BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Vibiana

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: September 1

IN BRIEF

Saint Vibiana

Roman virgin and martyr of the early centuries, patron of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Feast day	September 1
Born	3rd century (according to tradition), Rome (according to tradition)
Died	3rd century (according to tradition), Rome
Canonized	local cult (catacomb saint)
Era	3rd century
Patron saint of	Archdiocese of Los Angeles

In this booklet

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Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Vibiana

Saint Vibiana is a young Christian woman of Rome, honored as a virgin and martyr of the early centuries, probably of the 3rd century. Her tomb was found in 1853 in the catacombs, near the Appian Way. Her relics, given by Pope Pius IX to the bishop of California, are now venerated in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles, whose archdiocese has her as its patron. Her feast day is September 1.

Who was Saint Vibiana?

Saint Vibiana belongs to those "catacomb saints" known only by a name carved on a tomb. No ancient account tells of her life or death. All we know of her comes from the discovery of her tomb in the 19th century and from the inscription that accompanied it: "To the soul of the innocent and pure Vibiana," above a laurel wreath. In keeping with the practice of the time, this sign of victory led people to regard the dead woman as a martyr. Her name has remained dear to the Catholics of California, who dedicated their first great cathedral to her.

Key dates in the life of Vibiana

- **3rd century**: Life and death in Rome, according to tradition; no details are known.
- **December 9, 1853**: Her tomb is discovered in the catacombs, near the Appian Way.
- **c. 1854**: Pope Pius IX entrusts her relics to Thaddeus Amat, bishop of Monterey, in California, asking him to build a cathedral in her honor.
- **1876**: The Cathedral of Saint Vibiana is consecrated in Los Angeles; the relics are placed there.

- **1994**: The Northridge earthquake seriously damages the old cathedral.
- **2002**: The relics are transferred to the mausoleum of the new Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles.

A tomb in the catacombs

In the 19th century, excavations in the Roman catacombs brought to light many burials of Christians of the early centuries. On December 9, 1853, the tomb of a young woman named Vibiana was discovered near the Appian Way. The marble slab closing the tomb bore a short Latin inscription calling her innocent and pure, adorned with a laurel wreath. At that time, such signs led people to see the dead woman as a virgin martyr. Historians today are more cautious about such identifications, but there is no reason to doubt that she was a Christian of the early centuries, buried among her brothers and sisters in the faith.

From Rome to California

Shortly after the discovery, Pope Pius IX gave the relics to Thaddeus Amat, a Catalan priest who had become bishop of Monterey, an immense diocese that then covered Southern California. The pope asked him to build a cathedral in honor of the saint. The bishop brought the relics to America and, when the see of the diocese was moved to Los Angeles, he had the Cathedral of Saint Vibiana built there, consecrated in 1876. For more than a century, it was the heart of the Catholic Church in Los Angeles.

In 1994, the Northridge earthquake seriously damaged the building. The diocese decided to build a new cathedral, Our Lady of the Angels, opened in 2002. The relics of Saint Vibiana were then transferred there and placed in the mausoleum beneath the church. The old cathedral, now deconsecrated, has been restored and still bears her name.

Devotion and art

Saint Vibiana is the patron of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Her feast day is September 1. She is not listed in the Roman Martyrology and her cult remains local, but it is alive in California. She is depicted as a young girl, with the martyr's palm and sometimes the laurel wreath recalling the inscription on her tomb.

What can we learn from Saint Vibiana?

She has been called the patron of nobodies. Saint Vibiana left neither writings nor stories, only a name and two words: innocent and pure. Her memory links the Church of the catacombs to one of the largest cities of the modern world. She can be invoked by those who feel forgotten, by young people, and by all who want to keep a pure heart in the midst of the world.

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

Where to pray to Saint Vibiana

- **Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels** (Los Angeles, California): her relics rest in the cathedral mausoleum.
- **Former Cathedral of Saint Vibiana** (Los Angeles): the 1876 building that was dedicated to her, now deconsecrated.
- **Rome**: the catacombs of the Appian Way, where her tomb was found.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Vibiana for a Pure Heart and for the Forgotten

Saint Vibiana, a young Christian of Rome honored as a virgin and martyr, is known only through the inscription on her tomb: "innocent and pure." Her relics now rest in the cathedral of Los Angeles, whose archdiocese has her as patron. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to her purity of heart, young people and all who feel forgotten.

Prayer to Saint Vibiana

Saint Vibiana,
you of whom we know only your name
and the beautiful witness carved on your tomb,
innocent and pure,
obtain for me a simple and upright heart,
that seeks God without detours.

You rested for centuries in the silence of the catacombs,
among the first Christians of Rome;
teach me humble faithfulness,
the kind that does not seek to be seen
but to belong wholly to the Lord.

You whom the Church of Los Angeles chose as patron,
watch over young people, over those who are alone
and over all whom the world forgets.
Help us to keep the faith in the midst of great cities,
and lead us to Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Vibiana

- On her feast day, September 1.
- To ask for purity of heart and faithfulness in the faith.
- For young people, especially young women.
- For the Church of Los Angeles and the Catholics of California.
- When you feel forgotten or unimportant.

