

Panel 1



Initial sketch



Drawing for Mosaic

BIOGRAPHY OF SAINTS – PANEL 1 (LtoR)

SAINT STEPHEN

Stephen lived during the lifetime of Jesus Christ and was martyred shortly after Jesus's death.

The Acts of the Apostles, chapters 6 and 7, describe Stephen's ordination to the diaconate and his martyrdom by stoning. Stephen was one of seven men ordained as deacons by the Apostles to care for the early Christian community, their widows, and to organize the distribution of alms. Acts describes Stephen as "filled with grace and power, a man who worked miracles and great signs among the people."

Stephen's popularity created enemies among some of the Jewish leaders who accused him of blasphemy, of speaking against God and Moses. At his trial, Stephen defended himself by quoting the Jewish scriptures and defending the life and teachings of Jesus. When Stephen concluded his defense, he saw a vision of Jesus standing at the right hand of God. He said to the crowd of Jews, "Look, I can see heaven thrown open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." That vision was taken as the final proof of blasphemy to the Jews who did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah or Son of God. For them, Jesus could not possibly be beside the Father in Heaven. The crowd rushed upon Stephen and carried him outside of the city where they stoned him to death. Saint Stephen's last words were: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

In Acts, chapters 8 and 9, Saul of Tarsus, a persecutor of the early Christians, is recorded as present at Stephen's trial and death. Shortly after Stephen's martyrdom, Saul himself will encounter Jesus on the road to Damascus, be converted and become the great apostle Paul.

Symbol: Stephen is shown with the stones of his martyrdom and a martyr's palm.

Patron Saint of Altar Servers, Bricklayers, Casket makers and Deacons

Feast Day celebrated on December 26

SAINT LUCY

Lucy lived in Syracuse in Sicily and was martyred in 304 A.D. during the persecution of Christians under the Roman Emperor Diocletian.

Lucy's martyrdom is recorded in the fifth-century *Acts of the Martyrs*, in the *Sacramentary* of Pope Gregory I (Pope from 590 until his death in 604), and by the Venerable Bede (672-735) whose writing attests that devotion to Saint Lucy had spread to England by the seventh century. Lucy's martyrdom is described in the *Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine written c. 1260.

Lucy was born to a noble family in Syracuse in Sicily. Like Cecilia, who also appears in this panel, Lucy chose to remain a virgin and dedicate her life to Christ. Their choice stood in stark opposition to the patriarchal systems of the ancient world in which women lived under the guardianship of male relations and were passed, like property, from father to husband to son.

The early death of Lucy's father left Lucy and her mother without a protective male guardian. Lucy's mother also suffered from an incurable illness. To protect her daughter, she arranged for Lucy to marry a wealthy Roman pagan. Lucy prayed to Saint Agatha for deliverance from this marriage. Agatha had also chosen to remain a virgin and to dedicate her life to Christ. Agatha had been martyred a few years earlier in nearby Catania and many miracles were attributed to her intercession. In a dream, Agatha promised Lucy that her mother would be cured of her illness if her mother gave Lucy's dowry to the poor and allowed Lucy to remain a virgin and to commit her life to Jesus.

Lucy's rejection angered the bridegroom who informed the Roman governor that Lucy was a Christian. The governor, to punish Lucy, ordered his soldiers to take her from her home and deliver her to a brothel. According to tradition, Lucy proved immovable -- even after the guards bound her and attached her to a team of oxen. The guards then heaped bundles of wood around her, but the wood did not burn. Finally, they pierced her with their swords, cutting out her eyes, and killing Lucy. When Lucy's body was prepared for burial her eyes had been miraculously restored.

Symbol: Lucy is shown holding her eyes on a golden platter. The name "Lucy" means light; in this picture she also holds a flaming candle.

Patron Saint of the blind and of anyone who suffers problems of sight or illnesses of the eyes

Feast Day celebrated on December 13

SAINT DOMINIC

Dominic was born on August 8, 1170 in Castile in Spain and died on August 6, 1221 at the age of 51 while establishing a Dominican monastery in Bologna, Italy.

Dominic studied theology and the arts at university in Palencia, Spain. He is known for his charismatic preaching and for his charity to the poor. In 1204 Pope Innocent III sent Dominic to southern France, in Languedoc, to preach to the Cathars who believed in the Albigensian heresy. This heresy taught that all material things, including the human body, were inherently evil.

To assist his work, Dominic gathered a group of companions and formed the Order of Preachers in 1206. His monastery dedicated to Our Lady exists to this day in Prouille, France.

According to Dominican tradition, in 1208 in this monastery, Dominic had a vision that the Virgin Mary handed him the Rosary. During his prayers, Dominic had complained to the Virgin of his lack of success in converting heretics to the True Faith. Our Lady responded that his labors were spent on barren soil, not watered by the dew of Divine grace. She suggested that if Dominic preached the "Psalter of Mary" composed of 150 Angelic Salutations and 15 Our Fathers he would obtain an abundant harvest.

Dominic established a strict routine of prayer and discipline for monks in the Dominican Order. The Rule was approved by Pope Innocent III at the Fourth Lateran Council and received formal written authority from his successor, Pope Honorius III, in January 1217. A year later, the Pope established the ancient Basilica of Santa Sabina as the home in Rome of the Dominican Order of Preachers which it remains to this day.

