BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Barbara Kim

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: May 27

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IN BRIEF

Saint Barbara Kim

Korean laywoman, servant and widow, who died in prison in Seoul in 1839, one of the 103 Martyrs of Korea.

Feast day	May 27, September 20
Born	1805, Bongcheon-dong, Gyeonggi province (Korea)
Died	May 27, 1839, Seoul (Korea)
Canonized	May 6, 1984, by John Paul II
Era	19th century

In this booklet

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Barbara Kim

Saint Barbara Kim (Barbe Kim, 김 바르바라 in Korean) was a Korean laywoman of the 19th century. Born in 1805 in Gyeonggi province, a servant, then a wife and a widow, she died in prison in Seoul on May 27, 1839, during the great persecution of that year, after refusing to deny her faith. Canonized by John Paul II in 1984 with the Martyrs of Korea, she is celebrated on May 27 and, with her companions, on September 20.

Who was Saint Barbara Kim?

Barbara Kim belongs to the Church of Korea, which has the particularity of having been born from lay people: at the end of the 18th century, scholars discovered the Christian faith in books from China and handed it on even before priests arrived. In the 19th century, these communities were harshly persecuted. What we know of Barbara comes from the notices gathered for the cause of the Korean martyrs, taken up by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea. It is a simple life, without outward brilliance: that of a poor woman who slowly matured in faith until she gave it the supreme witness.

Key dates in the life of Barbara Kim

- **1805**: Born at Bongcheon-dong, in Gyeonggi province, into a very poor Catholic family that practiced little.
- **c. 1818**: At thirteen, she enters the service of a wealthy Catholic family, that of Mary Hwang, where her faith awakens.
- **Youth**: She wishes to remain a virgin for the Lord, but her father has promised her in marriage.
- **Following years**: Married to a man who is not a Christian, she has several children, only one of whom, a daughter, she is able to have baptized.

- **After she is widowed**: She devotes herself to prayer and works of charity, and takes advantage of the arrival of priests to deepen her spiritual life.
- **March 1839**: Arrested during the persecution; she is tortured but refuses to apostatize or to betray other Christians.
- **May 27, 1839**: After three months in prison, she dies of typhus in Seoul.
- **July 5, 1925**: Beatified by Pope Pius XI, after her martyrdom was recognized on May 9.
- **May 6, 1984**: Canonized in Seoul by Pope John Paul II, with the 103 Martyrs of Korea.

A faith awakened in service

Barbara grew up in a Catholic family in which religion was little practiced. Poverty forced her parents to place her, at thirteen, as a servant in a wealthy household. This family, that of Mary Hwang, lived its faith fervently, and it was there that the girl truly met God. The notices describe her as frank and active, attentive to the Christian teaching she received. Aware of the grace she had been given, she wished to consecrate herself to the Lord by remaining a virgin.

A difficult marriage

One day her father came to tell her that he had promised her to a young man presented as a Catholic. Barbara told him of her wish to keep her virginity, but he could not go back on his word, and she accepted the marriage. Her husband, in fact, was not a Christian. She tried to speak to him of her faith, without success, and this difference weighed on their marriage. Of the children she bore, she was able to have only one daughter baptized. These years show a woman who stayed faithful in a situation she had not chosen.

Once widowed, Barbara could at last give more time to prayer and charity. The secret arrival of priests in Korea, in the 1830s, allowed her to receive the sacraments more regularly and to lead a more intense spiritual life.

The martyrdom of 1839

In 1839 the persecution that Korean history calls the "Gihae persecution" broke out. Barbara Kim was arrested in March. Questioned and tortured, she refused to deny Christ and to give up the names of other Catholics. She spent three months in prison, in hunger, thirst and sickness. On May 27, 1839, typhus took her life, at thirty-five by the Korean reckoning of age. She did not die under the executioner's axe, but from what she had endured for her faith: the Church fully recognizes her as a martyr.

Recognition and devotion

Barbara Kim's martyrdom was recognized by a decree of the Holy See on May 9, 1925, and Pius XI beatified her on July 5 of that year with other martyrs of 1839 and 1846. On May 6, 1984, during his visit to Korea, John Paul II canonized her in Seoul with the 103 Korean martyrs: it was the first canonization celebrated outside Rome in modern times. She is celebrated on May 27, the day of her death, and honored on September 20 with Saint Andrew Kim Taegon, Saint Paul Chong Hasang and their companions.

What can we learn from Saint Barbara Kim?

Barbara Kim did nothing extraordinary in the eyes of the world: she served, she married without having wanted to, she raised her children, she prayed. But she let a faith grow in her that, in the hour of trial, proved unshakable. She is close to women who live their faith alone in their homes, to mothers who cannot

pass on the Gospel as they would wish, to widows and to the poor. You can pray to her for couples divided by faith, for the sick and for persecuted Christians.

