

Santa Clara de Montefalco

Patroness of those with Heart Illnesses

The devotion to Santa Clara evolved after a remarkable discovery that took place the day after her death on August 17, 1308.

The story is told that the saint once had a vision of Jesus as a pilgrim carrying a cross. Weary of carrying it, the Lord made a move to give her, thrusting its base into her chest. This happened in October 1294. Since then, Santa Clara bore the agony of Christ's passion quietly until she died fourteen years later.

Remembering how the saint used to refer to this cross, the nuns decided on the day after her death, August 18, to open her heart with the intention to preserve it. What they saw confounded them! For there, implanted in Santa Clara's heart were the mystical imprints of the cross and other symbols of Christ's sufferings, such as the scourge, the nails, the crown of thorns, and the lance. Even the figure of the crucified Christ with his head inclined towards the right arm was discernable.

Another miraculous manifestation discovered by the nuns was the presence in her gall bladder of three pellets or stone "large as a hazel nut" perfectly equal in shape, color and weight, which after being subjected to close examination by experts were found to have the same weight—"any one of them as heavy as the other two and any one of them equaled the weight of all three together." The theologians present during the examination agreed that these were symbolic of the Blessed Trinity for whom the saint had a great devotion.





To this day, six centuries since the discovery, these configurations are still distinct when one views the incorrupt body of Santa Clara seen in her shrine in the church of the Holy Cross of Montefalco, Italy.

It is God's reward for the nun's intense love for the Lord demonstrated through countless hours in prayer and meditation and acts of penance, and throughout her short but fruitful 40 years of caring for the poor and the sick. But it is the manner of her death which poignantly showed how much He loved her in return:

“She went peacefully, seated on her bed, smiling, her eyes turned towards heaven, keeping that pose, without a quiver, without movement, until Francis, her brother, taking her pulse, finally announced, weeping, ‘she is dead’.”

On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1881, Pope Leo XIII officially declared her a Saint at the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome.

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