

## HERE BEGINNETH THE LIFE OF ST. BARBARA

**I**n the time that Maximian reigned there was a rich man, a paynim, which adored and worshipped the idols, which man was named Dioscorus. This Dioscorus had a young daughter which was named Barbara, for whom he did do make a high and strong tower in which he did do keep and close this Barbara, to the end that no man should see her because of her great beauty. Then came many princes unto the said Dioscorus for to treat with him for the marriage of his daughter, which went anon unto her and said: My daughter, certain princes be come to me which require me for to have thee in marriage, wherefore tell to me thine entent and what will ye have to do.

### THE TOWER WITH THREE WINDOWS

**T**hen St. Barbara returned all angry towards her father and said: My father, I pray you that ye will not constrain me to marry, for thereto I have no will ne thought. After this he departed from her and went into the town where there was one making a cistern or a piscine, for he had many workmen to perform this work, and also he had tofore ordained how he should pay unto each of them their salary, and after this he departed thence and went into a far country where he long sojourned.

*Caxton added this life to his edition of the Golden Legend, but it was not a part of Voragine's original.*

Then St. Barbara, the ancille [handmaid] of our Lord Jesu Christ, descended from the tower for to come see the work of her father, and anon she perceived that there were but two windows only, that one against the south, and that other against the north, whereof she was much abashed and amarvelled, and demanded of the workmen why they had not made no more windows, and they answered that her father had so commanded and ordained.

Then St. Barbara said to them: Make me here another window.

They answered: Dame, we fear and dread to anger your father, which commanded us to make no more ne we dare not therefore make no more.

The blessed maid said: Do and make that I command you, and I shall content my father, and shall excuse you against him.

Then did they that she commanded to them, by of the manner that she enseigned and showed them. When the holy St. Barbara walked and came unto the cistern, she made with her finger toward the orient, a cross with her thumb in the stone of marble, the which cross is there yet unto this day, which every man may see that cometh thither by devotion. And when she came unto the side whereas the water descended into the said cistern, she blessed it, and made the sign of the cross, and incontinent the water was hallowed, in which all they that were sick received health, if they had perfect belief in God and in the blessed maid.

In this same cistern was this holy maid baptized of a holy man, and lived there a certain space of time, in taking only for her refection honeysuckles and locusts, following the holy precursor of our Lord, St. John Baptist.

This cistern or piscine is semblable to the fountain of Siloe in which he that was born blind recovered there his sight. It is also like to the piscine named Robatyoa, in which the impotent by the word of God was made whole. These piscines or pecines be fountains perpetual in which all manner sick men, in whatsoever malady they were grieved or tormented, that went therein received fully their health. In this fountain is living water, and it is the water that the Samaritan required of our Lord to have of the holy piscine.

On a time this blessed maid went upon the tower, and there she beheld the idols to which her father sacrificed and worshipped, and suddenly she received the Holy Ghost and became marvellously subtle and clear in the love of Jesu Christ, for she was environed with the grace of God Almighty, of sovereign glory and pure chastity. This holy maid Barbara, adorned with faith, surmounted the devil, for when she beheld the idols she scratched them in their visages in despising them all, and saying: All they be made like unto you which have made you to err, and all them that have affiance in you.

And then she went into the tower and worshipped our Lord. And when the work was full performed, her father returned from his voyage, and when he saw there three windows, he demanded of the workmen: Wherefore have ye made three windows?

And they answered: Your daughter hath commanded so.

Then he made his daughter to come afore him, and demanded her why she had do make three windows, and she answered to him, and said: I have done them to be made because three windows lighten all the world and all creatures, but two make darkness.

Then her father took her and went down into the piscine, demanding her how three windows give more light than two. And St. Barbara answered: These three fenestres or windows betoken clearly the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the which be three persons and one very God, on whom we ought to believe and worship.

Then he being replenished with furor, incontinent drew his sword to have slain her, but the holy virgin made her prayer and then marvellously she was taken in a stone and borne into a mountain on which two shepherds kept their sheep, the which saw her fly. And then her father, which pursued after her, went unto the shepherds and demanded after her. And that one, which would have preserved her, said that he had not seen her, but that other, which was an evil man, showed and pointed her with his finger, whom the holy St. Barbara cursed, and anon his sheep became locusts, and he consumed into a stone.

