

By  
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## **St. Agnes—A Martyr of Purity**

St. Agnes was twelve years old when she was taken to the altar of Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom, and commanded to obey the laws of Emperor Diocletian (A.D. 303) by offering incense to the gods. During the ceremonies of pagan worship, she raised her hands to Jesus Christ, her Spouse, and made the Sign of the Cross.

She didn't turn away when she was bound hand and foot. As the chains slipped from her young hands, the heathens who stood around were moved to tears. She gladly went to the place of her torture.

When the judge saw that she wasn't afraid of pain, he inflicted an insult worse than death: her clothes were stripped off, and she had to stand in the street before the pagan crowd. Even this didn't weaken her faith in God. She exclaimed, "Christ will guard His own!"

While the crowd averted their eyes from this virgin martyr, there was one young man who dared to gaze at the innocent child with sinful thoughts and desires. A flash of lightning struck him blind, and his friends led him away half dead with pain and fear.

Agnes was offered the hand of a rich young man in marriage, but she answered, "Christ is my Spouse. He chose me first, and His I will be. He has adorned my soul with the jewels of grace and virtue. I'm espoused to Him whom the angels serve."

Whereas nothing else worked, the judge finally sentenced the young virgin to death. For a moment she stood erect in prayer, then she bowed her neck to the sword. With one stroke from the executioner her head was severed from her body, and the angels carried her pure soul to heaven.

St. Agnes was ready to die to prove how much she loved Jesus and hated sin. Does your love of Christ mean as much to you as it did to St. Agnes? Do you subject your virtue to danger just because you want to be stylish, in vogue, or be part of the crowd? Would you defend your purity even if it meant laying down your life as St. Agnes did? Pray to St. Agnes, who is a patroness of purity and the young, that she may help you to keep your soul as pure as she kept hers.

The punishment of the young man who had evil thoughts and desires shows how God hates impurity and how strictly He punishes it. Jesus once said, "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell" (Matthew 5:29).

When I was young, I recall my mom and dad speaking in low tones about a teenage girl in our neighborhood who had contracted a sexually transmitted disease. Low tones was a hallmark of

such discussions in those days. Not so today. Premarital sex is so common among young people today that boys and girls as young as ten are having sexual relations. Thanks to parents allowing their children to have smart phones, pornography abuse among pre-adolescents has reached epidemic proportions. It seems no one gives a thought to sexual purity anymore. Sex has become the be-all-end-all of human existence.

Our Lady of Fatima told the three shepherd children that more souls go to hell for sexual impurity and immodesty than anything else. Satan is constantly waging a war against purity. We are bombarded with his evil and vile attacks all the time. They're in every form of advertising, television shows and the Internet, fashion, and movies. The media in all its varied forms pressure women to be sexier and more immodest (which leads to sexual impurity) all the time. The world tells our young people that it's all about feeling good (especially women), and there aren't any consequences to sex outside of marriage. They're told they don't have to worry about pregnancy, because contraceptives are readily available. If the contraceptive fails, there's always abortion. Men are taught to objectify women as objects of pleasure, and vice versa. Indeed, I can't recall the last time I saw a movie that didn't have a gratuitous sex scene that added *nothing* to the plot. We can't escape the assault on our senses.

We adults can avoid temptations of the flesh, even though it's not easy and requires a lot of cooperation with the actual graces God sends us—often to a heroic degree. It's not so easy for young people dealing with the struggles of transitioning from childhood to adulthood. Raging hormones and a constant assault on the senses from outside sources and peer pressure are destroying our young people.

I'm not sure if parents have given up fighting to help their children achieve and maintain the high moral standards of Catholicism handed down over the last 2000 years, or if parents no longer hold to those standards themselves. Either way, parents who aren't actively trying to help their children navigate through the modern swamp of sexual immorality, impurity and immodesty are actually helping their children find their way into the abyss of hell.

You see me harping a lot about sexual issues on these pages. I know you probably get tired of it, but I believe that what I'm doing is necessary. It's crystal clear to me that the post-Christian society and culture we live in is dedicated to completely destroying virtue. I know you see it too. Virtue has become vice, and vice has become virtue. If you stand up for virtue you're made to feel like an enemy of modern "virtue" when they call you a prude, fanatic, homophobic, xenophobic, and racist—you lack compassion and are judgmental, they tell you.

This war between Christian virtue and worldly vice is un-winnable. Indeed, we've already lost this war, but we must continue to fight to the final breath, just like St. Agnes did. We can still win small victories, one soul at a time. Approached in a proper manner, we can still save the souls of our family members. In order to do so, though, we have to live *exactly* as Jesus tells us, rather than send the message that our family members should do as we say and not do as we do.

Although it's too late to win over the world, we can at least win over the people we love. There are three steps necessary to be able to do this. We must first *learn* and become proficient in the teachings of Jesus. Then we must *apply* those teachings in our own lives. Once we've learned those teachings and applied them, we must cooperate with God in the acceptance of the graces He offers us to *become holy*. Absent these three steps and remaining lukewarm, we make the conscious choice to spend eternity in hell and drag those we claim to love along with us.