

## Lives of Saints

# St Agnes of Rome

d. 304

Feastday: 21st January



“He chose me  
first and He shall  
have me!”

**St Agnes of Rome**

I was Emerentiana's foster-sister. Emerentiana was also a virgin and a martyr. At the age of around 12, I was ordered to sacrifice to pagan gods and lose my virginity by rape. I was taken to a Roman temple dedicated to Minerva (Athena), but instead of obeying the orders given to me, I made the Sign of the Cross when I was led to the altar. When I refused to turn against God I was threatened, then tortured. Several young men presented themselves, offering to marry me, whether from lust or pity is not known. One of these was Procop, the Governor's son, who became very angry when I refused him. I said that to do so would be an insult to my heavenly Spouse, that I would keep my consecrated virginity intact, accept death, and see Christ. People were crying all around me, but I shed no tears myself. I stood still, I prayed, and I offered my neck courageously.

There are various theories as to the way I was killed. Some say I was beheaded and burned, others that I was tortured and stabbed to death. There are also various theories as to the exact date of my death. Some say it was 254, others that it was 304. I died in Rome, and I was buried beside the Via Nomentana in Rome.

Since the close of the fourth century the Fathers of the Church and Christian poets have sung my praises and extolled my virginity and heroism under torture. I am even mentioned in the first Eucharistic prayer. On my feast day two lambs are blessed at my church in Rome, and then their wool is woven into the palliums (bands of white wool) which the Pope confers on archbishops as symbol of their jurisdiction.

**S.D.C.**  
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