

A SAINTLY EXAMPLE OF PURITY

THE GREAT MARTYR BARBARA lived and suffered during the reign of the Emperor Maximian in the early years of the 4th century. Her pagan father Dioscorus was so protective of her that he placed her in a tower so that she could have no contact with anyone he considered to be unworthy. Alone in her tower, Barbara would often ponder the beauty of creation that she could study from her lofty perch. She was able to reach the conclusion that all of this was the work of the One, True God.

When Barbara became old enough to marry, her father brought her many suitors, whom she rejected one by one. Thinking she might change her mind if she was exposed to the world outside her tower, Dioscorus allowed her to leave and mingle with others. Little did he realize that many of the new people she met were Christians! Soon Barbara became one of them herself.

Upon returning from a trip, Dioscorus was furious to find that Barbara had cut a cross into one of her marble walls. When she told him that she was a Christian, he tried to kill her with his sword. Barbara was able to flee and hide on a nearby mountain, but the next day, her father captured her and took her to the local governor for execution. She willingly submitted to brutal torture and ultimately to martyrdom, understanding that this was the greatest way she could show her love for Christ. Before dying, Barbara prayed to God that everyone who would remember her in prayer should not be subjected to a sudden death and deprived of receiving the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

She met her end by the merciless hand of her father. Divine justice prevailed though, as Dioscorus was struck down and killed that same day.