

St. Agnes

Feast Day: January 21

Patron Saint of Young Girls, Chastity, Rape Survivors, and the Children of Mary

St. Agnes is one of the earliest and most beloved virgin martyrs of the Catholic Church. Born into a noble Christian family in Rome in the late third century, she was martyred around the year 304 during the persecution of Christians under Emperor Diocletian. Though very young—traditionally believed to be only twelve or thirteen—Agnes showed remarkable courage and an unshakable faith in Christ.

From an early age, Agnes consecrated her virginity to God. When a powerful Roman official's son sought her hand in marriage, she refused, declaring that she already belonged to Christ. Angered by her rejection, her suitors reported her as a Christian. Despite promises of wealth, honor, and safety if she would renounce her faith, Agnes remained firm, choosing loyalty to Christ above all else.

Ancient Christian accounts recount that Agnes endured cruel trials meant to humiliate her and destroy her resolve. Through God's grace, her purity was preserved and her faith strengthened. When these efforts failed, she was condemned to death. Agnes faced martyrdom calmly and willingly, offering her life as a final witness to Christ. She was executed by the sword, sealing her testimony with her blood.

St. Agnes soon became a lasting symbol of purity, courage, and total devotion to God. Her name is linked to the Latin word *agnus*, meaning lamb, reflecting her innocence and sacrificial love, and she is often depicted holding a lamb. The Church honors her feast day on January 21, and her name is included in the Roman Canon of the Mass. She is the patron saint of young girls and purity, and her witness continues to inspire Catholics to remain faithful to Christ in every trial.



Did You Know?

On the feast of Saint Agnes, lambs are traditionally blessed by the Pope in Rome. Their wool is later used to make the pallia given to new metropolitan archbishops on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, symbolizing their unity with the Pope. This tradition dates back to the 16th century.