

Saints of Egypt, pray for us



St. Apollonia

The people of Egypt could use all the prayers they can get these days. Given the violent clashes between supporters of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and pro-democracy demonstrators, perhaps there's no one better to ask for intercession than St. Apollonia – an Egyptian saint whose feast is celebrated today.

During an uprising against Christians in the third century, St. Apollonia was captured by angry mobs and beaten so severely in Alexandria that all her teeth were knocked out. After the pagan crowds lit a fire and threatened to burn the virgin if she did not renounce her faith, St. Apollonia hurled herself into the flames in an act of martyrdom.

Given her dental torments, St. Apollonia is the patron saint of dentists and those who suffer toothaches. She is often depicted holding a pincer with a tooth in it.

St. Apollonia isn't the only Egyptian saint. The nation's patron saints include St. Mary of Egypt, a former prostitute in Alexandria who lived the life of a hermit in penance for her sins; and St. Anthony of Egypt, the founder of monasticism.

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