

Homily
Memorial of Saint Cecilia
November 22, 2023

Today we remember St. Cecilia, virgin and martyr of the 3rd century. Much of what we know of St. Cecilia is uncertain and handed down through the centuries. What we believe is that she came from a wealthy and affluent family. She converted to Christianity and made a vow of virginity at a young age, but her parents forced her to marry a pagan named Valerian. She maintained her virginity and even converted her husband and his brother. They both died for refusing to deny their faith. Cecilia, remaining fervent in her faith, continued to preach, converting hundreds until she was tortured and eventually beheaded. Her body was found incorrupt over a thousand years later, her body appearing to be sleeping. St. Cecilia is said to have heard heavenly music in her heart when she was married and is represented in art with an organ or organ-pipes in her hand. She is the patron of musicians, composers, instrument makers, and poets.

Who likes to sing? Whether here at Mass, in our car, in the shower, we all have been given a voice. And, thanks to God, some of us can sing beautifully. To those, I encourage you to praise God for that gift and sing loudly and clearly. For those who were not gifted with a singing voice, I encourage you to praise God for the other gifts in your life and sing even more loudly to remind God of the gift He didn't give you. And to all of us, let us pray for the intercession of St. Cecilia to help us all sing better, sing joyfully and sing to the glory and praise of God.

Today we heard the parable of the wise and unwise virgins which we just heard this past Sunday. It is appropriate as we listen to and emulate St. Cecilia's story. Although she was young, St. Cecilia aligned herself to God's will and chose to be a virgin. She remained faithful even in the face of the evil that surrounded her. She loved much; she shared that love with her husband and his brother; she preached the love God has for all of us. And we can follow her example of remaining faithful. It is wise to follow God, Who is all and in all, Who loves us more than we can imagine, Who created all things; Who created us in His likeness and image; Who created us good. It is wise for us to embrace our goodness because it comes from God. And, like the wise virgins, it is good for us to be prepared.

How can we be wise today? How can we be prepared today? Coming to Mass this morning is a great start. How will the rest of our day go?

In a few moments, we will be witness to the greatest miracle ever – Jesus coming to us on this altar. In a few moments, we will become one with Him and one each other in the reception of His very Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. And immediately after that, we will be dismissed to go into the world to be Christ for the world. How will you be Christ for the world?