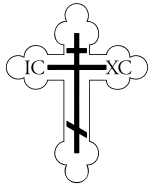


**SAINT
THE**

**BARBARA
NUN**





St. Barbara

Nun-Martyr ❖ Cell Attendant to St. Elizabeth

Barbara Yakovlena was a maidservant to the Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia and her husband, Grand Duke Sergius Alexandrovich. When the Grand Duke was assassinated in 1905, Elizabeth founded the convent of Saints Martha and Mary in Moscow.

On April 15, 1910, Mother Elizabeth became the superior or abbess of the convent. Barbara, whose nickname was Varya, also took the vows of a **nun** and became one of her novices. Together the women of the convent devoted their lives to prayer and fasting, as well as helping the poor and sick.

Their charitable work, begun with the blessing from St. Patriarch Tikhon, was well-known and spread throughout Moscow and Russia from World War I through the Bolshevik **Revolution**. They took food to the poor, opened a home for women with tuberculosis, founded a hospital and school, and set up homes to care for those who were disabled, widowed, or elderly. They also founded an orphanage to care for homeless children.

The Bolshevik Revolution began in 1917. All members of the Tsar's family and other royal family members were arrested or exiled (sent out of Russia). Tsar Nicholas and his family were sent to Siberia. In April of 1918, Patriarch Tikhon paid a visit to the convent. Mother Elizabeth, her fellow nuns, and other members of the royal family were rounded up and arrested. The nuns who were not royalty were to be released. Nuns Barbara and Catherine begged their captors to allow them to accompany Mother Elizabeth, but were refused.

These two brave women got on their knees and begged to be with their superior. The soldiers allowed Nun Barbara to join her beloved Mother, but only after signing an agreement that she would be willing to die with her. She did, saying, "I agree to give you the requested signature, not only in ink but, if necessary, in my own blood." The soldiers, stunned at this loyalty in the face of possible death, allowed Nun Barbara to join her beloved Mother Elizabeth, and Nun Catherine was released. The two women, Mother Elizabeth and Nun Barbara, were reunited and sent to Ekaterinburg, and then to Alapaevsk, in Siberia.

While imprisoned, Mother Elizabeth and Nun Barbara prayed and ministered to the others. The members of the royal family as well as the soldiers who guarded them were deeply impressed by their constant prayer, many times finding them in prayer all night. The two women also impressed their captors by their dignified manner and their care for the other prisoners, who all knew they did not have long to live.

On July 18, 1918, Mother Elizabeth, Nun Barbara and members of the royal family were awakened, and taken by cart to a deep, flooded mineshaft. They were thrown down the shaft, and thought to have drowned. Instead, the soldiers heard hymns sung from the bottom of the shaft! Despite agonizing pain and suffering, their singing continued for many hours, to the amazement of their captors.



Quote

I agree to give you the requested signature, not only in ink but, if necessary, in my own blood.
- St. Barbara

Date Died

July 5, 1918 Near Alopevsk, Siberia

Place Buried

Church of St. Mary Magdalene in Jerusalem

The relics of the **martyrs**, or those killed for their faith, were later recovered and sent to China, where they remained until 1920. Later that year, the relics of St. Elizabeth and St. Barbara were reverently brought to Jerusalem and buried at the Church of St. Mary Magdalene (that St. Elizabeth had once visited), where they remain to this day.

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Troparion *(Tone 4)*

Emulating the Lord's self-abasement on the earth,
You gave up royal mansions to serve the poor and disdained,
Overflowing with compassion for the suffering,
And taking up a martyr's cross, In your meekness,
You perfected the Saviour's image within yourself.
Therefore with Barbara, entreat
Him to save us all, O wise Elizabeth.

Kontakion *(Tone 3)*

In the midst of worldliness,
your mournful heart dwelt in Heaven; in barbaric godlessness,
Your valiant soul was not troubled;
You longed to meet your Bridegroom as a confessor,
And He found you worthy of your martyr's purpose.
O Elizabeth, with Barbara, Your brave companion,
Pray to your Bridegroom for us.

Key Terms

Martyr: A person who is killed for his or her faith.

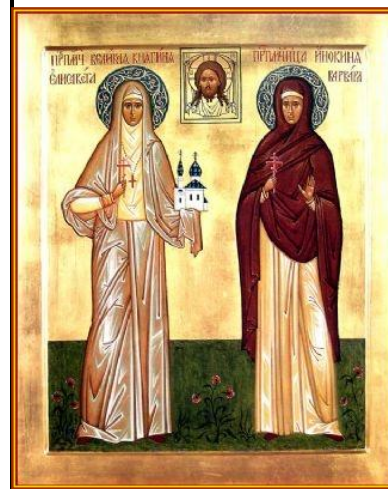
Nun: A woman who takes monastic vows.

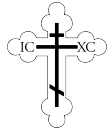
Revolution: A civil war overthrowing a country's government.

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✙ V. Rev. John Perich, MA, Russian History





Journal Prompts

St. Barbara ✦ Holy & Righteous Nun-Martyr Barbara ✦ New Martyr of Russia

1. St. Barbara was a faithful Orthodox Christian from the time she was very young. Later, she was an extraordinarily faithful servant to her mistress, and later superior, Grand Duchess Elizabeth. When she begged her captors to allow her to remain with Sister Elizabeth, she signed an agreement that she would be willing to die with her. Describe her feelings as she was about to sign her life away.

2. Have you ever been with your friends and a disagreement happened between them? How did you react? Did you have to take sides or defend one of them to the other, even at the risk of losing one of them as a friend? What did you do or say? What were the results? How did you feel?

3. What specific difficulties did St. Barbara encounter as she tried to follow Christ?

4. Do we encounter or see the same difficulties today?

5. How would you respond in the face of these adversities?

6. What lessons are there for us to learn from the life of St. Barbara living in times of trouble?

7. What guidance does the scripture offer us about handling difficult situations like this?



St. Barbara's Travels

