This saint was born before the year 300 A.D. She was brought up in the Theban region (Luxor) in a noble Christian family. They called her “Verena” which means ‘the good fruit’ or ‘the dainty fruit’ and raised her up according to Christian virtues. The saint was baptized by Bishop Chaerimon who oversaw her education and religious upbringing. She grew steadily in grace and faith.

During that time, large numbers of Christians declared their faith before the Roman rulers and were martyred, receiving the crowns of martyrdom. St. Verena visited those imprisoned and manifested unto their needs. She also longed to receive her share of persecution and martyrdom.

During the reign of Emperor Diocletian (284-305) the fame of the Theban Legion became well known. The Legion was headed by St. Maurice who was known for his courage and godliness. The Emperor ordered the Theban Legion led by St. Maurice to move from Thebes in Egypt (Luxor) to Gaul, in the Western region of Europe, to assist Emperor Maximian in defeating a revolt by the Bagaudea, south of France. The Legion was made of 6,600 soldiers. St. Verena joined the Theban Legion as a nurse in its mission to Europe.
When the Legion arrived there, Maximian was then residing in a near-by city called Octudurum, Switzerland. He ordered the commander Maurice and the members of the Legion to offer sacrifices to the gods before engaging in the war. They all refused to obey the order declaring in a letter addressing the Emperor that they are not rebellious but Christians willing to die for their Christ. The Emperor ordered to kill every tenth soldier to force the rest of the Legion to obey his orders. Nevertheless, the rest of the Legion was more enthusiastic to adhere to the Christian faith. The Emperor was enraged and ordered to decimate the rest.

St. Maurice encouraged the members of the Legion to remain steadfast in their faith, but also declare their military loyalty to the Emperor. The Emperor became furious and ordered to eliminate the rest of the unit present around Agaunum (nowadays a city called St. Maurice in the canton of Wallis in Switzerland), and to pursue the rest of the units of the Theban Legion in their positions in Switzerland, Italy and Germany. St. Maurice received the crown of martyrdom along with the unit that was in Agaunum which numbered 520 soldiers.
St. Verena

After the martyrdom of the legion, St. Verena went to Agaunum, and then continued her way to arrive near the city of Salodurum (Nowadays Solothurn in Switzerland). In her great desire to save her soul, she withdrew in a cave and led an austere life in asceticism, prayer and fasting. She supported herself by her handy work which a nearby Christian woman sold for her. The Lord performed many miracles of healings through her prayers. St. Verena was particularly concerned about the young girls. She guided them and taught them the basics of chastity and the proper hygiene practices. Because of her, many converted to Christianity, and many others became witnesses to the Lord Jesus Christ. St. Verena was interested in serving the poor and used to offer them food. Moreover, as a nurse, she enjoyed serving the sick, especially those suffering from leprosy. She used to wash their wounds and put ointment on them, not fearing contagion.
St. Verena

As a result of the fame of her ministry, and the holiness of her life, the ruler Hirtacus arrested and imprisoned her. The martyr, St. Maurice, appeared to console her. He encouraged her to be steadfast in her Christian faith. She was later released after the Lord healed her hands.

To escape the vain glory of the world, she fled to an island at the convergence of the rivers Aare and the Rhine. She lived in a small hut taking care of the sick and the needy. St. Verena then left the island because it was infested with serpents and scorpions. She went to the city of Zurzach (Tenedo) in the canton of Aargau in Switzerland, where she lived in a house next to the church of the Virgin St. Mary. The priest of the parish entrusted to her the care of the poor and the sick. She cared for their cleanliness and nursing their health. Nevertheless, the devil envied her and moved her fellow servants to plot against her, but the Lord always revealed her innocence. Later on she lived a solitary life in a cave, where she lived for eleven years, in asceticism, worship and devoutness. Many came to her to receive the blessings of her prayers and many sought her counsel.
St. Verena

When the time of her departure from the world drew near, the Holy Virgin St. Mary appeared to her along with some virgins in her cave. She told her about the blessings of eternal life and the joy of paradise. St. Verena rose and kneeled before her saying: “I am not worthy for the mother of my Lord and God to come to her servant.” The Theotokos told her: “To reward you for your faithfulness in your service to the Lord Christ.” The cave became full of incense and with this apparition, St. Verena departed to heaven on the 4th of the Coptic month Tute. They shrouded and buried her with great honor. A church was built after her name in the city of Zurzach, where she was buried, and she became the patron saint of the city. A convent was also built after her name in Switzerland.
Among the various icons of St. Verena, the most famous has always been the one where St. Verena with the double comb in her hand and a jug in her right hand. This icon of St. Verena is still the pattern of arms in the city of Stafa in the Canton of Zurich, for she was the first to point out the importance of personal cleanliness in that country.
In 1986, a delegation from Saint Verena's Church in Switzerland brought a part of Saint Verena's relics to Pope Shenouda III in Egypt. In 1989, Saint Verena's Group of the Bishopric of Public Services started its ministry to provide integral, spiritual, social, and health services in the popular poor areas. On the 22nd of February 1994, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III consecrated Saint Maurice and Saint Verena's Church in the Building of the Bishopric of Public Services, at Anba Rewis Basilica, Cairo. On July 16, 2019, a part of her relics was received to keep it in our church. May the intercession of Saint Verena and the Theban Legion be with all of us, Amen.