And then her father took her by the hair and drew her down from the mountain and shut her fast in prison, and made her to be kept there by his servants unto the time that he had sent to the judge for to deliver her to the torments. And when the judge was advertised of the faith and belief of the maid he did her to be brought tofore him. Her father went with her, accompanied

with his servants threatening her with his sword, and delivered her unto the judge, and conjured him, by the puissance of his gods that, he should torment her with horrible torments.

### **ST. BARBARA BEFORE THE PAGAN JUDGE**

**T**hen sat the judge in judgment, and when he saw the great beauty of St. Barbara, he said to her: Now choose whether ye will spare yourself and offer to the gods, or else die by cruel torments.

St. Barbara answered to him: I offer myself to my God, Jesu Christ, the which hath created heaven and earth and all other things, and fie on your devils, which have mouths and cannot speak, they have eyes, and cannot see, they have ears, and hear not, they have noses, and smell not, they have hands, and may not feel, and they have feet, and may not go, they that make them, be they made semblable to them, and all they that have fiance and belief in them.

Then became the judge all wood and angry, and commanded to unclothe her and beat her with sinews of bulls, and frot her flesh with salt, and when she had long endured this, that her body was all bloody, the judge did do close her in a prison unto the time that he had deliberated of what torments he might make her die.

And then at midnight descended a great light and clearness into the prison in which our Lord showed him to her, saying: Barbara, have confidence. and be firm and steadfast. for in heaven and in the earth thou shalt have great joy for thy passion, therefore, doubt not the judge, for I shall be with thee, and I shall deliver thee from all thy pains that any shall make thee suffer.

And incontinent she was all whole. And then, when our Lord had said thus, he blessed her and remounted into heaven.

Then St. Barbara was greatly rejoiced by the great comfort of our Lord. And on the morn, the judge commanded that she should be brought tofore him, and when she was come he saw that her wounds appeared not but she was all whole, and he said to her: Behold, Barbara, the bounty of our gods, and how much they love thee, for they have healed thy wounds.

Then the blessed Barbara, martyr of Jesu Christ, answered to the judge: Thy gods be semblable to thee, without entendment how may they heal my wounds. They may not help themselves. He that healed me is Jesu Christ, the Son of God, the which will not have thee because thy heart is so indurate and hard with the devils.

Then the judge, replenished of ire, commanded that she should be hanged between two forked trees, and that they should break her reins with staves, and burn her sides with burning lamps, and after he made her strongly to be beaten, and hurted her head with a mallet. Then St. Barbara beheld and looked upward to heaven, saying: Jesu Christ, that knowest the hearts of men, and knowest my thought, I beseech thee to leave me not.

Then commanded the judge to the hangman that he should cut off with his sword her paps, and when they were cut off, the holy saint looked again towards heaven, saying: Jesu Christ, turn not thy visage from me.

And when she had long endured this pain, the judge commanded that she should be led with beating through the streets, and the holy virgin the third time beheld the heaven, and said: Lord God, that coverest heaven with clouds, I pray thee to cover my body, to the end that it be not seen of the evil people.

And when she had made her prayer, our Lord came over her, and sent to her an angel which clad her with a white vestment, and the knights led her unto a town called Daliasion, and there the judge commanded to slay her with the sword. And then her father all araged took her out of the hands of the judge and led her up on a mountain, and St. Barbara rejoiced her in hasting to receive the salary of her victory.

### **HER HOLY DEATH**

**A**nd then when she was drawn thither she made her orison, saying: Lord Jesu Christ, which hast formed heaven and earth, I beseech thee to grant me thy grace and hear my prayer, that all they that have memory of thy name and my passion, I pray thee that thou wilt not remember their sins, for thou knowest our fragility.

Then came there a voice down from heaven saying unto her: Come, my spouse Barbara, and rest in the chamber of God my Father, which is in heaven, and I grant to thee that thou hast required of me.

And when this was said, she came to her father and received the end of her martyrdom with St. Julian. But when her father descended from the mountain, a fire from heaven descended on him, and consumed him in such wise that there could not be found only ashes of all his body.

This blessed virgin St. Barbara received martyrdom with St. Julian the second nones of December. A noble man called Valentine buried the bodies of these two martyrs, and laid them in a little town in which many miracles were showed in the louing and glory of God Almighty. And St. Barbara, the holy martyr suffered passion in the time of Maximian, emperor of Rome, and Marcian the judge. Whom we pray and beseech to be our advocatrix unto Almighty God, that by her merits he bring us after this short and transitory life into his glory perdurable. Amen.

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The [iconography of St. Barbara](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

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