

January 21

St. Agnes

Late 3rd Century • Italy

St. Agnes was an early Christian virgin who died under the Roman Emperor Diocletian's violent persecution of Christians.

Born of the Roman nobility and raised a Christian, Agnes had many suitors who wished to marry her. But Agnes was only thirteen. She did not love these men and wished to remain pure, so she refused each and every one of them. Angry at the refusals, the rejected suitors reported her to the Roman officials as a Christian.

Roman soldiers arrested Agnes and tried to force her to give up her Faith. The soldiers even tried to force Agnes to sin against purity, but Jesus miraculously protected her. Even though Agnes was young, she was strong. Nothing could make her deny her love for Jesus. And so she died as a witness to Christ.

The early Christians dearly loved their young, virgin martyr. They buried her body near a Roman road, and Christians would pray at her tomb. Many who prayed there reported miracles that happened through Agnes's intercession.

In Christian art, Agnes is shown with a white lamb. This is because her name, Agnes, means "lamb" in Latin. The snow-white wool of a lamb also represents purity, and Agnes was pure in defending her love for Jesus. To this day, we pray to St. Agnes in the Roman Canon of the Mass. If you listen carefully, you can hear her name in the prayers right before we receive Communion.

St. Agnes, help me remain pure in my love for Jesus!



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