

Rev. Derek Fairman

#### Roman Canon Saints 4

We conclude our look at the saints mentioned in the Roman Canon. After Saints Perpetua and Felicity comes St. Agatha. St. Agatha was born in Sicily around 231 to a noble family, but was eventually sent to prison for keeping her virginity. She was tortured and the local governor tried to persuade her to reject her Christian faith, to no avail. She was put into prison, where she was healed from the wounds she received from torture. She eventually died in prison under the persecutions of the Emperor Decius in 251. Her name means “good” or “honorable” and her feast day is February 5<sup>th</sup>.

After St. Agatha is St. Lucy. She was born in Syracuse in Sicily around 283. Her father was from Rome and her mother was from Greece. Her father died when she was five years old. Her mother sought treatment from an illness at the nearby shrine of St. Agatha. Her mother was cured and in thanksgiving she gave many items to the poor. This caused trouble and Lucy was condemned. She was martyred under the persecution of Diocletian in 304 in Syracuse. Her name shares a root with the Latin word for “light” and she is the patroness of the blind and intercessor for those with diseases of the eyes. Her feast day is December 13<sup>th</sup>, and part of the significance of her feast day is that in the middle of December, light is scarce and so December 13<sup>th</sup> is a day to be grateful for the gift of light that we have.

Next comes St. Agnes. She was born in 291 to a noble Roman family. She was a beautiful girl who had many young men wishing to be her husband. However, she resolved to maintain her purity, and the slighted young men turned her over to the authorities for her faith. She is the patroness of young girls, chastity and purity. Her name does sound like the Latin word for “lamb,” but the name also comes from the Greek word for “purity.” She died during the persecution of Diocletian in 304 at the age of twelve, the same year as St. Lucy. Her feast day is January 21<sup>st</sup>.

Next is St. Cecilia. St. Cecilia was a noble girl of Rome who lived in the second century and was forced against her wishes to marry a pagan nobleman named Valerian. She had made a vow of virginity, however. At her wedding feast, she sat apart and decided to sing to God in her heart instead of singing the usual wedding songs. After his baptism, her husband came to respect her vow. After Valerian had converted, his brother also converted. The two brothers dedicated themselves to burying the Christians who were being martyred in Rome. St. Cecilia brought

many people to the Christian faith. Eventually she and her husband and her brother-in-law and a Roman soldier were martyred together in Sicily around the year 180. Later, in 1599, her body was discovered to be incorruptible, the first saint whose body was discovered to be so.

Because she sat apart at her wedding feast, singing to God in her heart, she then became the patron saint of musicians. Numerous musical compositions and other related musical tributes have been dedicated to her. In many Catholic churches throughout the world, there are windows and statues dedicated to St. Cecilia. St. Cecilia is also an important reminder of the role of music in the liturgy, and that music can lift our souls to God. St. Cecilia's feast day is November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Finally, we have St. Anastasia. She was a martyr from northern Italy who died in the second century. Not much is known about Saint Anastasia for sure, other than her name means, "resurrection." She is also invoked against protection from poison, although again why this is so has been lost. The most interesting thing to note about St. Anastasia is her feast day. Her feast day, as a martyr, is the day that she received martyrdom. That day was December 25<sup>th</sup>. So, her feast day is December 25<sup>th</sup>, which is why we don't hear much about her feast day.

That concludes our brief look at the saints mentioned in the Roman canon. The Roman Canon reminds us that the liturgy that we celebrate, we do not celebrate alone, but with the many saints that invisibly surround us. They are with us, even if we do not see them. We remember these saints, important to the people of Rome, and the saints that are dear to us as well.