

Saint George,

With courage, you stood up to those in power, to tell them that what they were doing was wrong. Pray that we, too, may have courage to stand up for what is right, with God's help.

You were not ashamed of your faith. Pray that we, too, may be proud of our faith, and may cheerfully show the love of Jesus in all that we do.

St George, pray for us.

Amen.

A thought to take away

St George is often associated with killing a dragon, which may represent fighting against injustice. What are the bad things that you can conquer in your life? Do you have courage to stand up when you see something unjust happen? Who will speak out if you don't?

An action to complete

- Stand up for doing right today!
- Pray for those who are facing hardships as a result of speaking out against those in power.

*Saint George
Pray for us*



Feast Day

23 April

Birthplace

Lydda, now in Israel

Born

Around 280

Died

23 April 303, at Nicomedia, Bythinia (now in Turkey)

Canonised

He was declared a saint in 494 by Pope Gelasius

Patron saint of

England, Georgia, Portugal, Beirut, Malta, Palestinian Christians, skin disease sufferers, the Scouts



*Those who sow
with tears will
reap with songs
of joy.*

”

As St George was a martyr, someone who died for their faith, the readings on his feast day reflect this. Psalm 126 says,

“Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.”

Are we prepared to do something we might find hard in order to help our neighbour, either at home or overseas?

The life of St George

Very little is known for certain about the life of St George, although it seems likely that he is an historical figure. Pope Gelasius described him as one of the saints "whose names are justly revered among men, but whose actions are known only to God."

It is likely that George was born into a Greek Christian noble family in Lydda, which is now in Israel. His father, an officer in the Roman army, died when George was about 14. The name George means "worker of the land".

After George's mother died, he decided to become a soldier, in the army of Emperor Diocletian, for whom his father had also fought. George was stationed in Nicomedia.

In 302, Diocletian called for all Christian soldiers to be arrested, and all other soldiers to offer a sacrifice to the Roman gods.

George, with great courage, stood up to the Emperor, and told him that what he was doing was wrong.

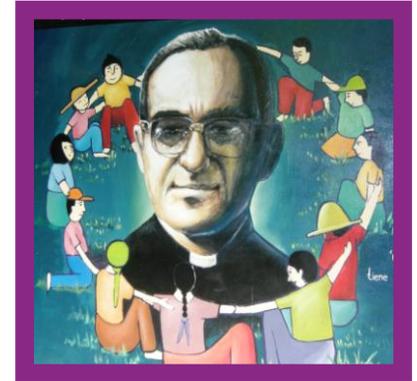
He announced in front of the other soldiers that he was a Christian who worshipped Jesus Christ. Diocletian was upset, because George was a good soldier and the son of his friend. He tried to convert George to the worship of the Roman gods, offering him many gifts, but George refused.

Diocletian felt that he had no choice but to execute George. George gave his wealth away to those living in poverty, and prepared himself for death. After being tortured, George was beheaded, and his body then returned to Lydda. It is said that as a result of his martyrdom, Diocletian's wife, Alexandra, became a Christian, and was then martyred herself.

St George is often pictured killing a dragon. This probably represents him fighting against injustice. The dragon can represent wickedness. The woman often pictured with him may represent the truth of God.

A modern martyr: Oscar Romero

Throughout history, there have been men and women who have stood up to powerful people and have spoken out against injustice. One of CAFOD's partners who did this was Oscar Romero, the Archbishop of El Salvador. Like St George, he died as a result of his actions for justice. CAFOD still works in El Salvador today.



A mural painting of Archbishop Romero with children.

Oscar Romero was a priest and bishop in El Salvador. His love for his people who were suffering violence and oppression led him to take their side and to denounce their oppressors. He was assassinated while saying Mass on 24 March 1980.

His commitment to those living in poverty led him to speak out against injustice. He is remembered for his courage, his faith and his love for the poor. His teachings still inspire our work today. Monseñor Romero believed that "the glory of God is the living poor person". He "became poor" in his own personal life and as Archbishop lived in a small two-roomed house in the grounds of a hospital for the terminally ill.



Romero's name on the memorial wall along with thousands of other victims of the civil war.

"I do not believe in death without resurrection. If they kill me, I will rise again in the Salvadorean people."

CAFOD's partner, Tutela Legal, was set up shortly after Romero's death to reinvigorate and continue his work against injustice. It has worked on more than 25,000 individual cases of injustice and corruption in the country, seeking truth and reparation for people from both sides of the civil war. The organisation holds an extensive archive which belongs to the people. The staff see themselves as the "stewards of people's historical memory". Wilfredo, who works for Tutela Legal, explains: "People accuse us of scratching old wounds. We are fighting against impunity. We are committed to the fact that, if we don't do it, no one else will."

Both St George and Oscar Romero gave witness by their Christian living and ultimately gave the greatest act of witness by the sacrifice of their lives.