

## Three Spiritual Daughters

Blessed Diana Andalo - died 1236, Bologna, Italy  
Blessed Cecilia Caesarini - died 1290, Bologna, Italy  
Blessed Amata of San Sisto - died 1270, Bologna, Italy

The three women that Dominic de Guzman called his spiritual daughters played key roles in the early growth of the Dominican Order.

Diana Bandalo came from one of Bologna's most important families and enjoyed all the privileges of her class. When Dominican preachers arrived in Bologna in 1218, she convinced her grandfather to give them land and a church under his patronage. But when Diana tried to enter the order, her family tracked her down, beat her, and dragged her home. In the year it took Diana to recover from her injuries, her father relented and allowed her to build a convent in Bologna. Diana began with four companions, and she asked for more nuns from the convent of San Sisto in Rome, who had learned the Rule from Dominic himself. In this group were Cecilia and Amata.

Cecilia Caesarini, a high-spirited noblewoman, had been a novice in the more scandalous convent in Rome. When Dominic came there to preach about reform, the nuns surprised their families and friends by accepting his strict rule. Cecilia the first woman to receive a veil from Dominic.

There is a legend that a week after Cecilia made her vows at San Sisto, Dominic was preaching to a crowd when a possessed woman became disruptive. She (or rather the seven devils inside her) insulted Dominic throughout his sermon. Finally, Dominic raised his hand, made the sign of the cross, and commanded the devils to leave her. She spit up hot coals and blood, but was finally free. She soon took the veil from Dominic, who gave her the name Amata, which means "beloved."

### **The Genius of Diana, Cecilia, and Amata:**

Neither family pressure, abuse, nor the devil himself could conquer these women. Their writings are priceless historical records. Diana's correspondence with Jordan of Saxony chronicles the spread of Dominican missionaries. Cecilia's memoir is all we know of the human side of Saint Dominic.

### **Reflection:**

*"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways!"*

Romans 11.33