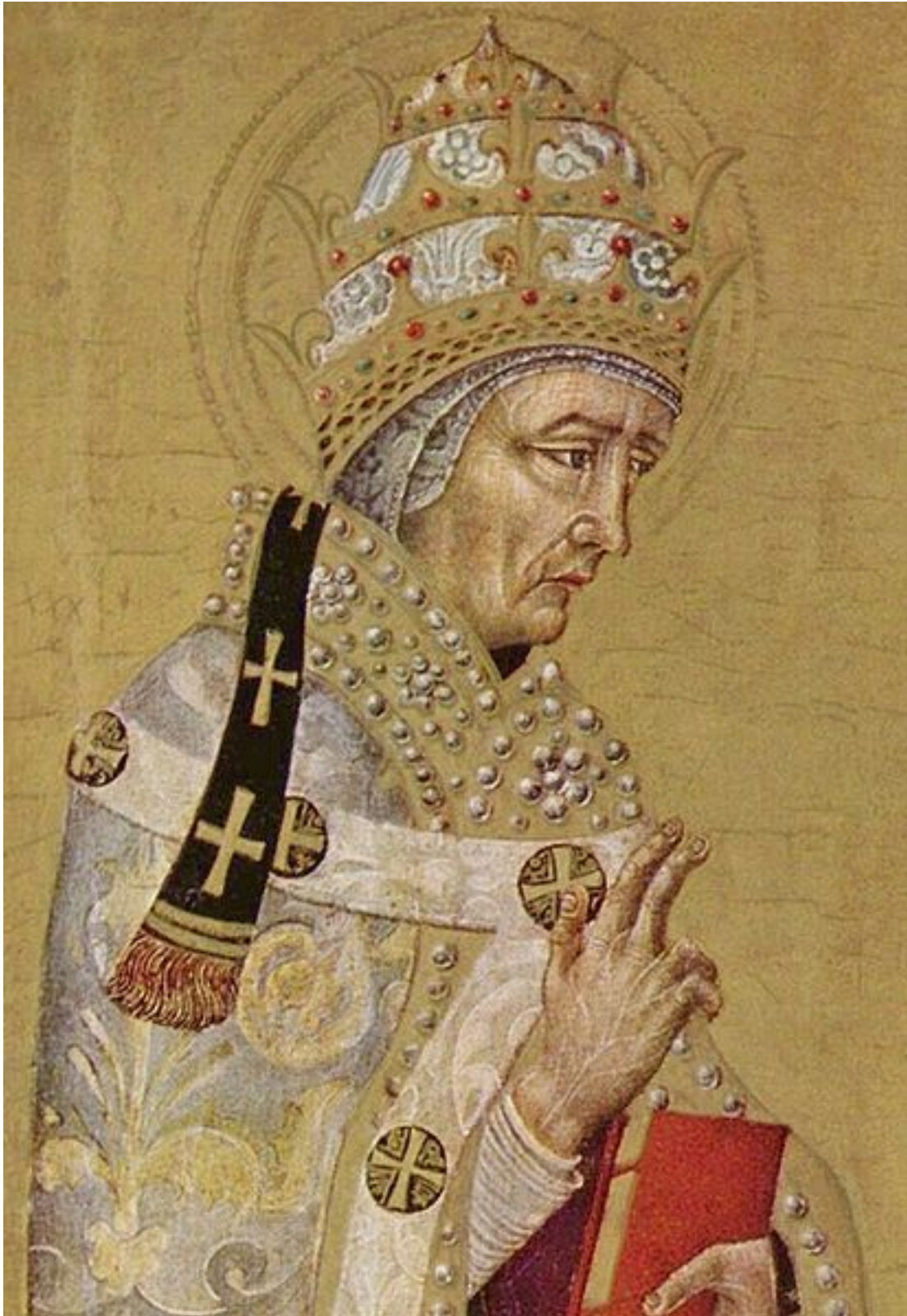


Fabian, Bishop of Rome (d. 250)

*Observed 20 January*



In his *History of the Church*, the historian Eusebius describes the election of a new Bishop of Rome in 236. There were many prominent ordained church leaders under consideration for the post, but while they were gathered a dove flew into the assembly and landed on the head of a stranger from an unspecified other place. Although this man was not ordained, the dove was interpreted as divine appointment and he was proclaimed Bishop by acclamation. God had spoken, further human debate was considered unnecessary. Whatever his background or previous training, Bishop Fabian showed gifts of courage, faithfulness, and organization. He is credited with organizing the Roman diocese into the parish structure which is the pattern of church organization still in the Roman Catholic Church and became the structure of the Church in England after the Synod of Whitby decided to use this Roman system in place of the Celtic, monastery-centered structure. Fabian considered remembering Christian martyrs an important activity of the Church and appointed a sizable group of scholars to make records of the lives of the martyrs thus far, so that their examples could edify the faithful in the years to come. During his episcopate, Emperor Decian began the first empire-wide lethal persecution of Christians. Fabian sent bishops to Gaul to keep alive the church there, which was at risk of being wiped out by the persecution. Then Fabian himself was executed for the crime of being Christian after 14 years as Bishop of Rome. Even today it is possible to see the inscription on his tomb. The words which are still legible say “Fabian, Bishop, Martyr”.

*Lessons*        2 Esdras 2:42-48; Psalm 126; I Corinthians 15:31-36,44b-49; Luke 21:20-24

*Collect*        Almighty God, you called Fabian to be a faithful pastor and servant of your people, and to lay down his life in witness to your Son: Grant that we, strengthened by his example and aided by his prayers, may in times of trial and persecution remain steadfast in faith and endurance, for the sake of him who laid down his life for us all, Jesus Christ our Savior; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.