



St. Catherine of Alexandria

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d. 305 • Egypt

Catherine was the daughter of the governor of Alexandria. Alexandria was a city of ancient learning in Egypt, and Catherine was a brilliantly educated young woman, knowing not only the ins and outs of the arts and sciences but also the important truths of the Faith.

The emperor Maxentius came to Alexandria and ordered all the Christians to sacrifice to the pagan gods in the temple. Those who would not sacrifice, he put to death. Catherine knew that she must do all that she could to save her fellow Christians. She entered the emperor's court, and in a voice that never wavered, Catherine denounced the emperor's persecutions and with clear argument explained the truth of the Christian Faith. The emperor was angered by her words, but he could not answer her arguments. So, with the intention of proving Christianity false, he summoned the great philosophers and thinkers of the court to hold a debate with Catherine.

All the great scholars filed into the court. All stood against Catherine, who was alone and unafraid. Despite all their wise words and all their clever sayings, Catherine was far wiser and cleverer than they. She soundly trounced their false arguments. In fact, so convincing was she that many of the scholars became Christian themselves. Emperor Maxentius was incensed. His plan had backfired. Because he could not win his fight the fair way, he threw Catherine into prison. But even in prison, Catherine did not stop trying to win others to the Faith. She spoke to the soldiers and her fellow prisoners, and won many hearts for Christ.

Legend says that the story of Catherine's wisdom even reached the empress's ears. She was curious to meet this brave and wise young woman, and so she visited Catherine in prison. Catherine told the empress all about her love for Jesus, and proved to her that Jesus was God and He had come down from heaven to die so that all could enter heaven. The empress's heart responded to Catherine's words, and she became a Christian. Later, she, too, would become a martyr for the Faith.

In his fury at Catherine's converting so many people to Christianity, the emperor ordered Catherine to be tortured on a large wheel with long, terrible spikes. But when the guards brought the wheel down to Catherine's prison, she prayed to God, and the wheel burst into pieces. The emperor ordered her beheading, and Catherine became a glorious martyr for the Faith, her death winning countless souls for Christ. St. Catherine of Alexandria, help me to do all I can to know and defend my Faith to others!