



## St. Catherine of Alexandria

Feast Day: November 25

Born: 287

Died: 305

Patron: apologists; craftsmen; the dying; unmarried girls; lawyers; nurses; preachers; students; and teachers

St. Catherine was born around 287 in Alexandria, Egypt, a major cultural center in the world during that time. Her mother was secretly Christian. Catherine was part of the aristocracy, intelligent and well educated. She had many young men interested in marrying her.

In a vision that Catherine had at age 14 of the Blessed Mother and the Infant Jesus, Jesus would not look at her, telling Mary that he could not regard Catherine because she was not baptized. Catherine's mother helped her find a priest. Catherine was baptized and studied the catechism. She remained unmarried at age 18, unusual for that time, saying there was no one suitable. In a second vision, Jesus looked at Catherine with great love and placed a ring on her finger in a Mystical Marriage.

Emperor Maxentius was ruthless in his persecution of Christians. He held a huge pagan festival in Catherine's district. Though only a teenager, Catherine went to him and denounced him for his cruelty. She also argued the case for Christianity and left Maxentius speechless and unable to defend his pagan gods. He imprisoned Catherine where she was visited by Jesus promising her the crown of everlasting life. Because he had been publicly humiliated, he wanted to publicly shame Catherine. Maxentius ordered fifty of the best orators and philosophers to debate her. St. Michael the Archangel told Catherine to have courage, that she would receive divine help. Overpowered by the Holy Spirit, Catherine spoke so passionately and convincingly in defense of Christianity that the orators and many observers were converted. Worried about their fate, the debaters asked Catherine to pray for them and expressed their desire for baptism. She gave them courage and told them they would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit through fire. They were burned to death, yet their bodies remained miraculously intact. Catherine was tortured. Instead of blood, milk flowed from her wounds.

Maxentius was determined to defeat Catherine. He tried seducing her to give up her faith, offering marriage and the title of empress. Catherine refused saying that she belonged to Jesus. Over 200 people visited her in prison including the emperor's own wife who was said to have converted. At this, Maxentius condemned her to be tied to a spiked wheel and killed. The wheel broke and pieces flew off killing some of the bystanders. Maxentius ordered her to be beheaded. At the moment of her death in 305 A.D., Catherine promised to ask Jesus to answer the prayers of those who remember her. Angels carried her lifeless body to Mt. Sinai. The Virgin Mary appeared to monks and led them to her body. A monastery was built at the site. Her relics were rediscovered around 800 A.D. Her hair was said to be vibrant and her bones exuded a holy oil for many years.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, St. Catherine and St. Margaret appeared to Joan of Arc to help her prepare for her role in freeing France from English control. St. Catherine of Alexandria is one of the 14 Holy Helpers; saints that the faithful invoked against the plague that devastated Europe from 1346 to 1349.

*"If you are ruled by the mind you are king; if by the body, you are a slave." ~ St. Catherine of Alexandria*