

Today is the memorial of St Agatha. Virgin and Martyr.

“It was to shame the wise that God chose what is foolish by human reckoning, and to shame what is strong that he chose what is weak by human reckoning.”

These words of the first Reading can well be applied to the life of Agatha. An attractive young lady who gave up the trappings of a noble birth and dedicated herself to following Christ in a life of prayer and service at a time of Christian persecution under Decius around 245 AD.

Agatha's beauty, noble attributes, and dedication to her chosen way of life opened her to the attention and desire of a judge called Quintianus.

To Quintianus Agatha's life made no sense and he used his authority, at first to try and force her to turn away from her vow and to marry him. Then, when she refused, to destroy her by torture, humiliation, and eventual death in prison.

Throughout her terrible ordeal, the words of the Psalm might sum up well the nature of Agatha's prayers.? ”My life is in your hands, deliver me from the hands of those who hate me. Let your face shine on your servant. Save me in your love.”

In the Gospel Jesus says, “Among pagans it is the kings who lord it over them, and those who have authority over them are given the title Benefactor. This must not happen to you.” Then....., “You are the men (and women) who have stood by me faithfully in my trials; and now I confer a kingdom on you.”

Do we resist the pressure of those around us and so affirm our faith in Christ (Agatha)? Do we ridicule or sleight the lives of others so to gain advantage where their ideas or views do not fit in with our own (Quintianus)?