

THE LIFE OF ST. BARBARA

December 4

This Life of Saint Barbara is from His Excellency, Nicholas Samra, Titular Bishop of Gerasa, Auxiliary Bishop, and Protosyncellos of Newton, Brookline, Massachusetts, United States.

More than seventeen hundred years ago, when many people still believed in pagan gods, there lived in Syria a rich and noble man, Dioscoros, He had only one child, a very beautiful girl named Barbara. Barbara's parents were proud of her; not only because of her beauty, but for her virtue as well.

When she was young, Dioscoros became very protective of Barbara. He had a tower built in which Barbara was placed so people could not see her. He supplied her with all her needs: servants, food and clothing. Barbara could not leave the tower and its special gardens, nor could she speak to anyone except those chosen by her father.

Barbara was not unhappy being alone without any friends. She loved her tower. She loved to go to the very top and spend long hours looking at what was around her. She could see the top of the hills which seemed to reach out of the blue sky, the green tree tops swaying in the wind and waving to the passing white clouds of many beautiful shapes. Barbara would enjoy the warm sun and the cool evenings and loved to see the stars twinkle in the dark sky. The moon was always so calm but mysterious. In her wonder of this natural beauty, Barbara began to understand that there could only be one creator of all of this - this creator had to be a wise and almighty Giver of life.

When Barbara was old enough to be married, her father brought her one young man after another, hoping she would like one of them. Barbara refused each one because she did not want to be married. Her father thought that if she would know the pleasures of social life she would change her mind. He then allowed her to leave the tower for a while to mingle with people, and she began

to meet girls her own age. Some of them were Christians and from them Barbara learned about Jesus Christ and His teachings, and she believed that she had found the true religion. She was then baptized a Christian.

Barbara's father decided to add a bathing house to the fortress, while Dioscoros was out of town Barbara noticed only two windows were being built. She instructed the builders to add another window on the north side so that the pool would have more light; she would assume the responsibility for the construction of this project.

God filled her heart with the Holy Spirit and with love of Christ. Barbara made the sign of the cross on the marble bath with her finger. This was so deeply imbedded in the marble that it still exists today for all generations to see the power and glory of God.

Barbara fasted and prayed for Divine Guidance after spitting on the false idols her father worshipped.

When Dioscoros returned he questioned the builders about the construction of the third window, They told him that his daughter had ordered the third window installed. He asked Barbara why this was done. Barbara answered by saying: "Three Lights guide everyone who walks the earth." She made the sign of the cross with three fingers and said: "This signifies the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and with these Lights the whole world is guided." Her father realized that Barbara had become a Christian and became so angry he drew his sword and threatened to kill her, but Barbara ran away and hid on a nearby mountain.

When Dioscoros found Barbara he forced her back to the tower and imprisoned her for several days. Seeing that she would not give up her Christian faith, nor sacrifice to the idols, Dioscoros sent her to the pagan governor, Marcius who had his soldiers strip Barbara and beat her with

sticks then rub the wounds with vinegar to increase the pain. She was imprisoned. That night a bright light appeared and a voice told Barbara that Christ was always with her, and all her wounds disappear immediately.

Outraged, Marcius refused to believe she had been cured by the power of God; the ruler then had Barbara's body torn with iron claws, her eyes were burned with fire torches and her head hit with a spiked club. Again her wounds were healed. Barbara told the governor that his pagan gods had no power to perform such miracles and that Christ, the Son of God, was responsible for her salvation. Marcius then ordered his soldiers to behead Barbara. She was stripped of her clothing and marched throughout the city but she was miraculously clothed by angels.

Barbara's father, Dioscoros, requested permission to kill his own daughter. He took her to the mountain where she had fled, there he beheaded her. The earth quaked, then opened and swallowed her body. As Dioscoros descended the mountain a bolt of lightning struck and killed him.

Barbara made a last request to God before her death on December 4, 236 showing her love for those around her by asking that all who would remember her suffering in prayer should not die suddenly without penitence and without receiving the Holy Sacraments.

When her body was found by **pious** Christians several days later, the aroma of incense came forth from the ground where she was buried. With great respect her body was carried to the village of Gelassos where she was buried with honor.