christ’s feet while she did all the work. Jesus responded that her sister had chosen the better way, emphasizing that hearing the word of God is more important than any earthly consideration. Tradition has it that after the resurrection, Martha went to France to spread the new faith. There she found a town beset by a dragon. Martha charmed the beast with hymns and prayers and led the tamed dragon back to the city. In Spain, Martha caused a flash flood to rescue a city besieged by pirates.



Nusaybah bint Ka'ab
Feast Day c. 7th Century AD

The first woman warrior of Islam, Nusaybah bint Ka'ab fought beside the Prophet in the Battle of Uhud, where she sustained at least 12 major wounds. After her conversion, she devoted herself to the education and training of women. In her 60s she fought with the Muslim army and lost her arm in battle. An advocate for Muslim women, Nusaybah bint Ka'ab asked the Prophet why the Quran only mentioned men and seemed to deprive women of importance. He responded that what was true for men was also true for women. Later, a verse in the Quran was revealed, enshrining the spiritual equality of men and women (Chapter 33, Verse 35).



Saint Olga of Kiev
Feast Day 11 July
born c. 903- died 963 AD

St. Olga is the patron saint of widows and converts. She is invoked by those who need comfort in their hour of need.

A vicious and vengeful adversary as well as a brilliant military tactician, Olga used murderous methods that were studied by the US Military during World War II. She secured the throne for her infant son, acting as his regent. She was the first ruler of Kiev Rus' to adopt Christianity, and her efforts to convert the rest of her people earned her the title of Isapostolos: Equal to the Apostles.



Saint Philomena

Virgin Martyr

Feast Day 11 August

c. 291-304

St. Philomena is the patron saint of infants, babies, and youth.

Known as “The Wonder Worker,” Philomena was a Greek princess who took a vow of virginity for Christ’s sake. Refusing to marry the Roman emperor, Diocletian, she was scourged, drowned with an anchor, and shot with arrows before the emperor finally had her beheaded. Her remains were discovered in 1802 in the Catacomb of Priscilla in Rome. They became the focus of widespread devotion. Several miracles were credited to Philomena’s intercession. From 1837-1961, celebration of her liturgical feast was approved for some places. In 1961, the Holy See ordered that the name of Philomena be removed from all liturgical calendars.



Saint Quiteria
Virgin Martyr
Feast Day 22 May
c. 2nd century AD

St. Quiteria is the patron saint of Higuera, Spain; Meca, Portugal; and Kuthenkuly, India. She is invoked against rabies.

Quiteria was the youngest of nine sisters (nonuplets!) born to a noble woman who was so disgusted at having given birth to nine children (like an animal), she ordered them drowned. Disobeying, their nurse took them to a remote village where they were raised as good Christians. Once grown, they traveled together with Quiteria as their leader, breaking Christians out of jail and smashing Roman idols. They were caught and returned to their father, who demanded they renounce their faith and marry. Quiteria fled (along with two sisters) and while pursued held rabid dogs at bay with the power of her saintly voice. Eventually, she was caught and beheaded.



Ruth Bader Ginsberg
Birthday 15 March
1933-2020

The “Notorious RBG” was a lifelong trailblazer for human rights and gender equality. She was “a thinker whose ideas have profoundly shaped human self-understanding and advancement in a rapidly changing world” (Berggruen Institute, which awarded her the 2019 prize for Philosophy and Culture).



Saint Solange

Virgin Martyr and a Cephalophore

Feast Day 10 May

c. 9th century

St. Solane is the patron saint of rape victims and shepherds and the people of Berry and Bourges, France. She is invoked in times of drought.

Born to a poor, devout family, the shepherdess Solange consecrated her virginity at seven. Her mere presence was said to cure the sick and exorcise devils. The son of a count was taken with her beauty, and when she rejected his suit, he tried to abduct her. Solange struggled so violently that she fell from his horse. Enraged, her abductor beheaded her. According to legend, her severed head invoked three times the Holy Name of Jesus. Solange then picked up her head and walked with it as far as the Church of Saint Martin, dropping dead after receiving last rites.