To pray with her, see the prayer to Saint Barbara Kim and the novena to Saint Barbara Kim.

Where to pray to Saint Barbara Kim

- **Seoul** (South Korea): the shrines dedicated to the Korean martyrs, which keep the memory of the persecutions of the 19th century.
- Any church dedicated to the **holy Martyrs of Korea**, especially in Korean communities around the world.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Barbara Kim for Families and Persecuted Christians

Saint Barbara Kim, a Korean servant, wife and widow, died in prison in Seoul on May 27, 1839, for remaining faithful to Christ. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to her women who carry their faith alone, divided families and persecuted Christians.

Prayer to Saint Barbara Kim

Saint Barbara Kim,
young servant in a stranger's house,
there you met the Lord
and wished to give him your whole life.
Teach me to recognize God
in the humblest places.

Married without having chosen it,
you loved your husband and your children
without being able to share your faith with them.
Support the women and men
who pray alone in their homes,
and keep them in hope.

In the prison of Seoul,
despite torture, hunger and sickness,
you did not deny Christ.
Obtain for me perseverance in trial,
comfort for the sick,
and strength for persecuted Christians.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Barbara Kim

- On her feast day, May 27, or on September 20 with all the Martyrs of Korea.
- For a spouse or children who have drifted away from the faith.
- For widows and women living alone.
- For the sick, especially those suffering from fevers and infections.

- For Christians imprisoned because of their faith.

A short invocation

> *Saint Barbara Kim, faithful in humility and in trial,*
> *pray for our families. Amen.*

To prepare for her feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Barbara Kim from May 19 to 27, and read the life of Saint Barbara Kim.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Barbara Kim

This novena offers nine days of prayer with Saint Barbara Kim, a Korean laywoman who died in prison in 1839. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on her feast day, May 27, begin on May 19. You can also pray it from September 12 to 20, for the feast of the Martyrs of Korea.

How to pray this novena

Each day, begin with the Sign of the Cross and entrust your intention to God. Read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. End with: "Saint Barbara Kim, pray for us." The act of the day helps you live the novena concretely.

Day 1: Born in poverty

Barbara was born in 1805 into a very poor family, Catholic in name but little practicing. God does not choose easy conditions to make himself known.

Prayer: Lord, bless poor families, and awaken the faith of those who have received it without living it.

Act of the day: Give to an organization that helps families in need.

Day 2: A servant at thirteen

Placed as a servant in a wealthy family, Barbara discovered a living faith there. It was in service that she met the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to serve you in the simplest tasks of my day.

Act of the day: Do a quiet service without expecting thanks.

Day 3: The desire to give herself

Touched by grace, Barbara wished to remain a virgin for the Lord. She wanted to belong to him entirely.

Prayer: Lord, give me an undivided heart, and bless those you call to consecrate their lives to you.

Act of the day: Pray for religious vocations.

Day 4: Accepting what was not chosen

Since her father had promised her, Barbara accepted the marriage. She did not give up God, but learned to serve him on another path.

Prayer: Lord, when my life takes a direction I did not want, help me to find you there.

Act of the day: Peacefully accept an annoyance of the day.

Day 5: Alone in faith at home

Her husband was not a Christian and refused to hear her speak of Christ. Barbara carried her faith alone among her own.

Prayer: Lord, support those who pray alone in their family, and touch the hearts of those they love.

Act of the day: Pray by name for a loved one who is far from the faith.

Day 6: A mother who hands on the faith

Of her children, Barbara was able to have only one daughter baptized. She did what she could, and left the rest to God.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you the children I cannot lead to you. Watch over them better than I can.

Act of the day: Bless your children or grandchildren, or pray for them.

Day 7: A time for charity

Once widowed, Barbara devoted herself to prayer and works of charity, and was nourished by the sacraments when the priests arrived.

Prayer: Lord, make every stage of my life, even the most painful, a time to love you and to love others.

Act of the day: Visit a widowed or isolated person.

Day 8: The arrest

In March 1839, Barbara was arrested and tortured. She refused to deny her faith and to give up the names of her fellow Christians.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to stay faithful to you and to protect those entrusted to me.

Act of the day: Pray for Christians imprisoned today for their faith.

Day 9: Death in prison

After three months of suffering, Barbara died of typhus on May 27, 1839. The Church recognizes her as a martyr and a saint.

Prayer: Lord, through the intercession of Saint Barbara Kim, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will, and give peace to those who suffer.

Act of the day: Pray for a sick person and, if possible, visit them.

Closing prayer

Saint Barbara Kim,
humble servant and faithful martyr,
present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Watch over our families,
and keep us faithful to the end.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

You can also pray the prayer to Saint Barbara Kim at any time, and read the life of Saint Barbara Kim.

Credits and sources

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