

By her virtue she gained so great an ascendant over her master that a single word would often suffice to check the greatest transports of his rage; and she would sometimes cast herself at his feet to appease him in favour of others. She never kept anything for herself but the poor garments which she wore: everything else she gave to the poor. Her master, seeing his goods multiply, as it were, in her hands, gave her ample leave to bestow liberal alms on the poor, which she made use of with discretion, but was scrupulous to do nothing without his express authority. If she heard others spoken ill of, she zealously took upon her their defence and excused their faults.

Always when she communicated, and often when she heard mass, and on other occasions, she melted in sweet tears of divine love: she was often favoured with ecstasies during her prayers. In her last sickness she clearly foretold her death, and having prepared herself for her passage by receiving the last sacraments, and by ardent signs of love, she happily expired on the 27th of April, in 1272, being sixty years old: one hundred and fifty miracles wrought in the behalf of such as had recourse to her intercession have been juridically proved. Her body was found entire in 1580 and is kept with great respect in St. Frigidian's church, richly enshrined; her face and hands are exposed naked to view through a crystal glass. Pope Leo X granted an office in her honour. The city of Lucca pays a singular veneration to her memory.

*(Excerpted from: ewtn.com)

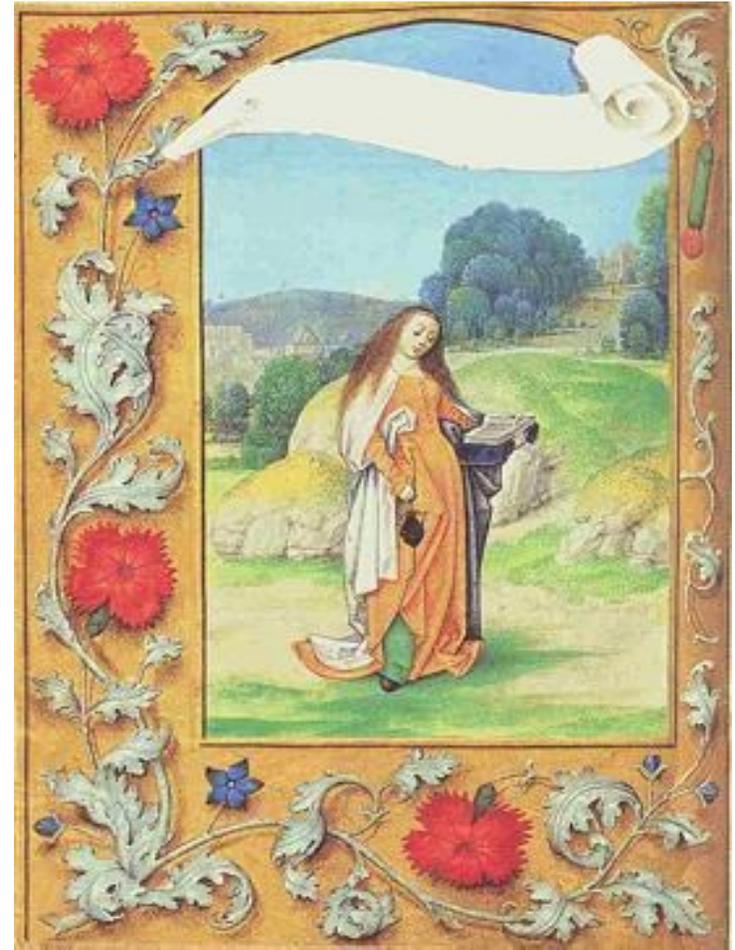


INCORRUPT BODY OF SAINT ZITA

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Saint Zita, Virgin

Feast Day: April 27



Patronage:

**Domestic servants, homemakers, lost keys,
people ridiculed for their piety,
waiters, and single lay women.**

Saint Zita

*She was born in the beginning of the thirteenth century (1212) at Montsegradi, a village near Lucca in Italy. She was brought up with the greatest care, in the fear of God, by her poor virtuous mother, whose early and constant attention to inspire the tender heart of her daughter with religious sentiments seemed to find no obstacles, either from private passions or the general corruption of nature, so easily were they prevented or overcome. Zita had no sooner attained the use of reason, and was capable of knowing and loving God, than her heart was no longer able to relish any other object, and she seemed never to lose sight of him in her actions. Her mother reduced all her instructions to two short heads, and never had occasion to use any further remonstrance to enforce her lessons than to say, "This is most pleasing to God; this is the divine will"; or, "That would displease God."

