

ST. DYMPHNA

Good Saint Dymphna, great wonder-worker in every affliction of mind and body, I humbly implore your powerful intercession with Jesus through Mary, the Health of the Sick, in my present need. (*Mention it.*) Saint Dymphna, martyr of purity, patroness of those who suffer with nervous and mental afflictions, beloved child of Jesus and Mary, pray to Them for me and obtain my request.

(Pray one Our Father, one Hail Mary and one Glory Be.)

Saint Dymphna, Virgin and Martyr, pray for us.

This prayer to Saint Dymphna succinctly identifies her as the well-known patron saint of those with mental or nervous disorders or mental illness.

According to tradition, as with another great saint, [St. Philomena](#), St. Dymphna was martyred as a teenager for her purity when she resisted the advances of a powerful figure. In St. Philomena's case, it was the Roman emperor Diocletian in the Fourth century. In St. Dymphna's case it an Irish pagan King named Damon, *her own father*, in the Seventh. Apparently, St. Dymphna's mother, who was quite beautiful, died when the child was only about 14. This so distressed King Damon that he sought to have his own daughter, who was Christian, take her place. (Talk about someone with a mental disorder!) Before this occurred, St. Dymphna had taken a vow of chastity, consecrating her virginity to Christ. St. Dymphna then fled Ireland with Saint Gerebernus, her confessor, along with two others to escape the king. They landed in Belgium where they settled in the town of Gheel, but he caught up with them. Damon then killed Saint Gerebernus and St. Dymphna as well, when she refused to return to Ireland with him. As with St. Philomena's story, this account is given to us from tradition and its authenticity has been disputed, but the relics of both Saints have been very powerful indeed! St. Dymphna's relics were placed in a church built in her honor in Gheel, where she was martyred, as miraculous cures of mental disorders took place there in the centuries after her death. The town itself became a model of humane treatment for the mentally ill. In the 13th century, the bishop of Cambrai comissioned an account of St. Dymphna's life's story based on the oral tradition and the miracles attributed to her afterwards. An infirmary to treat the mentally ill was built in Gheel, also in the 13th century, and the town still cares for them to this day. Miraculous cures of mental illness, and epilepsy as well, still occur at her shrine.

Prayers to St. Dymphna like the one above show her to be a great help not just to the mentally ill but, indeed, to anyone experiencing anxieties in these troubled times!

Her feast day is May 15th.