

According various legends, Saint Barbara lived in either Heliopolis (in modern-day Lebanon) or Nicomedia (in modern-day Turkey) during the third century. She was the daughter of a pagan named Dioscorus who [shut her in a tower](#) to protect her beauty from suitors. While imprisoned, Barbara secretly took communion and converted to Christianity. During one of her father's absences, she ordered workmen to install a third window in her tower, creating a symbol of the Holy Trinity. Upon his return, Dioscorus was so enraged at his daughter's conversion that he drew his sword to kill her. Barbara was saved by a miracle and [escaped to a mountaintop outside the city](#). Two shepherds nearby witnessed the miracle, but the second shepherd revealed Barbara's location to Dioscorus. As punishment, the second shepherd was turned to stone and his flock of sheep to locusts.



Legend of Saint Barbara (detail)

Saint Barbara is publicly tortured

After capturing his daughter, Dioscorus turned her over to the Roman authorities who [relentlessly tortured her](#). During her torture, wounds inflicted on her miraculously healed and she was comforted by her faith. Unable to force her to rescind her faith, Roman authorities sentenced Barbara to execution. Dioscorus himself beheaded her, only to be subsequently struck down by a lightning bolt (or in some accounts fire from heaven).

Saint Barbara's last wish was that the grace of Sacrament be bestowed on the dying at the moment of passing in honor of her martyrdom. Saint Barbara's tomb was said to be a place of miracles. Due to lack of evidence to verify Saint Barbara's legend, she was struck from the Catholic Church's calendar in 1969.

This statue's journey from France was a tragic one. After it was purchased by the Vanderbilt Fine Arts Gallery from a seller in France in 1982, the piece was damaged during shipping due to improper packing and handling. Liability for the damage was never claimed, despite the Gallery's efforts to document the damage and contact the seller and shipping company. Damage to the statue is still visible, manifested in a crack in the left arm, missing structural elements at the top edges of the tower, and cracks on the tiara.

St. Barbara, Patron Saint of Miners

According to legend, which dates only to the 7th century, she was the beautiful daughter of a pagan, Dioscorus, who kept her guarded in a [tower](#) to protect her from harm. When she professed [Christianity](#) and refused marriage, he became enraged and took her to the provincial prefect, who ordered her to be tortured and beheaded. Dioscorus himself performed the execution and, upon his return home, was struck by lightning and reduced to ashes.



Barbara, Saint St. Barbara, lindenwood sculpture with polychromy, German, c. 1490; in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. Overall 127cm. *Photograph by Katie Chao. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, The Cloisters Collection, 1955 (55.166)*

Some accounts name the ancient Egyptian city of [Heliopolis](#), others Nicomedia or a town in [Tuscany](#), as the scene of her sufferings. The original Greek accounts of her martyrdom are lost, but Syriac, Latin, and other versions are [extant](#). Her story, reproduced in great detail in [Jacobus de Voragine](#)'s *Legenda aurea* (1255–66; *Golden Legend*, 1483), was popular in the [Middle Ages](#).

Following his return from a long journey, Barbara explained to her father that she was a Christian and did not wish to marry. She had already removed the different images of Pagan gods from her living room quarters and had replaced them with crucifixes.

Dioscuros, seeing that his only child had turned to the new religion and that he himself had been placed at a disadvantage, was overcome with rage. He handed over his daughter, as a Christian, to the Roman pro-consul Martianus, a Supreme Court judge, for the assessment of punishment.

Martianus tried at first by kind persuasion, to make her break with her faith; but when this failed, he had her thrashed and cast into jail. Due to the strength of her faith, her wounds healed immediately.

On the following day, she was ordered by Martianus to pay sacrifice to the pagan gods. When she refused, she was mutilated in a dreadful way. When she continued to proclaim her Christian faith, she was sentenced to die by the sword.

Barbara went to her place of execution in cheerful ecstasy: with her enthusiasm for her true faith. Her last wish was that God through her experience help all those confronted with and unprepared for a sudden untimely death.

The Barbarous father was so outraged that he himself severed his daughter's head! Immediately following Barbara's death, a terrible thunderstorm arose. As punishment for his monstrous crime, Dioscuros was killed by lightning. This is the story of Santa Barbara in its oldest form.

PRAYER TO ST BARBARA FOR PROTECTION

<https://prayers4reparation.wordpress.com/2012/02/18/prayer-to-st-barbara-for-protection/>

18 Feb

ST BARBARA, VENERATED BY SOLDIERS AND INVOKED AS A PROTECTOR
AGAINST LIGHTNING, STORMS, HURRICANES AND SUDDEN DEATH.