The sweetness and modesty of the young child charmed everyone who saw her. She spoke little, and was most assiduous at her work; but her business never seemed to interrupt her prayers. At twelve years of age she was put to service in the family of a citizen of Lucca, called Fatinelli, whose house was contiguous to the church of St. Frigidian. She was thoroughly persuaded that labour is enjoined all men as a punishment of sin, and as a remedy for the spiritual disorders of their souls; and far from ever harbouring in her breast the least uneasiness, or expressing any sort of complaint under contradictions, poverty, and hardships, and still more from ever entertaining the least idle, inordinate, or worldly desire, she blessed God for placing her in a station in which she was supplied with the most effectual means to promote her sanctification, by the necessity of employing herself in penitential labour, and of living in a perpetual conformity and submission of her will to others. She was also very sensible of the advantages of her state, which afforded all necessaries of life, without engaging her in the anxious cares and violent passions by which worldly persons, who enjoy most plentifully the goods of fortune, are often disturbed; whereby their souls resemble a troubled sea, always agitated by impetuous storms, without knowing the sweetness of a true calm. She considered her work as an employment assigned her by God, and as part of her penance; and obeyed her master and mistress in all things as being placed over her by God. She always rose several hours before the rest of the family and employed in prayer a considerable part of the time which others gave to sleep. She took care to hear mass every morning with great devotion before she was called upon by the duties of her station, in which she employed the whole day with such diligence and fidelity that she seemed to be carried to them on wings, and studied when possible to anticipate them.

Notwithstanding her extreme attention to her exterior employments, she acquired a wonderful facility of joining with them almost continual mental prayer and of keeping her soul constantly attentive to the divine presence. Who would not imagine that such a person should have been esteemed and beloved by all who knew her?

Nevertheless, by the appointment of divine providence, for her great spiritual advantage, it fell out quite otherwise and for several years she suffered the harshest trials. Her modesty was called by her fellow-servants simplicity, and want of spirit and sense; and her diligence was judged to have no other spring than affectation and secret pride. Her mistress was a long time extremely prepossessed against her, and her passionate master could not bear her in his sight without transports of rage.

It is not to be conceived how much the saint had continually to suffer in this situation. So unjustly despised, overburdened, reviled, and often beaten, she never repined nor lost her patience; but always preserved the same sweetness in her countenance, and the same meekness and charity in her heart and words, and abated nothing of her application to her duties. A virtue so constant and so admirable at length overcame jealousy, antipathy, prepossession, and malice.

Her master and mistress discovered the treasure which their family possessed in the fidelity and example of the humble saint, and the other servants gave due praise to her virtue. Zita feared this prosperity more than adversity, and trembled lest it should be a snare to her soul. But sincere humility preserved her from its dangers; and her behaviour, amidst the caresses and respect shown her, continued the same as when she was ill-treated and held in derision; she was no less affable, meek, and modest; no less devout, nor less diligent or ready to serve everyone. Being made housekeeper, and seeing her master and mistress commit to her with an entire confidence the government of their family and management of all their affairs, she was most scrupulously careful in point of economy, remembering that she was to give to God an account of the least farthing of what was entrusted as a depositum in her hands; and, though head-servant, she never allowed herself the least privilege or exemption in her work on that account.

She used often to say to others that devotion is false if slothful. Hearing a man-servant speak one immodest word, she was filled with horror, and procured him to be immediately discharged from the family. With David, she desired to see it composed only of such whose approved piety might draw down a benediction of God upon the whole house and be a security to the master for their fidelity and good example. She kept fast the whole year, and often on bread and water; and took her rest on the bare floor or on a board. Whenever business allowed her a little leisure, she spent it in holy prayer and contemplation in a little retired room in the garret; and at her work repeated frequently ardent ejaculations of divine love, with which her soul appeared always inflamed. She respected her fellow-servants as her superiors. If she was sent on commissions a mile or two in the greatest storms, she set out without delay, executed them punctually, and returned often almost drowned, without showing any sign of reluctance or murmuring.