



## *Life of Saint Christina of Bolsena*

Shortly: Life of Saint Christina describes the life of a beautiful little girl who was tortured by her father and his successors. She finally gained martyrdom at a young age of eleven or twelve. Christina fulfills the divine call of discipleship to propagate christianity among the pagans.

Saint Christina is a martyr who lived during the 3rd century A.C. Her icons show her bound to a stone, holding few arrows and with snakes around her feet. There are many stories and accounts regarding the life of Saint Christina. However, the early life of St. Christina is more or less the same in all the texts.

### **Early Life of St. Christina**

Not much is known about the early life of Saint Christina. There is no mention about her mother or her siblings. Her whole life is centered on her father, Urbain, member of a well known Roman family Anici (St. Lucia was from the same roman family). The meaning of the name Christina is " *Little Christ*" and was probably given to her inside of the Christian community. Local tradition wants her to be born here in Bolsena, but there is the same tradition in the coastal City of Tyre, modern Lebanon. It may be that she was born in Tyre and moved to Bolsena along with her father, a powerful magistrate who was sent to command the military in roman city of Bolsena (*Vulsinii nuova*).

Her parents were staunch believers of the rituals of Paganism. They were idol worshipers and were against Christianity. The accounts of her early life reveal her father to be a wealthy and a cruel man who had tortured her because of her belief in Christianity (*as it was duty of military during the government of emperor Diocletian*).

### **A Few Facts About Life of St. Christina**

Christina was a beautiful child full of love and affection. She was well educated and did not lack any material luxury. Her father was against the practices of Christianity. As he knew about her conversion, he locked his daughter, Christina, together with few of her pagan girl friends in a huge tower, assuming the confines of the tower would curb her interest in Christianity. Christina saw the beauty of the nature that was God's creation through the confined towers too. She yearned to understand him and pine for more knowledge regarding the presence of God. It is believed God revealed Himself to her through an angel.

Christina was tired of the luxury that was bestowed on her and was greatly moved by the poverty and sufferings of people around her. She broke the gold pagan idols belonging to her father and distributed among the poor and needy. This infuriated her father who punished her cruelly by whipping her with rods and threw her into a dungeon.

In the meantime, she had evangelized many of the pagans in her household. Even when she was in the dungeon she had not lost faith in her belief and remained unshaken. Urbain, her father became her persecutor. He tore her body with iron hooks and tied her to a rack beneath which a fire was kindled. Christina's faith in God saved her. God turned the flames on the bystanders.

In another incident, a stone was tied around her neck and she was thrown into the lake of Balsena. However, God's angel saved her again, and her father died after this incident.

Christina's suffering and torture continued even after her father's death. Urbain had two successors, Dion and Julian. Dion died an unexpected death, after he threw her into a burning furnace. She remained in the furnace unhurt for five days. It was indeed a miracle.



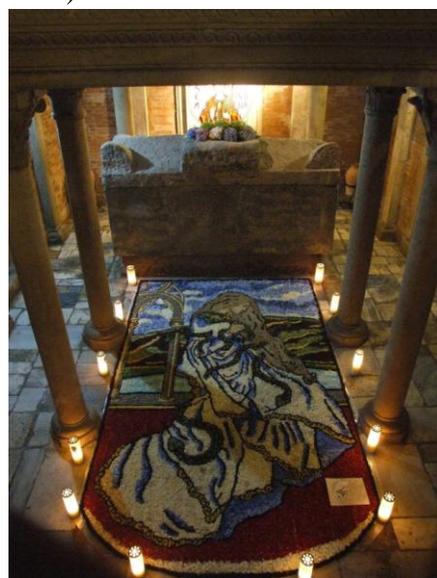
Saint Christina was thrown into a cage of serpents. But Christ saved her once again. Julian was her last persecutor; he cut off St. Christina's tongue and her breast.

The Saint prayed to be allowed to finish her course. When she was pierced with arrows, she gained the martyr's crown at Amphitheatre of Bolsena. She was buried in the catacombs near to the old Vulsinia city.



### **History of the place around her tomb**

Soon after her death the persecution of Christians was over (306 in Italy, 313 in the whole Empire) and people were free to excavate a first small cave around her tomb as a place of prayer. In the first half of the 10th century a big part of her relics was stolen and spread all over the Europe (*Sepino, Palermo, Santiago de Compostella, Canterbury, Innsbruck, Ravensburg etc.*) After this fact, the original cave was enlarged, the old sarcophagus with the remaining of Christina was hidden deep under the floor and a small underground basilica was build in the enlarged cave. Over the tomb of Christina was placed an ancient altar with a marble ciborium (canopy of state). In 1263 an Eucharistic Miracle happened on this Altar to a foreign priest, called by the tradition Peter of Prague, on his pilgrimage from Prague to Rome.



In the 15th century the Altar of the Eucharistic Miracle was moved to its actual position, while over the tomb of Christina there was erected a statue "Saint Christina sleeping in the death" by Benedetto Buglioni.

The tomb of St. Christina was discovered by Giovanni Batista de Rossi and Henry Stevenson in the 19th century, marked with an inscription dating from the 10th century.

Her feast day is July 24th.