

Apparently, the only people who have cherished her and her memory to any extent, have been those with toothaches. They were told or read of her sufferings, with her teeth, and relied on her sympathy for theirs. The following prayer is published in F. Martinez's book on dentistry published in Valladolid, Spain, in 1557:

Illustrious virgin martyr, Apollonia,
Pray to the Lord for us
Lest for our offenses and sins we be punished
By diseases of the teeth.

*(excerpted from: www.Saints.sqpn.com)

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Saint Apollonia

Feast day: February 9



Patron Saint of Toothaches

Saint Apollonia

*For centuries before there was any dental profession, men and women suffering from toothache had been accustomed to call upon Saint Apollonia to come to their assistance. Poor mortals, that was about all they could do, for a medieval toothache was a pretty hopeless affair. If Apollonia declined to help you, you might try a charm, or go upon a little pilgrimage, but in the end you would probably be quite speedily reduced to the drastic remedy of extraction, and be forced to hunt up some one with a pair of forceps or tweezers – the barber, surgeon or the blacksmith. Extraction could have been no laughing matter in those rough days. Wise and wealthy people saved up their toothaches till the day came round for one of the great annual fairs or markets, and then had their decayed stumps harvested, amid a blare of trumpets, by artists in gorgeous costumes. On such occasions the victim would be further en-heartened by a large and interested concourse of spectators.

But perhaps the best thing to do, if Saint Apollonia refused her aid was to seek some monastery and ask the good brothers to take your tooth out. They were usually willing to do so, if approached in the proper spirit. They kept up this tooth pulling practice, too, into quite recent times. Not so very many years ago, if we happened to be on the Capitoline Hill at Rome on one of the proper days, we would have seen a gloomy band of men, women, and children toiling up the long, steep stairs to the portals of the church of Santa Marie in Araceli, not barefooted or on their knees, but with swollen, aching cheeks, done up in cloths or handkerchiefs, which would be tied in large disconsolate bow knots, in a way that is no longer the fashion for pedestrian toothaches. On the upper step a squad of Franciscan friars, forceps in hand, awaited the sufferers, and there on the crest of Araceli's marble staircase, the populace of Rome, amid much unrestrained and hearty screeching, were wont to have their teeth out at the expense of the church.

There lived in Alexandria during the first half of the third century a very opulent magistrate, of unknown name. He had married a wife whom he loved devotedly, and who loved him fondly in return. The only blot on the happiness of this pair was the fact that they had no children. They addressed earnest and unceasing prayers to Juno, Ceres, Jupiter, all the gods, to grant unto them a son or daughter to inherit their vast wealth, but all without avail. Three pious pilgrims arrived in Alexandria, and went from house to house asking alms in the name of the Redeemer and the Blessed Virgin, his mother, for they were tired and hungry. The magistrate's wife, seated at her window one day saw them, and heard their petition at a house across the way. Her interest was aroused by their strange words, and she called to them saying: "What sort of begging is that of yours, and who are the gods in whose name you ask?" Wherefore the pilgrims told her of Christ, His life and teaching. And she asked them if the Virgin Mary would hear her if she prayed that a child might be given her, and the pilgrims replied that the Virgin would be gracious to her without any doubt. Then the wife of the magistrate fell on her knees and prayed long and fervently to the Holy Virgin, and her request was granted and a daughter was born to her, to whom she gave the name of Apollonia.

The child grew into a maiden as lovely and graceful as a flower, and as good and pure as she was beautiful. The family of a Roman magistrate quite naturally conformed to the established religion of the state, but the mother never ceased to talk to her daughter about the wonderful circumstances of her birth, and about Christ and the Holy Virgin to whom she had addressed her prayers. Apollonia drank in all the details, and as she got older there sprang up in her heart a strong desire to be baptized and become a Christian. And Heaven did not leave her helpless. An angel came to her one day and led her out of Alexandria into the desert to the cell of Leonine, a disciple of Saint Anthony. Apollonia told him her story and her wish to be a Christian, and Leonine baptized her forthwith. Hardly had he done so than another angel swooped down from Heaven, and throwing a garment of shining white about Apollonia cried: "This is Apollonia, the servant of Jesus; Go, now, to Alexandria and preach the faith of Christ."

Apollonia returned home filled with ecstasy and zeal. She went among the people and preached to them with wonderful eloquence, making many converts. Before long complaints concerning her and her doings began to pour in on her father. Why did he, a Roman magistrate, allow his daughter to break so flagrantly the laws of the Empire?

He, much disturbed, called Apollonia to him to explain her conduct. She defended herself with dignity and fervor, and still kept on with her preaching and conversions, until her father, beside himself with anger, gave her up to the Roman governor to be dealt with as a criminal. The governor ordered her to be taken into the temple of one of the pagan gods, Serapis, most likely, and bade her fall on her knees before the statue of the deity and adore it. Apollonia flatly refused to comply. She advanced haughtily to the statue, made the sign of the cross, and commanded the demon inside to depart. There was an awful rumble, a crash, a shriek, and from the broken image the demon fled, crying: "The holy virgin, Apollonia, drives me forth."

This proceeding served to send the governor into a fit of violent wrath. At his bidding the girl was bound to a column, and one by one her beautiful teeth were all pulled out with a pair of pincers. Then a big fire was kindled, and, as Apollonia persisted in her faith, she was flung headlong into the blaze, and there gave up her soul to God, being borne to Heaven by His angels.