

“Story of Devotion”



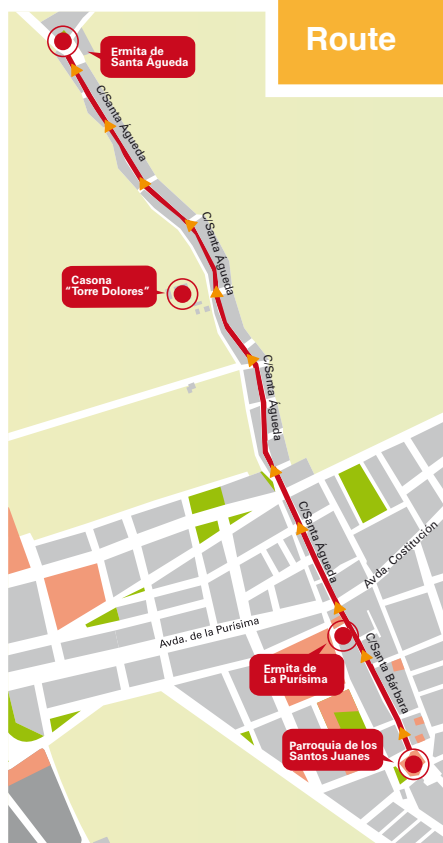
Catral's devotion to this Sicilian martyr is very old, although there is no record of the date when the first chapel dedicated to her was built and neither data of the origin of the ancient image which was destroyed in the civil war in 1936. The oldest references we know about the hermitage of Saint Agatha date from 1684 to 1691, due to the failed attempt of Don Juan Ginés Portillo and Soto to create a new Alphonsine lordship in the almarjales of Catral, near the chapel of the saint, where he had properties.



The devotion to Santa Agueda in Catral started possibly with the conquerors, and later with the Castilian and Catalan-Aragonese settlers in the thirteenth century, and particularly, by the military orders (notably Santiago) in whose dominions was included Catral to 1255.

Another possible hypothesis could be related to the figure of St. Vincent Ferrer (great devotee of the Sicilian martyr), who was preaching in these lands around 1411 and where later the Friars of Carmelite order did it as well. They could also have contributed, in the same way to the consolidation of this devotion, and even help in the construction of the first chapel dedicated to the Saint.

José Montesinos, in the chapter of his work related to Catral "Oriolano Historical Compendium" 1794, when he describes the chapels that were in the town in the mid-eighteenth century, gives a description of the image of the Saint. He mentions the beginning of his miraculous fame, the story of rebuilding the old chapel and in addition a lovely story of what could be the first pilgrimage of Santa Agatha, with a fervent and lively pilgrimage procession from the church of the Santos Juanes (beautiful temple of the mid-eighteenth century) to the hermitage of the saint, which is very similar to how it is done today.



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DE CATRAL



“Romería de Santa Águeda”

CATRAL



• 4 & 5 February,
Catral (Alicante).

Declared:
“Festividad de Interés Turístico Provincial”

“Romería de Santa Águeda”

In Catral there is the neighbourhood of Saint Agatha, in whose plaza lays the Saint's hermitage. This long street becomes each year an artisan market, where thousands of visitors can enjoy “bolicas” and turrón of Saint Agatha. A lovely tradition is to buy “la pesá”, which is a package of sweets to give as a present to a loved person.



The main traditional product is “el turrón”.



Santa Agatha was a Christian maiden of Catania (Italy, Sicily), who due to her faith in Christ suffered martyrdom and death on 5 February of the year 251, which is when each year the festival is celebrated. She is a protector of diseases that affect the breasts of nursing mothers on nutrition and fertility period of breast milk.



The other main traditional product is “bolicas de Santa Águeda”

The Pilgrimage of Santa Agueda, which is celebrated each year on 4 and 5 February at Villa Catral is one of the oldest and most emblematic traditions of the province of Alicante and perhaps in the Valencian Community, for its religious significance and great devotion.



She is invoked against the effects of fire and is also protective of metal smelters. Other powers attributed to her, are to protect against evil spirits, livestock diseases and boost agricultural production.