



# The legend of Saint Barbara



According to legend, Saint Barbara was the extremely beautiful daughter of a wealthy heathen named Dioscorus, who lived near Nicomedia in Asia Minor. Because of her singular beauty and fearful that she be demanded in marriage and taken away from him, he jealously shut her up in a tower to protect her from the outside world.

Shortly before embarking on a journey, he commissioned a sumptuous bathhouse to be built for her, approving the design before he departed. Barbara had heard of the teachings of Christ, and while her father was gone spent much time in contemplation. From the windows of her tower she looked out upon the surrounding countryside and marveled at the growing things; the trees, the animals and the people. She decided that all these must be part of a master plan, and that the idols of wood and stone worshipped by her parents must be condemned as false. Gradually she came to accept the Christian faith.

As her belief became firm, she directed that the builders redesign the bathhouse her father had planned, adding another window so that the three windows might symbolize the Holy Trinity.

When her father returned, he was enraged at the changes and infuriated when Barbara acknowledged that she was a Christian. He dragged her before the prefect of the province, who decreed that she be tortured and put to death by beheading. Dioscorus himself carried out the death sentence. On his way home he was struck by lightning and his body consumed.

Saint Barbara lived and died about the year 300 A.D. She was venerated as early as the seventh century. The legend of the lightning bolt which struck down her persecutor caused her to be regarded as the patron saint in time of danger from thunderstorms, fires and sudden death.

When gunpowder made its appearance in the Western world, Saint Barbara was invoked for aid against accidents resulting from explosions--since some of the earlier artillery pieces often blew up instead of firing their projectile, Saint Barbara became the patroness of the artillerymen.

Saint Barbara is usually represented standing by a tower with three windows, carrying the palm of a martyr in her hand. Often, too, she holds a chalice and a sacramental wafer and sometimes cannon are displayed near her. The feast of Saint Barbara falls on December 4th and is traditionally recognized by a formal Dining-In or military dinner, often involving the presentation of the Order of Saint Barbara.

The Order of Saint Barbara is an honorary military society of the United States Field Artillery. Both U.S. Marine and Army field artillery along with their military and civilian supporters are eligible for membership. The order is managed by the U.S. Field Artillery Association and two levels of recognition exist. The most distinguished level is the Ancient Order of Saint Barbara and those who are selected for this honor have achieved long-term, exceptional service to the field artillery surpassing even their brethren in the Honorable Order of Saint Barbara. The order links field artillerymen of the past and present in a brotherhood of professionalism, selfless service and sacrifice symbolized by Saint Barbara. St. Barbara (Varvarah in Armenian) is commemorated in the Armenian Church before the feast of the Holy Translators.



## The legend of Saint Barbara



The legend of Saint Barbara is a story of a young girl who was raised in a pagan household. Her father, a wealthy man, wanted to marry her to a pagan prince. Barbara, however, was a Christian and refused. She was angry and prayed to God for help. One day, a lightning bolt struck her tower, and she was killed. She was buried in a cave, and her body was found by a Christian soldier. He was amazed by her beauty and holiness, and he buried her in a church. She became a saint, and her feast day is celebrated on June 4th.