

Saint Bibiana of Rome  
(Vivian)  
died 362, Rome, Italy

Bibiana was born into a powerful Christian family, but her life changed when the new emperor, Julian the Apostate, rejected his own baptism. He launched a campaign against all Christians, whom he referred contemptuously as Galileans. When the new pagan governor, Apronianus, was in an accident and lost an eye, he blamed it on Christian magic and resolved to exterminate the Galileans once and for all. Bibiana's father, Flavian, was one of the first arrested. A former governor himself, he refused to deny his faith and was branded on the face with a hot iron, then banished to Acquapendente to die. Three days later, Bibiana's mother, Dafrosa, was beheaded. Finally, Bibiana and her sister Demetria were brought before Apronianus, who ordered them scourged. Demetria collapsed and died on the spot. Apronianus briefly lodged Bibiana with a brothel-keeper called Rufina, but she failed to corrupt her, and so Apronianus has Bibiana scourged with lead-tipped whips until she died. The church built over Bibiana's home still stands today. It contains the relics of her family as well as a statue of her by Bernini that is considered one of the finest in Rome.

**The Genius of Bibiana:**

Bibiana's story is considered mainly legend, but it is worth noting that about six months after her martyrdom, Julian the Apostate was mortally wounded in a battle with the Persians. Christians and pagans agreed that his dying words were "Thou has conquered, O Galilean." With Julian's demise, religious tolerance returned to the Roman Empire.

**Reflection:**

*"For the grace of God has appeared, saving all and training us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age, as we await the blessed hope, the appearance of the glory of the great God and of our saviour Jesus Christ who gave himself for us to deliver us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people as his own, eager to do what is good."*

Titus 2.11-14

Gallick, Sarah The Big Book of Woman Saints p. 362