

## Lives of Saints

# St Virginia

## Centurione Bracelli

1587-1651

Feast day: 18th May



When God is  
one's only goal,  
"all  
disagreements  
are smoothed  
out, all difficulties  
overcome."

**St Virginia  
Centurione Bracelli**

S . D . C .  
S O C I E T A S  
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 in 1587 in Genoa, Italy. I was raised in a pious family and felt drawn to religious life as a child. However, I later agreed to an arranged marriage to Gasparo Grimaldi Bracelli. He was a drinker and a gambler. At the age of 20 I was widowed and with two small children.

I moved in with my in-laws, cared for my children, and dedicated my free time to prayer and charity. When my daughters were grown and got married, I devoted myself entirely to caring for the sick, aged, and abandoned children. When my mother-in-law died, I poured myself into the work, turning my house into a refuge and founding the Centro Signore della Misericordia Protettrici dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo.

I cared for 300 patients during one plague epidemic and famine, and in 1635 I received official government recognition for my hospital. I worked closely with the young women in my houses, teaching them religion and ways to earn a living.

My congregation was divided into two: the Sisters of Our Lady of Refuge on Mount Calvary and the Daughters of Our Lady on Mount Calvary. We were generally successful, healing the sick, educating children, training adults, and helping the dissolute return to productive lives.

Besides my administrative work in the institute, I worked for general spiritual development throughout the region, worked for the choice of the Blessed Virgin Mary as patron of the republic of Genoa, worked for the institution of the forty hours devotion, and for the revival of home missions. I acted as peacemaker between noble houses, and aided in the reconciliation of Church and Republic authorities. I continued working up to the end of my days, and in later years received the gifts of visions and internal voices. I died in 1651 and was canonized in May 2003.