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Nov. 25, St. Catherine of Alexandria

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NCR Today

Today is the feast of St. Catherine of Alexandria, a saint loved and venerated by Christians of the East and of the West.

St. Catherine, portrayed by countless artists over the centuries, is shown debating with the philosophers, or with the wheel upon which she was to be tortured. The spiked wheel broke, and Catherine was beheaded instead.

Catherine of Alexandria may have been a Christianized version of Hypatia of Alexandria, another woman of late antiquity, another philosopher, mathematician, and public lecturer, whose brilliance inflamed the powerful men of her era. In Catherine's case, the Christian woman was martyred by pagans. In Hypatia's case, the pagan woman was destroyed by Christians.

Click here to find a sonnet by Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli about the traditions of St. Catherine's Day, when the house is readied for winter, and when the pifferari arrive in Rome to play <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKPckU3qGPs&feature=related>> their music for the Virgin Mary in the weeks before Christmas.

St. Catherine, one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers, is invoked for protection from sudden and unprovided death.

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