

ST. AGATHA, VIRGIN/MARTYR

FEAST DAY: FEBRUARY 5

Saint Agatha died in 251 during the Christian persecutions under Decius, which lasted from 240 to 251. She was very pretty and was from a wealthy family. So lovely was Saint Agatha that she unwittingly caught the attention of Quintian, the Governor of Sicily. Agatha refused Quintian, however, having taken a Christian vow of purity and devotion to Christ. Quintian had Agatha imprisoned and brutally tortured and her breasts were severed. She is said to have been healed of her wounds when St. Peter appeared to her in prison. Quintian's tortures continued and she finally died unshaken in her dedication to Christ.

Devotion to her spread beyond Sicily and was so fervent in the early Church that St. Agatha's name came to be included in the first Eucharistic Prayer. She is honored for her courage in suffering and her devotion and commitment to Christ. St. Agatha is the patron saint of Sicily, nurses, bakers, miners, jewelers, Alpine guides, and those suffering from breast cancer. She is also the protector against earthquakes, volcanoes, fires and thunderstorms.

Nowhere in the world is the feast of St. Agatha honored as it is in the village of Catania, in Sicily. Starting on the 2nd of February and ending on the 5th, the Saint Agatha festival is celebrated by the entire village. (Check out the story on the Internet.)

<http://catholiccuisine.blogspot.com/2009/02/saint-agatha-rolls.html>



ACTIVITY: Plan and serve an Italian meal to honor St Agatha on February 5th.

During the meal tell the story of St Agatha. *Agatha rolls* (recipe on source above) made in Sicily in honor of the feast. At the end of your meal pray together St. Agatha's Prayer as a segway to the longer prayer: *Jesus Christ, Lord of all things! You see our hearts, you know our desires. Possess all that we are. Make us worthy to overcome all evil.*

CALL TO PRAYER: Psalm 34 (alternate sides)

Antiphon: "Come, Bride of Christ, and receive the crown which the Lord has prepared for you forever."

Leader: "The Bridegroom is here let us go out to meet Christ the Lord." (Move away from the dinner table to the prayer center. Light a tall candle which represents the presence of Christ.)

Side One: My soul rejoices in God, let the humble hear me and be glad.

Glorify our God with me and let us exalt God's name together.

I sought God who answered me and freed me from all my fears.

Side Two: Those who look to God are radiant; their faces are never put to shame.

The poor called; God heard and saved them out of all their troubles.

The angel of God encamps around those who revere God and rescues them.

Side One: O taste and see that God is good! Blessed are those who trust in God.

Side Two: Revere God, all you saints, for there is nothing lacking to those who fear God.

READING: MATTHEW 25: 1-13

REFLECTION: How does the Scripture parable of the *Ten Virgins* apply to our lives as women living in the twenty-first century? How does the story of *St. Agatha* speak to women today?

RESPONSE TO READING

(Words adapted from "Standing On Their Shoulders," by Mary Lax Smith SCL, as printed in papers entitled *Woman Song III*, pp. 114-115.)

(A small candle is lighted from the Christ candle at the beginning of each reading.)

- Reader 1 I am woman made in the image of the God of compassion, nurtured by the Mother of God whose eagle's wings sustain me in my fragility, my fears, my risking
- Reader 2 I am woman nurtured in faith by women through the centuries, women who walked with Jesus Who served as He called them to do, who stayed with him through crucifixion, who rejoiced in resurrection whose story is now being recovered — revealed for all women
- Reader 3 I am woman who carried the Jesus story beyond the Jewish border — Mary of Magdala, apostle to the apostles — Martha whose faith knew Jesus as Messiah and shared the Good News
- Reader 4 I am woman who witnessed to the Jesus story by the shedding of blood — Agatha, Agnes, Lucy, Perpetua and Barbara
- Reader 5 I am woman who took up the Jesus story lived it in silence, subverted a church which would often try to forget them — Julie and Mechtild, Hildegard and Gertrude and most especially Teresa
- Reader 6 I am woman who brought Christ to others — Catherine of Siena, Mary Ward and Louise deMarillac and Angela Merici — women who inspired other women to continue the story
- Reader 7 I am twentieth-century woman who believed in women's power within — Elizabeth Seton and Catherine Spaulding, Sojourner Truth and Susan B. Anthony, Dorothy Day...our mothers and our sisters who each day step forth to nurture in compassion those same people Jesus chose: the poor, illiterate, marginalized, sick, rejected.
- Reader 8 Are not these and all women God's incarnation in our world, the mother's face of God present for us all through all times? All we need do is to be aware that God can be revealed in those least likely, and open our eyes to find Her in these women on whose shoulders we stand.
- All: BLESSED BE A GOD WHOSE MANY FACES REVEAL US TO OURSELVES!

CLOSING SONG: "I AM WOMAN" by Helen Reddy

St. Agatha Cake



Prepared by Sister Maryann Bremke, C.P.P.S.