

The Romans would not allow Christians to be buried; they liked to see their victims mistreated and had no respect for the human body. Again, these are the Romans of the Roman Empire toward the very end of its existence. No Roman citizen would be crucified; this was reserved for non-Romans. They would allow the bodies to remain, alive or dead, on the cross so that the birds of the air or the wild animals would take care of it, if you will. They had no respect for the body. Cecilia's husband and brother were arrested and condemned to death by the prefect, Turcius Almachius. An officer of the prefect, Maximus, appointed to execute this sentence, was himself converted and suffered martyrdom along with the two brothers.

Now we come to why St. Cecilia was martyred for the faith. She was caught in the act of burying her husband, his brother and his brother's friend. St. Cecilia could have saved herself; she could have gotten out of it because they gave her an option. If she had just gone to the prefect and in front of the people taken that thumb and finger and gotten a pinch of incense and put it into the fire she could have saved her life. That would have meant that she was publicly worshiping the Roman gods and goddesses. She wouldn't do that because as a Catholic Christian she only believed in One God, Three Persons in One God. She believed that Jesus was both human and divine.



Santa Cecilia Crypt Chapel

The body of St. Cecilia is with us to this day and her body still preaches to us. The Corporal Work of Mercy that St. Cecilia did in burying the dead still speaks to us about the great care and respect for the human body, even when the body is dead.

St. Cecilia is regarded as the patroness of music [because of the story that she heard heavenly music in her heart when she was married], and is represented in art with an organ or organ-pipes in her hand. Her feast is celebrated in the Latin and the Greek Church on 22 November.

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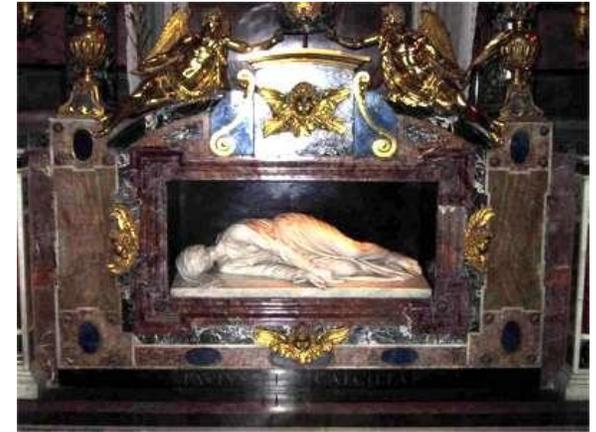
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Pamphlet 509

Saint Cecilia

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The Church of St. Cecilia, in the Trastevere quarter of Rome was rebuilt by Paschal I (817-824), on which occasion the Pope wished install her relics. At first, however, he could not find them and believed that they had been stolen by the Lombards. In a vision he saw St. Cecilia, who exhorted him to continue his search, as he had already been very near to her, i.e. near her grave. He therefore renewed his quest; and soon the body of the martyr, draped in costly stuffs of gold brocade and with the cloths soaked in her blood at her feet, was actually found in the Catacomb of Prætextatus. They may have been transported there from the Catacomb of Callistus to save them from earlier depredations of the Lombards in the vicinity of Rome. The relics of St. Cecilia with those of Valerianus, Tiburtius, and Maximus, also those of Popes Urbanus and Lucius, were taken up by Pope Paschal, and

reburied under the high altar of St. Cecilia in Trastevere. The monks of a convent founded in the neighborhood by the same Pope were charged with the duty of singing the daily Office in this basilica. From this time the veneration of the holy martyr continued to spread, and numerous churches were dedicated to her.

During the restoration of the church in the year 1599 Cardinal Sfondrato had the high altar examined and found under it the sarcophagi, with the relics of the saints, that Pope Paschal had transported there. Recent excavations beneath the church, executed at the instigation and expense of Cardinal Rampolla, disclosed remains of Roman buildings, which have remained accessible. A richly adorned underground chapel was built beneath the middle aisle, and in it a latticed window, opening over the altar, allows a view of the receptacles in which the bones of the saints repose. In a side chapel of the church there have long been shown the remains of the bath in which, according to the Acts, Cecilia was put to death.

When the tomb was opened the Holy Father Pope Clement VIII (Pope from 1592 to 1605) was there and what he saw struck him. It appeared that St. Cecilia's body had just been placed there that morning. Our best estimate is that St. Cecilia was martyred for the faith around the year 230. It could have been fifty years earlier but the best guess is 230, which is about two hundred years after Christ. The Pope called for a sculpture to be made of the body. The cardinal priest of Santa Cecilia, Paolo Emilio Cardinal

Sfondrato (1560-1618), commissioned Stefano Maderno (1576 –1636), aged 23 at the time, to recreate the martyr's body in marble.

Maderno had the task of sculpting what he saw. The picture above appears to be so lifelike and yet it is marble. You can see that Maderno copied exactly what he saw when the tomb was opened. The body of St. Cecilia is still incorrupt. I think this has a lot to do with her martyrdom and the reason for her martyrdom.



Before I go into that, look at her neck and you can see the fatal wound. The statue depicts evidence of her decapitation, thus helping to confirm the identity of the saint. In addition, it also it is meant to underscore the incorruptibility of her dead body (an attribute of saints), which miraculously still had congealed blood after centuries.



You can also see how the early Christians arranged her body so carefully in the catacombs. Look at her left hand and you can see her left index finger that looks as if it is pointing. The right hand has two fingers folded back and the thumb and the other two fingers forward. The left hand with the single finger would be a Christian way of allowing St. Cecilia to speak to us even today. Our Christian belief is that there is One God. On the other hand we see the thumb and two fingers.... One God, but Three Persons. The two fingers that are folded back represent the two natures of Christ, who is True God and True Man. Just the posture of those beautiful hands preach something and they give us a hint as well as to why St. Cecilia would accept martyrdom when she had a way out.

St. Cecilia was a young woman of noble class in Rome. In her youth she by vow consecrated her virginity to God, yet was compelled by her parents to marry a nobleman named Valerian, who eventually converted to the faith. Soon after Valerian's brother Tiburtius also became a Christian. They were both arrested because they had buried Christians who had been executed.