

# I SPY IN MY LITTLE ICON



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Why do you think they dress up for St. Barbara's Feast Day? Well, St. Barbara lived a little after the year 300 AD. Her father, Dioscoros, was a powerful leader and very wealthy, but he was a pagan. In fact, he helped Emperor Maximian to persecute the Christians of the time. St. Barbara was an extraordinarily beautiful young woman, and in an effort to hide her away from the world, her father built a tall tower and required her to live there. Despite his efforts to lock her away from the world, St. Barbara was very curious about what great creator could have made the majestic mountains and hills, brilliant sunsets, and exquisite creatures she could see out her window. She was intelligent and questioned all of her teachers until she finally learned of the One True God. St. Barbara knew it was illegal to be a Christian, but she was baptized secretly despite the risk to her earthly life.

While Dioscoros was away on a business trip, a bathhouse was being built on their property. St. Barbara went to the builders and asked them to add a third window where only two had been planned for. She wanted the three windows to represent the light of the Holy Trinity flowing into the building. When her father returned from his trip, he was irate to find that the builders had not followed his instructions. Not wanting the builders to come to any harm, St. Barbara confessed to her father that the architectural change was done at her request and that she had chosen to become a Christian.

Dioscoros became even more infuriated and pulled out his sword to kill St. Barbara, but she was able to run away before he could catch her. She used disguises and hid among the hills surrounding her home for some time while her father gathered additional Roman troops to help hunt her down. One story during this time tells of a wheat field that sprung up around her to hide her from her pursuers, and another tells of a crevice in a mountain opening up to conceal her another time. Eventually, St. Barbara was captured and taken to prison. Despite many tortures at the hand of her father and the Emperor's men, St. Barbara remained steadfast in her faith. She received her heavenly crown of martyrdom by beheading, but not before her courage and devotion to God inspired others to follow the One True Triune God as well.

Everyone likes to dress up, don't you think? It is fun to pretend to be someone other than our everyday selves. In America, the main holiday that we think of when people dress up is Halloween; but in the Middle East, St. Barbara's Feast Day is the day to dress up! Each year, on December 4th, much like in the US, children from Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan will dress up in their favorite costumes and head out to knock on their neighbors' doors! The day is called Eid il-Burbara in Arabic. There is dancing and singing for everyone on this day, and at each person's home, they offer special sweet treats and sometimes even money to their neighbors who come by knocking on the door!