At that time, in Catania, the comely and lovely maiden Agatha was a fifteen-year old virgin. Both her body and soul were adorned with various virtues and good works, for she put to death all ungodliness. Disdaining carnal-mindedness, Agatha desired only to be a bride of Christ . . .

It was not long before Quintianus (the governor of Catania) learned of the excellent fame, virtues, and good deeds of Agatha. He then mediated upon the evil reasoning of his heart, saying to himself, “If, in some manner I bring Agatha to do my bidding, and take her to wife, I shall profit thrice! . . .

Pondering upon these boons in his heart, the profane tyrant commanded that she be made to stand before him. Beholding and marveling at her beauty, as one out of his senses, he remained speechless for a long time. Afterwards, he plied her with compliments, so she might submit to his will. He promised her many honors, majesty, and rank. However, the wise and beauuteous damsel in no way considered his nonsensical prattle. Instead, she delivered to him such a knowledgeable defense so he might immediately understand from the outset her immovable heart. . . .

The holy Agatha said . . ., “My mind is founded and established in my Master Jesus Christ, the chief Cornerstone. Whereas, your words are as the wind, and your promises and threats as flowing rivers, which strike the tower of my mind. However, in no way shall you shake it. The more you war against it, more so shall you find it firmly established in the love of my Creator.” After uttering this, Agatha wept and supplicated God to grant her grace, so she might enter quickly the expected and hoped-for martyrdom. . . .

By these words, that thrice-accursed ruler became infuriated. He commanded that Agatha be brought before him. This having been done, he questioned her concerning her family and station. She answered, “I am a free woman, and the offspring of the most noble family of this city, as all my fellow citizens are aware.” The governor said, “If you are free, as you say, why do you have practices and prescriptions as though you were some slave girl?” Agatha replied, “This is because I am the slave of the Master Christ and none other.” . . . The governor retorted, “Put away such ill-timed words: Either sacrifice to my gods or I shall destroy you with the harshest punishments.” The saint answered, “I beseech my Lord that you become as your god.” These words cast the tyrant into confusion. He then ordered his servants to beat the holy maiden on the mouth, lest she further insult his god.

After this took place, Agatha yet spoke to Quintianus, saying, “I marvel at you, O governor, who thinks himself a prudent man, how you have demonstrated such folly? I, on your behalf, entreated for what was good and honorable – that you should become as your god; but you did command, O ignorant one, to have me beaten. If your gods are better than you, you should have thanked me; for I desired only what was to your advantage; but if they are worse, shame on you, O blind one, be ashamed to make obeisance to senseless deities.”

Giving reign to anger, the tyrant said, “How do you dare, O dishonorable woman, to utter such vain and silly words? Sacrifice to my gods this very hour or I shall deliver you to diverse punishments for your correction.” Agatha replied, “In no way do I fear your vengeance and torments. Even if you cast
me to wild beasts, as soon as they hear the name of Christ, they shall become submissive and tame as lambs. If you hurl me into the flames to burn me, the heavenly angels shall enter therein and cool the intense heat and ferocity of the fire. If you beat me with rods and tear my flesh, or whatever other chastisement you devise, I have the help of my Master. All the elements hearken unto Him. With only His word, all the sick are healed, demons are cast out, paralytics are invigorated, the lame walk, and many other wonderful works are wrought merely with His nod and divine will. It is He Who shall deliver me from all your intentions and contrivances.” At this juncture, the governor commanded that she be led to prison.

The following day, Quintianus couched upon his throne as a wild wolf. When Agatha was brought before him, he said, “Let us not lose any time. You will immediately renounce Christ and sacrifice to the idols.” The saint answered, “Know this: I shall never be so insensible as to fall down and worship your demons, even if you will inflict upon me the most fearful punishments that have ever been heard; for I shall ever confess my God in the heart and mouth. Therefore, torture, punish, lacerate my flesh, and give me over to various deaths, so you might know the truth.”

Quintianus then ordered that the holy woman be completely undressed and that her hands be tied behind her back. They were then bid to suspend her from a pillar and flog her with bullwhips. Afterwards, they were to burn her all about her head, hands and feet.