Saint Thais
Feast Day 8 October
c. 4th century AD

St. Thais is the patron saint of sinners.

A wealthy and beautiful harlot living in Egypt, Thais was a public sinner. After making inquiries about the Christian religion, she converted. When a monk in disguise paid for entry into her chamber in order to challenge her, he found she already believed in God. Following her acceptance into the Church, she was given a convent cell where she lived in solitude as penance for her sins. Three days after her release, she died.



Saint Ulphia
Feast Day 31 January
c. 711-750 AD

St. Ulphia is the patron saint of amphibians and keepers-of-amphibians and the people of Amiens, France.

When frogs were accused of loud croaking that prevented the local priest from properly saying mass, their extermination was ordered. St. Ulphia promised the frogs she would protect them and they hid under her robes and clung to her legs. She meditated and prayed until she understood their song. Then she spoke to the frogs, telling them that they must be still. To this day, the frogs near the oratory of St. Ulphia are, indeed, quiet.



Saint Victoria of Albitina

Virgin Martyr

Feast Day 12 February

c. late 3rd century-304 AD

St. Victoria is the patron saint of Anticoli, Italy.

Born of north African nobility, St. Victoria refused an arranged marriage to a pagan, and she leapt from a window on her wedding day. She survived and was arrested for her faith. She argued with the judge at her trial and was later executed with 45 other Christians. Her uncorrupted remains lie in a glass case in Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome.



Wangari Muta Maathai
Feast Day 1 April
1940-2011 AD

A Kenyan social, environmental, and political activist, Wangari Muta Maathai founded the Green Belt Movement, an environmental NGO focused on the planting of trees, environmental conservation, and women's rights. Her work, often considered subversive, was unwelcomed by officials in her home country, where she was beaten and jailed for her activism. In 2004, she became the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. The committee commended her "holistic approach to sustainable development that embraces democracy, human rights, and women's rights in particular."



Saint Xenia of St. Petersburg

A Fool for Christ

Feast Day 24 January

c. 1719-1830

St. Xenia is the patron saint of the people of St. Petersburg, Russia. She is invoked for missing children and for those seeking employment, a spouse, and a home.

At the death of her husband, Xenia spent the next 45 years wandering the streets of St. Petersburg (usually wearing her late husband's military uniform) and giving away all her worldly goods to the poor.



Blessed Yvette of Huy
Feast Day 13 January
1158-1228 AD

Blessed Yvette is the patron of brides, large families, and widows

Venerated as a Christian prophet and anchoress, Yvette was forced into an arranged marriage at 13 and bore three children (one dying in infancy), before she was widowed at 18. She then began to live a more spiritual life: attending mass regularly, giving to the poor and deciding not to remarry. Leaving her two sons in the care of their grandfather, she retired to a leper hospital to tend the inmates and follow her religious calling. Ten years later she became an anchoress and offered guidance to pilgrims. Known for her insight into the divine, she was able to summon priests and even the dean of her local church and confront them about their behavior. After a time, her power threatened the male clergy and canons, and she was denounced. Never formally canonized as a saint, she is classed as “Blessed” by the Catholic Church.



Saint Lucy Yi Zhenmei
Virgin Martyr
Feast Day 19 February
1815-1862 AD

St. Lucy Yi Zhenmei is the unofficial patron saint of catechists.

A devout and studious child, Zhenmei took a vow of chastity at 12, knowing that she wished to devote her life to God. She had a strong and disciplined prayer life and worked as a catechist, teaching local children, and later women, the faith. Zhenmei refused payment for this work, saying she taught for the glory of God. Despite the hatred and persecution against Christians in Chongqing, she cofounded a mission there in 1862. Shortly thereafter, Zhenmei and five other catechists were arrested for the crime of being Christian. She and her companions refused to renounce their faith and were executed without trial by beheading.