

St. Imelda Lamertini

Feast Day: May 13

Patron: of fervent first communion

Death: 1333

The patroness of fervent first communion, Blessed Imelda, came from one of the oldest families in Bologna; her father was Count Igano Lambertini and her mother was Castora Galuzzi. Even as a tiny child she showed an unusual piety, taking delight in prayer and slipping off to a quiet corner of the house, which she adorned with flowers and pictures to make it a little oratory. When she was nine, she was placed, at her own wish, in the Dominican convent in Val di Pietra, to be trained there by the nuns. Her disposition soon endeared her to all, while the zeal with which she entered all the religious life of the house greatly edified the nuns. Her special devotion was to the Eucharistic presence of Our Lord at Mass and in the tabernacle. To receive Our Lord in Holy Communion became the consuming desire of her heart, but the custom of the place and time had fixed twelve as the earliest age to receive First Communion. Sometimes she would exclaim: "Tell me, can anyone receive Jesus into his heart and not die? "

When she was eleven years old she was present with the rest of the community at the Ascension Day Mass. All the others had received their communion: only Imelda was left unsatisfied. The nuns were preparing to leave the church when some of them were startled to see what appeared to be a Sacred Host hovering in the air above Imelda, as she knelt before the closed tabernacle absorbed in prayer. Quickly they attracted the attention of the priest who hurried forward with a paten on which to receive It. In the face of such a miracle, he could do nothing else but give Imelda her first communion, which was also her last. The rapture with which she received her Lord was so great that it broke her heart: she sank unconscious to the ground, and when loving hands upraised her, it was found that she was dead.