

## Saint George (d. 303)

*Observed 23 April*



Asked about which saints are historical and which are legendary, many people would be tempted to include George among the legendary. The best known story about him involves saving a princess in Libya by slaying a dragon. This certainly seems to be a legend created as part of inspiring and fanciful tales of the middle ages. But George himself was real. He was martyred in Palestine at the beginning of the fourth century. At the end of the fifth century his name was included in a list of saints described as “good men, justly remembered, whose deeds are known only to God.”

Although no one knows his deeds or his life, Saint George as patron saint is well known. King Richard the Lionhearted fought in the crusades under Saint George's protection, as did many others. He became very popular among the English and his banner (red cross on a white ground) became the battle flag of England. He has come to symbolize the valiant, steadfast fight of the faithful Christian against whatever sort of evil comes across his path.

Famously Saint George is invoked by King Henry V in Shakespeare's play, as he is about to lead his outnumbered army to victory at Agincourt:

"I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,  
Straining upon the start. The game's afoot:  
Follow your spirit, and upon this charge  
Cry 'God for Harry, England, and Saint George!'"

So the saint has continued to be regarded as both protector and inspiration for the English people, particularly when under attack. He also enjoys great popularity among the Orthodox.

*Lessons*        Joshua 1:1-9; Psalm 3; Revelation 12:7-12; John 8:21-29

*Collect*        Almighty God, you commissioned your holy martyr George to bear before the rulers of this world the banner of the cross: Strengthen us in our battles against the great serpent of sin and evil, that we too may attain the crown of eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.