

Blessed Imelda Lambertini
born c. 1322, Bologna, Italy
died 12 May 1333, Val di Pietra, Italy

The patron saint of first communicants was another one of those headstrong girls who became great saints. Imelda was not a martyr, however. She simply died of joy.

The daughter of a noble family, nine-year-old Imelda was placed in a Dominican convent outside the walls of Bologna. She was the youngest of several girls boarding there, and she became the Sisters' pet. They allowed Imelda to pray with them and even to wear a modified Dominican habit, but they drew the line at letting her receive Communion. Imelda cried when they told her that she must be fourteen to receive the Eucharist. She appealed to the convent chaplain, but he refused to make an exception.

On the eve of the feast of the Ascension, after the Sisters and older girls had received Communion, the priest left, and as the Sisters began to follow him out of the convent chapel, Imelda remained behind, praying silently. Suddenly a heavenly fragrance filled the air and a radiant Host was seen hovering over Imelda's head. Some Sisters said that the Host had emerged from the tabernacle, while others said it descended from heaven. They called the priest back to see. He could not understand what it meant at first, and simply knelt in adoration. As he knelt, the Host descended onto the paten. Bowing at Diving Will, he understood that he had no choice but to give Imelda her first Communion. Tasting the Host, she was so overcome that she collapsed and died in an ecstasy of joy. The Sister said that she died in *soculo Domini* ("In the kiss of the Lord").

Imelda's body was placed in a marble tomb in the convent sacristy. Every year, on the anniversary of her death, the Sisters commemorated her with prayers and hymns. Two hundred years later, they moved to a new convent inside Bologna's city walls, and today Imelda's relics are venerated there at the church of Saint Sigismund.

The Genius Imelda Lambertini:

Strong-willed, impatient, and eager for experience, Imelda was no perfect little girl, but she achieved perfect joy in the Eucharist.

Reflection:

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

Matthew 7.7

From The Big Book of Woman Saints, written by Sarah Gallick, page 144