

## Life

St. Cecilia was one of the most famous martyrs of the early Church, and her veneration was very popular early on. The saint was a noble Roman girl living in the second century, during Christian persecution. Cecilia had been a Christian since she was a child and had vowed perpetual virginity. Her father betrothed her to a young Roman nobleman Valerian. On the night of the wedding, she confessed her faith and moved her husband with her piety. Valerian also converted to Christianity and agreed to stay in a celibate marriage with her. Later, her husband's brother was also moved and baptized. Valerian and his brother were accused of being Christians. After being tortured, they still refused to apostatize and were martyred by being beheaded. Cecilia continued to engage in worshiping the Lord and doing good deeds. Many people were converted because of her, and her home became a gathering place for believers. Cecilia was later arrested, but because she was so beloved, the officials did not dare to execute her publicly. They sentenced her to be locked in the steam room to die of suffocation, but after one day and one night she remained unharmed, so the sentence was changed to beheading. After being struck three times on the neck, she was fatally wounded and laid on the ground. She lived for three more days, during which she gave her home to the Church. After she died, she was buried in the Catacombs of Saint Callixtus. Around 820 her body was brought to the Basilica of Saint Cecilia. During the Basilica's restoration in 1599, her body was exhumed, and it was found to be incorrupt. A biography of St. Cecilia recorded that as the musicians played on the day of her wedding, Cecilia sang and prayed to the Lord in her heart for help in her predicament. This is why St. Cecilia became the patron saint of music and Church music.

## Reflection

St. Cecilia seems to be a good representative figure of "The Whole Package" group: noble birth, young and beautiful, outstanding eloquence and respected by her fiancé. If she had obeyed the arrangements of the regime and society at that time and had not openly professed her faith in God, she could have enjoyed what most people think of as a happy life. But she chose to "keep chastity for the Lord", which meant that she was willing to give up everything and devote her whole being, body and mind, to Christ. The Catholic Church honours virgins not only for their virtues, but also for their wholehearted and sacrificial spirit in serving the Lord.

St. Cecilia used her life to witness her love of God. When she was near death and could not speak, she used her fingers to profess her faith: raising three fingers of her right hand to indicate the Triune God, and one finger on her left hand to indicate there is only one God. Let us look at the statue of St. Cecilia, reflect on our faith in the Holy Trinity, and ask ourselves: How much physical and mental time are we willing to dedicate to Christ in our daily lives?



## Prayer

On November 10, 2012, as Pope Benedict XVI welcomed participants attending the National Congress of "Scholae Cantorum" organized by the Italian Association of Saint Cecilia in Italy, he explained the importance of sacred music in mass: "the music you perform is neither an accessory nor merely an external embellishment of the liturgy; it is the liturgy itself. You help the entire assembly to praise God, to draw his word into the depths of hearts; by singing you pray and enable others to pray, and take part in the singing and prayers of the liturgy that in glorifying the creator embrace the entire creation." Let us join the choir in singing and praying during mass, praising the Lord.

May we imitate St. Cecilia in consecrating ourselves to Christ and  
singing hymns at mass as prayers.

We also pray for the choirs. Saint Cecilia, pray for us.