

10. THE MIRACLES OF SAINT PATRIZIA

Saint Gennaro's blood is not the only one to liquefy in Naples. **Saint Patrizia** is the other Patron Saint of Naples and her blood, which is kept in the monastery at San Gregorio Armeno, liquefies on **25 August** every year (which is her Saint's day) and often on other occasions too.

Saint Patrizia was the niece of **Constantine the Great** and was born in Constantinople in 350 A.D. She was brought up in the Imperial Court and educated as a Christian by a pious woman called **Aglaia**. From an early age Patrizia **vowed to remain a virgin**. But her family had counted on her getting married so Patrizia fled the family home rather than break her vow. She set sail for Rome with Aglaia where Pope Liberio gave her the veil as **Christ's Bride**. When her father died she returned to Constantinople and she got rid of all her worldly goods, giving away her riches to the poor. She set sail for the **Holy Land** with Aglaia to go and worship the Holy Grave in Jerusalem. However, during the journey, a violent storm struck and the ship was forced to take shelter in Naples. The young virgin was offered refuge by the **Basilian Monks** in their monastery which lay where Castel dell'Ovo stands today. It was here that, just a few months later, Patrizia was taken ill and died. Her body was placed on a noble carriage pulled by two oxen. After wandering the streets of Naples the carriage came to a halt outside the **Church of the Saints and Martyrs Nicandro and Marciano**, which the virgin Patrizia had visited not long before her death. After her funeral, she was buried in the year 365 in the church of the Greek Orthodox Basilian monks. Aglaia and other young girls did not want to leave the body of their Patron Saint, so the Basilian monks were forced to leave them the monastery. The Duke of Naples assigned the monks the Church of San Sebastiano instead. The pious women became a closed order of nuns. They observed the rules of Saint Basil, until they decided to conform to the rules of Saint Benedict. Once Patrizia was proclaimed a saint, the church of Saint Nicandro and Marciano (in Vico Armanni) was commonly known as Saint Patrizia's Church.

In 1864, when the convent closed down, the nuns moved to the **San Gregorio Armeno Monastery**, taking with them the sacred blood and remains of their Founder. These **sacred remains** are still to be found under the main altar there, in a glass urn decorated with silver, gold and precious stones.

Legend has it that a knight who lay down on the Saint's tomb was cured of all his ills. He prayed all night and, seized by religious fervour and reluctant to leave the reliquary, he opened the urn and tore one of the Saint's teeth out. Blood flowed out as if the body was still alive. He collected the blood in two phials which are still preserved today.