

St. Cecilia
November 22



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3rd century • Rome

The music was playing for her wedding, but Cecilia was singing a hymn to God in her heart. A Roman maiden from the noble patrician class, Cecilia had promised Jesus that she would never marry and so be His alone. But her parents were forcing her into marriage with the noble Roman Valerian. With her heart's song, she sang to Jesus that she desired Him alone and that she knew that He would protect her as His bride.

The moment they were alone together, Cecilia told Valerian of her promise to God and that she had a guardian angel to defend her. Valerian was astonished and asked if he could see the angel. Cecilia said that he would if he was baptized a Christian. Valerian did as she asked. When he returned, he found Cecilia on her knees praying, and beside her stood her brilliant guardian angel. Valerian also knelt beside her, and the angel placed two crowns of lilies and roses on their heads, for soon the two would become martyrs for the Faith.

Valerian's brother Tiberius also became a Christian, and together they buried the Christians who were martyred under Roman persecution. The two brothers were caught and became martyrs for Jesus. Cecilia knew that her turn would soon come. She gave all her wealth to the poor and recovered the brothers' bodies and buried them in her villa. The Roman soldiers caught Cecilia and dragged her to the pagan temple, but she refused to offer sacrifice to false gods.

And so the Roman authorities ordered her death. They locked her in the Roman baths of her villa and lit the flames under her baths so hot that Cecilia would suffocate. Abandoned in her baths a day and a night, Cecilia remained unharmed by the heat and the flames. Seeing this, the Romans lowered the heat, and a soldier entered with a sword and struck her the three times allowed to him by Roman law. Yet Cecilia still was not dead. She lay on the floor of her baths for three days. Many Christians came to visit her to give her comfort, but instead, she gave them comfort with her joyful words. She was ready to go to heaven to be with Jesus. On the third day, she went to heaven, a glorious martyr for the Faith!

St. Cecilia, help me always sing a hymn to God in my heart!