



St. Florian

Feast Day: May 4 (*International Firefighter Day*)

Born: circa 250 AD

Died: 304 AD

Patron: firefighters, chimney sweeps, Poland and Austria, protector against lightning, floods and drowning and the pains of purgatory

St. Florian was born around 250 AD in the region we now know as Austria. It was ruled by the Roman Emperor Diocletian who was notorious for persecuting Christians.

Florian was a Roman soldier who rose quickly to level of commander. He was the highest officer in the province of modern day Austria. He also organized an elite firefighting brigade. An entire town was miraculously saved from a raging fire when Florian prayed while pouring a single bucket of water. St. Florian used a cross with 8 points (one for each Beatitude) that became known as the fireman's badge. In the 14th century Muslims fought Christians in the Crusades by lobbing burning oil, causing catastrophic fires and loss of life. Crusaders from Malta called The Knights of St. John became very good at putting out these fires and were awarded St. Florian badges of honor. The badges have also been called the Maltese Cross. The badge is still used by firefighters today.



Roman soldiers were ordered to arrest and torture Christians to get them to renounce their faith and sacrifice to pagan gods. It became known that Florian was not carrying out these orders to punish Christians. The emperor sent his assistant Aquilius to push Florian to persecute Christians. Florian refused, "Tell the Emperor that I am a Christian and will suffer the same fate as Christians." Aquilius was shocked and tried to entice Florian to turn away from the True Faith by offering him a prestigious position. Angered that his efforts failed, he had Florian beaten. Florian courageously said he would not mind a "few scratches" for defending the Faith. Aquilius was afraid that other Christians would be emboldened to follow Florian's defiance; so he ordered Florian to be burned at the stake. With great confidence, Florian climbed on the pyre, told the soldiers to light it and said, "If you do, I will climb to Heaven on the flames."

Trying to defeat his spirit, Aquilis ordered Florian to be scourged and flayed. Then a stone was tied around his neck and he was tossed into the Enns River. Florian drowned and his body was recovered by a woman named Valeria. The year was 304 AD and Florian was around 54 years old. A monastery was built near his tomb and the town of St. Florian, Austria grew around it. His remains were transferred to the Augustinian Abby near Linz, Austria. A relic of his was sent to Poland. When a fire that threatened a man's home was put out at the intercession of St. Florian, veneration to this saint grew. St. Florian became the patron of Poland and Austria. He is associated with many more miracles.