

St. Cecilia was (according to history) the first saint whose body experienced the phenomenon of incorruption. Cecilia was a member of a very rich and distinguished Roman family, who gave her in marriage to a young nobleman named Valerian. Marriage was not a vow she wished to take. Cecilia desired to remain a virgin. On her wedding day, during the secular music, Cecilia heard celestial music and sang to God in her heart, leading to her patronage of musicians. Cecilia convinced her new groom to respect her vow of virginity and later converted him to the Faith. He was granted a vision of Cecilia's guardian angel, who placed a crown of roses and lilies on both of their heads.

St. Cecilia spent her time preaching and in her lifetime was able to convert over four hundred people, most of whom were baptized by Pope Urban. Both Valerian and his brother, Tiburtius, were converted by St. Cecilia and were later pursued by the early persecutors of Christians to renounce their faith in Christ. Both men refused and were beheaded and buried along the Apian Way.

Cecilia was arrested for having buried their bodies, and for this crime she was given the choice of sacrificing to idols or put to death. She steadfastly affirmed her faith and chose to die rather than renounce it. Her captors decided to execute her secretly so they confined her to the vapor bath of her home to die of suffocation. After she remained a day and a night in that stifling room, St. Cecilia was completely unharmed. When the first form of execution failed, an experienced executioner was sent to behead her. Despite the three violent blows to the neck, the executioner could not sever Cecilia's head. Cecilia died after three days of agony, during which she gave all her belongings to the poor, her home to the Church - and, no longer able to speak - continues to profess her faith in the Triune God, by using her fingers: raising the thumb, forefinger, and middle finger of her right hand (to indicate three Divine Persons) and the index of her left hand (to indicate the one Divine Nature).

The early Christians clothed the body of the martyr in rich robes of silk and gold and placed it in a cypress coffin in the same position in which she had died. At her feet were placed linen cloths and veils which were used to collect her blood.

St. Cecilia's body was laid to rest in the Catacomb of St. Callistus. In the year 822, during the time of the restoration of the church dedicated to her memory, Pope Pascal the 1st wished to transfer the remains of the Saint to a place of honor in her cathedral but could not locate her grave. St. Cecilia appeared to him in a vision while he was at prayer and told him of the location of her body. The relic was found in exactly the place indicated. St. Cecilia's remains were transferred to her titular church in Trastevere and placed under the high altar.

She is the patron saint of musicians and poets.