

# St. George's Day

## When Is St. George's Day?

St. George's Day is celebrated on 23<sup>rd</sup> April each year. This date was chosen as people believe that it is the date on which Saint George died in AD 303.



## Who Was Saint George?

Not many things are known for certain about Saint George. Stories about him have been told for almost two thousand years. In these stories, Saint George's father is called Gerontius and was in the Roman army. His mother is called Polychronia.

## Where Did Saint George Live?

Saint George's mother was from a place known as Syria Palaestina. This is where Saint George lived until his mother died when he was seventeen years old.

## What Was Saint George's Job?

When Saint George was seventeen, he travelled to the city of Nicomedia. He joined the Roman army, just like his father had done. He travelled around the world as a soldier and he was part of the group of soldiers who looked after the emperor of Nicomedia.

## What Happened to Saint George?

In AD 303, the Roman emperor Diocletian gave an order. He said that every soldier who was a Christian would have to give up their job and any money they had. To keep their job, they would have to stop being a Christian and believe in the Roman gods instead.

Saint George did not want to stop being a Christian. He decided to visit emperor Diocletian to try to change his mind. Diocletian would not listen to Saint George and Saint George refused to give up his beliefs.

Saint George was arrested and put into prison. Whilst in prison, he told other people about Christianity. Many other people became Christians due to Saint George's teachings.

## Did Saint George Slay a Dragon?

There is no proof that Saint George fought a dragon. This story was first told seven hundred years after Saint George had died.

Instead of a real dragon, it is thought that the dragon in the story represents evil. Saint George managed to win the battle by refusing to stop being a Christian, even when he knew that he would be punished.

This is what is remembered each year on 23<sup>rd</sup> April.

### Did You Know...?

- The flag of England is called the Saint George's Cross.
- Even though Saint George is so special to England, he probably never even visited!

# St. George's Day

The life of Saint George is remembered and celebrated each year on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. Saint George is the **patron saint** of many countries around the world, including England, Malta and Romania.

## Early Life

Not much is known for certain about Saint George but stories about him have been told since the fourth century. According to these stories, Saint George's father is thought to have been called Gerontius and he is believed to have been in the Roman army. His mother is thought to have been called Polychronia and is said to have been from an area known as Syria Palaestina.



When Saint George was fourteen years old, his father died. He and his mother returned to Syria Palaestina and they lived there together for three years.

## Life in the Army

When Saint George was seventeen, he travelled to the city of Nicomedia. Just like his father, he joined the Roman army and began to travel around the world. By the age of thirty, Saint George had risen to the rank of military tribune – a respected role within the Roman army. He was part of the group of soldiers trusted to guard the emperor of Nicomedia.

Saint George's success within the army continued to grow. He was promoted to the rank of **legatus** within just a few years and became highly respected within society.

## Imprisoned

On 24<sup>th</sup> February AD 303, the Roman emperor Diocletian gave an order. He announced that every Christian soldier within the Roman army would have to give up their job and their money. They would also have to stop being a Christian and worship the Roman gods instead.

Saint George did not want to give up his Christian beliefs. He gave away all of his money and possessions as he was told. Then, he decided to visit emperor Diocletian to try to change his mind. Diocletian would not listen to Saint George and Saint George refused to give up his beliefs.

Diocletian ordered his guards to arrest Saint George. Despite this, Saint George kept his faith and went on to spread the word of Christianity whilst in prison. Many other people became Christians due to Saint George's teachings.

### Saint George and the Dragon

Despite the popularity of the story, the idea of Saint George slaying a dragon only began to appear seven hundred years after his death. Instead of a real dragon, it is thought that the dragon slain by Saint George represents evil. Saint George defeated evil by refusing to give up his Christian faith, even when he would be punished. This is remembered each year on 23<sup>rd</sup> April – a day which has become known as St. George's Day. This date was chosen as it was believed to have been the date on which Saint George died in AD 303.



### Glossary

**Patron saint** – The saint who protects or guides a person or place.

**Legatus** – A high-ranking member of the Roman army who was in charge of other soldiers.



# St. George's Day

St. George's Day is celebrated annually on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. It is celebrated in honour of Saint George, the patron saint of many countries around the world, including England, Malta and Romania.

## Early Life

Although not much is known about Saint George for certain due to the lack of historical records, stories about him have been told since the fourth century. According to legend, Saint George was the son of wealthy Christian parents. His father is thought to have been Gerontius, an official in the Roman army, and his mother Polychronia is thought to have been from the area known as Syria Palaestina. After his father's death when Saint George was just fourteen years old, he returned to Syria Palaestina with his mother and they lived there together for three years.



Following his mother's death when he was seventeen, Saint George travelled to the city of Nicomedia. Just as his father had before him, he joined the Roman army and began to travel around the world.

## Career

Before the age of thirty, Saint George had been promoted to the rank of military tribune – a respected role within the Roman army – and he was part of the group of soldiers trusted to guard the emperor of Nicomedia. Saint George's success within the army continued to grow and he was promoted to the rank of legatus within just a few years. This meant that he was in charge of up to 5,000 soldiers and he was highly respected in society.

**Diocletian's Command**

On 24<sup>th</sup> February AD 303, the Roman emperor Diocletian gave an official order. He announced that every soldier within the Roman army who was a Christian would have to give up their job and all of their possessions. They would also have to stop being a Christian and worship the Roman gods instead.

## Diocletian's Command

Saint George did not want to give up his Christian beliefs. He gave away all of his money and possessions as ordered and decided to visit emperor Diocletian in an attempt to change his mind. Diocletian would not listen to Saint George, offering him gifts, money and land to give up his Christian beliefs but Saint George refused.

This angered Diocletian and he ordered his guards to arrest Saint George. Despite this, Saint George kept his faith and went on to spread the word of Christianity whilst in prison, with many other people becoming Christians due to Saint George's teachings.

### **Saint George and the Dragon**

Although it is commonly associated with the saint, stories of Saint George slaying a dragon only began to appear in the 11<sup>th</sup> century – seven hundred years after Saint George's death. It is thought that the dragon slain by Saint George represents evil and that Saint George triumphed over evil by refusing to give up his Christian faith in the face of punishment. Saint George's victory is commemorated each year on 23<sup>rd</sup> April – a day which has become known as St. George's Day. This date was chosen as it was believed to have been the date on which Saint George died in AD 303.