A short invocation

> *Saint Vibiana, innocent and pure,*
> *keep my heart for God.*
> *Pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for her feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Vibiana from August 24 to September 1, and read the life of Saint Vibiana.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Vibiana

This novena offers nine days of prayer with Saint Vibiana, Roman virgin and martyr, patron of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition; it is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on her feast day, September 1, begin on August 24. You can also pray it at any other time of the year.

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 Vibiana, pray for us." The act of the day helps you live the novena concretely. Since almost nothing is known of her life, the meditations start from the inscription on her tomb and the story of her relics.

Day 1: A name carved in stone

Of Vibiana, only a name remains. But God had always known that name: he calls each of us by name.

Prayer: Lord, you have called me by my name. Help me to answer your call with trust.

Act of the day: Pray for the saint whose name you bear, or for your patron saint.

Day 2: Innocent

The inscription calls her innocent. Innocence is not naivety: it is a heart that does not want to do harm.

Prayer: Lord, cleanse my heart of all ill will and make me like the children of the Kingdom.

Act of the day: Hold back a hurtful word.

Day 3: Pure

Vibiana is also called pure. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Prayer: Lord, give me a pure way of looking at others and at myself.

Act of the day: Keep a moment of silence and turn off screens for an hour.

Day 4: The laurel wreath

A laurel wreath adorned her tomb, a sign of victory. For Christians, the true victory is faithfulness to Christ.

Prayer: Lord, keep me faithful to the end, and give me a share in the victory of your Resurrection.

Act of the day: Meditate on the crown of life in the Book of Revelation (Rev 2:10).

Day 5: With the first Christians

Vibiana rested in the catacombs, among the Christians of Rome. Faith is lived in community, in the communion of saints.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the communion of saints. Unite me with all who loved you before me.

Act of the day: Pray for Christians persecuted today.

Day 6: A long journey

Her relics crossed the ocean to reach California. The saints accompany young Churches and peoples on the move.

Prayer: Lord, bless migrants and those who begin a new life far from home.

Act of the day: Help someone who has come from elsewhere.

Day 7: A house for God

Pope Pius IX asked that a cathedral be built in her honor. Churches are houses where God gathers his people.

Prayer: Lord, make my parish a welcoming house, and my heart a place where you dwell.

Act of the day: Spend a few minutes in prayer in a church.

Day 8: After the earthquake

In 1994 the earth shook and the old cathedral was damaged. A new cathedral now houses her relics. God knows how to raise up what has been broken.

Prayer: Lord, raise up what is broken in my life and in the world, and give me hope.

Act of the day: Support the victims of a disaster, through prayer or a gift.

Day 9: Patron of the forgotten

Vibiana has been called the patron of nobodies. She reminds us that no one is forgotten by God.

Prayer: Lord, remember those whom no one notices. Through the intercession of Saint Vibiana, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Check in on someone who lives alone.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Vibiana,*
> *innocent and pure,*
> *you who now rest in the heart of a great city,*
> *present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Keep my heart simple and faithful,*
> *and watch over those whom the world forgets.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

PILGRIMAGE

Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles

The Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels stands in the center of Los Angeles, California. The seat of the archbishop, it was opened in 2002 to replace the old Cathedral of Saint Vibiana, damaged by an earthquake. The relics of Saint Vibiana, patron of the archdiocese, rest in the mausoleum beneath the church.

From Saint Vibiana to Our Lady of the Angels

In the 19th century, Pope Pius IX gave Bishop Thaddeus Amat the relics of Vibiana, a young Christian of Rome whose tomb had just been found in the catacombs, asking him to build a cathedral in her honor. The Cathedral of Saint Vibiana was consecrated in 1876 and remained for more than a century the heart of the Catholic Church in Los Angeles.

The Northridge earthquake of 1994 seriously damaged the building. The archdiocese then decided to build a new cathedral, entrusted to the Spanish architect Rafael Moneo. Dedicated to Our Lady of the Angels, the patron of the city, it was consecrated in September 2002. The relics of Saint Vibiana were transferred there the same year.

What you can see

The modern building, with its angular lines and ocher walls, is arranged around a vast nave bathed in soft light. Large tapestries depict a procession of saints and blessed of every age, turned toward the altar. Beneath the church, the mausoleum houses chapels and the tombs of bishops of Los Angeles. It is there that the faithful come to pray before the relics of Saint Vibiana. A plaza surrounds the cathedral and makes it a meeting place in the heart of the city.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Vibiana. Before her relics, entrust to her young people, those who are alone and the purity of your heart, then say the prayer to Saint Vibiana. Attending Mass in the cathedral is a way to join the prayer of the whole Church of Los Angeles. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Vibiana

- **Former Cathedral of Saint Vibiana** (Los Angeles): the 1876 building, now deconsecrated and restored, which still bears her name.
- **Rome**: the catacombs near the Appian Way, where her tomb was discovered in 1853.

Practical information

The cathedral is in downtown Los Angeles and is easy to reach by public transportation. It is a place of worship: modest dress and silence are requested, especially during services. Mass times and access to the mausoleum may vary: check with the cathedral before your visit.

Credits and sources

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