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St. George, Martyr

[by: Saint Peter Damian](#)



The veneration of Saint George began as early as the fourth century at Lydda in Palestine, where a church was built in his honor. From antiquity this veneration has spread throughout both the East and the West. This is an excerpt from a sermon on Saint George by St. Peter Damian, bishop and doctor of the Church from the 11th century.

Dear brothers, our joy in today's feast is heightened by our joy in the glory of Easter, just as the splendor of a precious jewel enhances the beauty of its gold setting.

Saint George was a man who abandoned one army for another: he gave up the rank of tribune to enlist as a soldier for Christ. Eager to encounter the enemy, he first stripped away his worldly wealth by giving all he had to the poor. Then, free and unencumbered, bearing the shield of faith, he plunged into the thick of the battle, an ardent soldier for Christ.

Clearly what he did serves to teach us a valuable lesson: if we are afraid to strip ourselves of our worldly possessions, then we are unfit to make a strong defense of the faith.

As for Saint George, he was consumed with the fire of the Holy Spirit. Armed with the invincible standard of the cross, he did battle with an evil king and acquitted himself so well that, in vanquishing the king, he overcame the prince of all wicked spirits, and encouraged other soldiers of Christ to perform brave deeds in his cause.

Of course, the supreme invisible arbiter was there, who sometimes permits evil men to prevail so that his will may be accomplished. And although he surrendered the body of his martyr into the hands of murderers, yet he continued to take care of his soul, which was supported by the unshakable defense of its faith.

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Dear brothers, let us not only admire the courage of this fighter in heaven's army but follow his example. Let us be inspired to strive for the reward of heavenly glory, keeping in mind his example, so that we will not be swayed from our path, though the world seduce us with its smiles or try to terrify us with naked threats of its trials and tribulations.

We must now cleanse ourselves, as Saint Paul tells us, from all defilement of body and spirit, so that one day we too may deserve to enter that temple of blessedness to which we now aspire.

Anyone who wishes to offer himself to God in the tent of Christ, which is the Church, must first bathe in the spring of holy baptism; then he must put on the various garments of the virtues. As it says in the Scriptures, *Let your priests be clothed in justice*. He who is reborn in baptism is a new man. He may no longer wear the things that signify mortality. He has discarded the old self and must put on the new. He must live continually renewed in his commitment to a holy sojourn in this world.

Truly we must be cleansed of the stains of our past sins and be resplendent in the virtue of our new way of life. Then we can be confident of celebrating Easter worthily and of truly following the example of the blessed martyrs.

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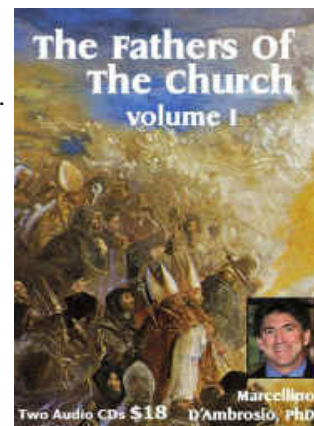
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