In 1218 Dominic established the Confraternity of the Rosary whose members pray the 15 decades of the Rosary each week. Pope Clement VIII declared that St. Dominic established the Confraternity of the Rosary in the Church of St. Sixtus in Rome. Pope Alexander VI in 1495, addressed St. Dominic as "the renowned preacher long ago of the Confraternity of the Rosary, and through his merits, the whole world was preserved from universal ruin."

Symbol: Dominic holds lilies and a book; he wears a Dominican habit and his hair is cut with a tonsure; frequently Dominic is also shown receiving the rosary from the Blessed Virgin Mary

Patron Saint: of astronomers and of the innocent who are falsely accused of a crime

Feast Day: celebrated on August 8

SAINT SEBASTIAN

Sebastian died in Rome in 288 at the beginning of the persecution of Christians by the Roman emperor Diocletian. Sebastian's tomb, venerated since ancient times, lies beneath the Basilica of Saint Sebastian on the Via Appia, one of the seven pilgrim churches of Rome.

The details of Sebastian's martyrdom are recorded by the bishop of Milan, Saint Ambrose (337-397), in his sermon on Psalm 118. Ambrose stated that Sebastian was Milanese by birth and traveled to Rome where "the persecutions were raging fiercely on account of the faith." Sebastian's life and martyrdom are also described in the *Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine written c. 1260 A.D. which places his birth in Narbonne in France.

In 283 Sebastian joined the Roman Army. He distinguished himself for his excellent service and was promoted to serve in the Praetorian Guard of the Emperor Diocletian.

At this time twin brothers, Marcus and Marcellian, were imprisoned for refusal to sacrifice to the Roman gods. The brothers were deacons of the Christian Church. Their parents visited them in prison and begged them to renounce Christianity. Instead, Sebastian convinced both parents to convert. Sebastian also converted various other prominent Romans, including a local prefect, and all of the other sixteen men in the same prison to the Christian faith.

In 286, Sebastian was denounced as a Christian to the Emperor Diocletian who ordered him killed by tying him to a stake on a training field and used as target practice for archers. His body was riddled with arrows, and Sebastian left for dead. His body was recovered by a woman named Irene whose husband, a Christian, had been a servant of Diocletian. Irene discovered that Sebastian still lived and nursed him back to health. Sebastian then returned to Diocletian's palace. When he saw the Emperor, Sebastian publicly rebuked Diocletian for his cruel persecution of Christians. The Emperor immediately ordered Sebastian beaten to death and thrown into the sewers. Christians retrieved his body and buried him in the catacombs.

Sebastian is invoked as a protector against the plague and is credited with having defended Rome against the plague in 680.

Symbol: Sebastian is tied to a tree and pierced with the arrows of his martyrdom

Patron Saint: of victims of the plague, of soldiers, of athletes, and of those who desire a saintly death

Feast Day: celebrated on January 20

SAINT CECILIA

St. Cecilia was born in Rome in 200 A.D. and died on November 22, 230 A.D. She is buried in the Basilica of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere in Rome which is located on the site of the house where Cecilia lived and was martyred.

The fourth century text, *Passion of Saint Cecilia*, details her life and martyrdom. Her name entered the *Sacramentary* of Pope Gelasius in 496. In the year 500, Pope Symmachus (Pope from 22 November 498 to his death in 19 July 514) held a papal council at the Basilica of Saint Cecilia.

Cecilia was born to a rich noble family in Rome. Like Lucy who also appears in this panel, Cecilia chose to remain a virgin and dedicate her life to Christ. When her father informed her of the marriage he had arranged to a youth named Valerian, Cecilia donned sackcloth, fasted, and prayed to the saints, angels, and virgin martyrs to guard her virginity.

During the wedding ceremony, as the musicians played, Cecilia "sang in her heart to the Lord". Before her marriage was consummated, Cecilia told Valerian that she had taken a vow of virginity and that an angel was protecting her and would punish him if he forced her to break her vow. When Valerian asked to see the angel, Cecilia replied that he must first be baptized by Pope Urban I at the third milestone on the via Appia.

Following his baptism, Valerian returned to his wife and found the angel at her side holding a chaplet of roses and lilies. Valerian's brother also converted and together they dedicated themselves to burying the saints who were murdered by Turcius Almachius, then prefect of Rome. The brothers were eventually arrested as Christians and martyred.

Cecilia continued to preach Christianity to the Romans and converted over four hundred people to Christianity most of whom were baptized by Pope Urban I.

Cecilia was also arrested and condemned to death in the baths. She was shut in for one night and one day and the fires were stoked to an enormous heat, but Cecilia was not affected. The Prefect then ordered his executioner to cut off her head. The executioner struck her three times but did not decapitate her. She survived, bleeding, and lived for three days. Crowds collected her blood while she continued to preach and to pray. During this time, Cecilia asked the Pope to convert her home to a church.

Symbol: Cecilia is shown with an organ or organ pipes and a crown of roses

Patron Saint: of music and of musicians

Feast Day: celebrated on November 22