



Saint George – the Dragon Slayer

The Life of Saint George

There is very little reliable information about the historical life of Saint George.

He is said to have lived in the 3rd century and to have come from Cappadocia (modern-day Turkey) or the eastern Mediterranean region.

According to tradition, he was a Roman soldier and may have served in the imperial army.

George professed the Christian faith at a time when Christians were being persecuted in the Roman Empire.

During the reign of Emperor Diocletian (around 303 AD), he was arrested for his faith and ordered to renounce his Christian beliefs.

George, however, remained steadfast.

According to tradition, he was tortured and eventually put to death as a martyr. His death is generally dated to around 303/304 AD.

George – the soldier who remained true to his conscience

The story of Saint George depicts a man caught between conflicting loyalties: he was a soldier of the Roman Empire, yet at the same time a Christian. When the state demanded that he renounce his faith, he placed his conscience above personal gain and safety.

His stance serves as a reminder of the importance of conscience and responsibility:

- A person needs inner convictions.
- Not every order or demand should be carried out blindly.
- Loyalty to higher values can require courage.

George demonstrated that true strength lies not only in physical power or military skill, but in the ability to stand up for what is right, even under pressure.

The Legend of the Battle with the Dragon

The best-known tale about Saint George is the legend of his battle with a dragon. According to this story, a dangerous dragon was threatening a town. To appease the dragon, the inhabitants had to sacrifice animals to it regularly, and eventually even human beings. When the lot fell on the king's daughter, George appeared and confronted the dragon.

With his faith and courage, he defeated the monster and freed the people.

Symbol:

His well-known depiction is that of the knight on horseback defeating the dragon. It serves as a reminder that, with courage, faith and a sense of responsibility, people can stand up against evil in the world.

The message is this: everyone encounters 'dragons' in their lives – challenges, temptations and injustices. What matters is whether one finds the courage to face them.

Why is Saint George venerated?

St George is venerated because, as a martyr, he remained true to his faith. He was not canonised because he was a famous warrior, but because he was prepared to stand up for his convictions.

Significance for us today

St George reminds us that every person bears a responsibility when they witness injustice. Courage does not mean being without fear. Courage means doing the right thing despite fear.

For soldiers, St George can be an important role model:

- Strength is not for self-assertion, but for the protection of others.
- Responsibility requires character and a conscience.
- A mission always requires an ethical compass.

His life poses the question:

'What am I prepared to stand up for when the going gets tough?'

Feast Day

The feast day of St George is 23 April.

Among other things, he is the patron saint of:

- soldiers,
- scouts,
- horsemen,
- farmers,
- several countries and regions.

"It is not the strength of the sword that matters, but the strength of the heart."