The governor then directed his impious ministers to remove the holy Agatha’s breasts. Whereupon, those savage men carved them out of her chest wall with knives, the sight of which would usher in profound sorrow to any witness. The hemorrhaging was so profuse that all the ground about her was reddened with blood. These are the trials suffered by this holy saint who then turned her face toward the governor, and said to him, “O profane and merciless tyrant, how is it that you are not ashamed, O senseless one, to sever those members with which you were nourished from your infancy? Nevertheless, regarding this, I am in no way concerned, because I have my Master Christ Who is able to heal me, if it is in my interest.”

The governor then bid his executioners to cast the holy maiden into a dark dungeon. They were charged not to give her any nourishment, other than a little bread and water – just enough so she would not die. Quintianus charged that she was to be left unattended, so her wounds might fester and smell rank.

As the holy Agatha laid in her gloomy cell, indifferent to her injuries, at midnight an ineffable and splendid light shone forth. Saint Agatha then beheld a certain sacred and august elder who was holding in his hands a vessel containing medicinal herbs. The elder was the holy Apostle Peter who was accompanied by Agatha’s guardian angel. The holy maiden, at first, did not recognize them. The Apostle then spoke to her, saying, “It is for this, O daughter, that I came: to heal your wounded members.” Yet, the holy maiden replied, “Who are you that you should care for my health? Never have I received treatment for any bodily ailment. Therefore, it is unfitting that now I should practice what I have never done previously, since I was close to death.”

Then, the blessed Peter said to her, “Do not be embarrassed, O daughter, to permit me to heal you; for I am a slave of the Master Christ. It is through love that I came here to do you this favor.” The
holy Agatha responded, “I have no reason to be ashamed before any man of the world, and especially
from you who are an elder. My flesh is so mutilated that I suppose it is impossible for anyone to be
scandalized in me! For your freewill kindness, my lord, I thank you much, because I did not seek it.”

The maiden then fell to the ground and prayed to the Lord . . . and said, “Blessed be God the Father
and my Lord Jesus Christ Who, through His Apostle Peter, healed my breasts and the remaining
wounded members of my body.”

The following day, the saint was brought again into the palace where the governor said to her, “Fall
down and worship my gods, O perverse girl, or, indeed, you shall receive even grimmer
chastisements!” She remarked, “O vain and frenzied man, why would I want to renounce my Master
Who healed my wounds, so that I might worship stones?” The governor asked, “Who is it that healed
you?” The saint answered, “My Master Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, Whom I shall ever
confess with my mouth and with all my heart.” The governor, with relentless hostility, replied, “Now I
shall test if your Christ will help you!”

Quintianus charged his men to light a huge coal fire there in the palace. He then bid them to cast upon
the burning coals pitch, tile, and iron-spiked instruments to pierce her flesh. The tyrant then ordered
that Agatha be bound hand and foot with iron chains. She was then cast on the flaming coals.

This fiendish punishment brought a vehement torment on the blessed Agatha who entreated the Lord
for help. In the midst of the flames, she gazed with the eyes of her heart toward eternal life. God then
helped His handmaiden, as He once bedewed the Three Children in the fiery furnace (Dan 3:20–27).
Straightway, a fearful earthquake took place of such a magnitude that all believed that their city would
be submerged by the sea. . . .

The governor, fearing the wrath of the mob and the degree of the quake, commanded that Agatha be
removed from the coals. It was then clearly observed that Agatha suffered no ill-effects from the fire.
She was then cast into prison to await further orders from Quintianus.

In her cell, Agatha could be found kneeling in prayer, uttering this prayer to the Master Christ, “Lord
Jesus Christ, my God, Who made me from nothing and caused me to be in this world, Who preserved
my body from corruption and unadulterated from every carnal pleasure, Who empowered me to
overcome the punishments of the impious tyrant, and Who vouchsafed to me the strength of patience
on account of Thy many tender-hearted mercies, I entreat and supplicate Thy goodness to receive me
this day in Thy glory that I might be made worthy to behold with my spiritual eyes Thy holy
countenance.” Praying thus, the saint, straightway, reposed. Her soul, adorned with the beauties of
ture virginity and luminous with the splendors of martyrdom, then went into the hands of her heavenly
Bridegroom to rejoice with Him in unspeakable delight and everlasting glory. The year was 251.

When St. Agatha’s fellow citizens learned the news of her repose, all hastened weeping to the prison.
With immeasurable reverence they took up her holy virginal body. They prepared the relics for
interment with myrrh and other fragrant spices. Her precious relics were then wrapped in a clean linen
cloth and piously laid to rest in a purple marble tomb.....