

Lives of Saints

St Frances of Rome

1384-1440

Feast day: 9th March



“Sometimes (a married woman) must leave God at the altar to find Him in her housekeeping.”

St Frances of Rome

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D O C T R I N Æ
C H R I S T I A N Æ

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I was born of wealthy parents, and I found myself attracted to the religious life during my youth. However, my parents objected and a young nobleman was selected to be my husband.

I got married at age 12 to Lorenzo de' Ponziani, and my marriage lasted 40 years. I had two sons and a daughter from this marriage. My second son died of the plague. Later, my young daughter also died. I used all my money and sold all my possessions to help the sick.

Many different diseases were rampant in Rome. Fatal diseases and plagues were everywhere, but I ignored the risk of contagion and displayed the deepest kindness toward the poor and the needy. I would help them by my eager care, and urge them lovingly to accept their trials, however, difficult, from the hand of God. When my resources were exhausted, Vanozza, my sister-in-law, and I went door to door, begging, and I opened part of my house as a hospital. I won away many Roman ladies from a life of frivolity, and united them in an association which later became the Benedictine Oblate Congregation of Tor di Specchi. Since I was married, I obviously lived at home, rather than at the community residence. I did this for 7 years, until my husband passed away. Only then did I join the community.

For thirty years I continued this service to the sick and the stranger. During epidemics I would myself seek out priests and bring them to those who were disposed to receive the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist. I often had visions and revelations, and I had the gift of miracles and ecstasy. I could also read the secrets of consciences. Above all I practised humility, detachment, obedience, patience and charity.