ST BARBARA IS ONE OF THE FOURTEEN HOLY HELPERS OF EMERGENCY SITUATIONS.

FEAST DAY: DECEMBER 4th

According to tradition, St Barbara was martyred at the end of the fourth century in Antioch under the emperor Maximian. St Barbara spent almost her entire life confined in the tower of a fortress. When he heard that she had been converted to the Christian faith even in confinement, her father,

who was a pagan, not only denounced her but also condemned her to death. He himself was the executioner and cut off her head with a sword. Immediately afterwards, a terrible storm arose and the executioner was incinerated by a bolt of lightning.

PRAYER:

St Barbara, you are stronger than the tower of a fortress and the fury of hurricanes. Do not let lightning hit me, thunder frighten me or the roar of canons jolt my courage or bravery. Stay always by my side so that I may confront all the storms and battles of my life with my head held high and a serene countenance. Winning all the struggles, may I, aware of doing my duty, be grateful to you, my protector, and render thanks to God, the Creator of heaven, earth and nature who has the power to dominate the fury of the storm and to mitigate the cruelty of war.

St Barbara, pray for us.

Amen.

Saint Barbara ([Greek](#): Αγία Βαρβάρα, [Coptic](#): ⲧⲁⲓⲁ ⲃⲁⲣⲃⲁⲣⲁ), Feast Day *December 4*, known in the [Eastern Orthodox Church](#) as the **Great Martyr Barbara**, was an [early Christian](#) Greek [saint](#) and [martyr](#). Accounts place her in the 3rd century in the Greek city [Nicomedia](#), present-day [Turkey](#) or in Heliopolis of Phoenicia, present-day [Baalbek](#), [Lebanon](#).^{[1][2]} There is no reference to her in the authentic early Christian writings nor in the original [recension](#) of [Saint Jerome's martyrology](#). Her name can be traced to the 7th century, and veneration of her was common, especially in the East, from the 9th century.^[3]

Because of doubts about the historicity of her legend,^[4] she was removed from the [General Roman Calendar](#) in the [1969 revision](#), though not from the Catholic Church's list of saints.^[5]

Saint Barbara is often portrayed with miniature chains and a [tower](#). As one of the [Fourteen Holy Helpers](#), Barbara continues to be a popular saint in modern times, perhaps best known as the patron saint of [armourers](#), [artillerymen](#), [military engineers](#), miners and others who work with [explosives](#) because of her old legend's association with [lightning](#), and also of [mathematicians](#). Many of the thirteen miracles in a 15th-century French version of her story turn on the security she offered that her devotees would not die without making confession and receiving [extreme unction](#).^[6]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Barbara#In_modern_popular_culture

Saint [Barbara's day](#) or [Eid il-Burbara](#) is celebrated in [Lebanon](#), [Syria](#), [Jordan](#) and [Palestine](#), [Israel](#) among [Arab Christians](#) annually on December 4, in a feast day similar to that of North American Halloween.^[21] The traditional food for the occasion is [Burbara](#), a bowl of boiled [barley](#), [pomegranate](#) seeds, raisins, [anise](#) and sugar. Walnuts or almonds can be added.^{[22][23]} The general belief among [Lebanese Christians](#) is that Saint Barbara disguised herself in numerous characters to elude the Romans who were persecuting her.

The name of the [barbiturate](#) family of pharmaceutical drugs is believed to derive from the suggestion by an artilleryman commemorating the feast of Saint Barbara in 1864, whom the chemist [Adolf von Baeyer](#) encountered at a local tavern whilst celebrating his recent discovery of the parent compound.^[24]

Saint Barbara is mentioned in Thomas Pynchon's novel *[Against the Day](#)*. The December fourth holiday is compared to the Fourth of July, as being **more celebrated by the Dynamiters**.

Saint Barbara is mentioned in [Federico García Lorca](#)'s play, *[La Casa de Bernarda Alba](#)* (1936). According to this drama, a popular Spanish phrase regarding this saint in the early 20th century was:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Barbara

Saint Barbara became the patron saint of [artillerymen](#). She is also traditionally the patron of armourers, military engineers, gunsmiths, tunnellers, miners and anyone else who worked with cannon and explosives. She is invoked against thunder and lightning and all accidents arising from explosions of gunpowder. She is venerated by Catholics who face the danger of sudden and violent death in work.

The Spanish military artillerymen, mining engineers and miners also venerate her as patron saint. Parades, masses, dinners and other activities are held in her honour.

In the [Czech Republic](#), a statue of Saint Barbara is placed near the future tunnel portal during the groundbreaking ceremony of most major tunneling projects, owing to her being the patron saint of miners.