During the Middle Ages, people believed that St George was one of the 'Fourteen Holy Helpers' – a group of saints who could help during epidemic diseases. St George's protection was invoked against several nasty diseases, many fatal and with infectious causes, including the Plague and leprosy.

From around 1100, St George’s help was also sought to protect the English army. In William Shakespeare’s Henry V, the monarch calls on the saint during his battle cry at the Battle of Harfleur in the famous “Once more unto the breach, dear friends”. Five hundred years later – during the First World War – a ghostly apparition of St George is said to have aided British troops. For this reason, many people of England have a devotion to St. George.

Palestine – According to their local tradition, St. George was imprisoned in the town of al-Khader, south of Bethlehem where the Monastery of Saint George stands today. The chains that held him are relics in this place. The Palestinian Christians living in the Bethlehem area have a strong devotion to St. George and many are named after the saint. There, they celebrate his feast day on May 6, when a procession takes place from the center of town to the monastery. The bones of Saint George are buried in the Church of Saint George, in the town of Lod, Israel; around 10 miles from the large city of Tel Aviv.

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord our God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” Deuteronomy 31:6

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Information Found thru: Wikipedia.org, Pilgrim Center of Hope’s Journeys of Hope
20 April 2022 episode, English-Heritage.org, BBC News

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St. George
Military Saint

Born: Cappadocia
Died: 23 April 303
Feast Day: 23 April
Patronage: Soldiers, Palestine

A Part of His Story

Lydda. Saint George was a soldier of Cappadocian Greek origin and a member of the Praetorian Guard for Roman emperor Diocletian, who was sentenced to death for refusing to renounce his Christian faith. He became one of the most venerated saints in Christianity, and he has been especially venerated as a military saint since the Crusades.

There is little we know about him. But the wonderful traditions that have been associated with depictions of St. George date back to the 5th century, when Christian art began to depict a militant Christ who tramples Satan, a serpent or a dragon. Then in the early medieval period, there was a transition into Christ being mounted on a horse with a spear.

An early ceramic icon from the 300s to 500s in Vinica, Macedonia, features a depiction of St. George holding a spear alongside St. Christopher who also holds a spear. Depictions of a soldier slaying a dragon were more often associated with St. Theodore, another early Christian. But there was a shift in Christian art sometime in the 11th century moving this image to become associated with St. George.

In the well-known version of the legend from Jacobus de Voragine's The Golden Legend, written in the 1260s, the story of St. George and the Dragon took place somewhere the author called Silene in Libya. At that time period it was the oldest and most important of the five Greek Cities. Silene was plagued by a venom-spewing dragon dwelling in a lake near the city, poisoning the entire countryside. To keep it from affecting the city, the people offered the dragon sacrifices of two sheep.
daily, then a man and a sheep, and finally their children and youths, chosen by casting lots.

One time the lot fell on the king's daughter. The king offered all his gold and silver to have his daughter spared, but the people refused. The daughter was sent out to the lake, dressed as a bride, to be fed to the dragon.

Saint George happened to arrive at the right time and the right place. The princess tried to send him away, but he vowed to remain and protect her. The dragon emerged from the water. Saint George made the Sign of the Cross and charged it on horseback, seriously wounding it with his lance. He then called to the princess to throw him her belt, and he put it around the dragon's neck. When she did so, the dragon followed the girl like a "meek beast" on a leash.

The princess and Saint George led the dragon back to the city of Silene, where it terrified the people. George announced that if all the people were to become Christians and be baptized, he would slay the dragon. The tale says that fifteen thousand men including the king of Silene converted to Christianity. George then killed the dragon, beheading it with his sword, and the body was carted out of the city on four ox carts. The king built a church to the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint George on the site where the dragon died, and a spring flowed from its altar with water that cured all diseases.

So then, as we look at the icon of St. George, we see this story unfolding before our eyes. And it reminds us of the story of salvation. The dragon represents Satan, whose temptations poison our lives and cause us suffering. As we hear in the story of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, God did not create death, but it was through sin that death entered the world.

So, in this story of St. George, we hear about how the dragon was poisoning the whole countryside, and the people were afraid to suffer. So, they started offering sacrifices to the dragon to keep him away, but eventually they started to even sacrifice their own lives.

But St. George in this story represents Christ. He is there in our time of greatest need, waiting to encourage us. The Word of the Lord is Truth, and it is described in Hebrews 4:12 as sharper than a two-edged sword: *For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

Christ pierces the Dragon, the Father of Lies, with the Truth. It is the Truth that sets us free. Saint George, the Christ figure in this story, is a loyal knight who promises to defend us, and – notice how George asks the princess to cooperate in the process with him.

He asks her to give something that she has, to keep the dragon at bay, while George himself pierces the dragon to wound it. We can interpret this part of the story in two ways. First, with George being the Christ figure in the story, we see that Christ needs our participation to keep our spiritual enemy from harming us.

We can’t simply ask God to defend us from temptation if we are not willing to do our part. We must practice and exercise virtues like trustworthiness, honesty, integrity, temperance, and above all love, to cooperate with Christ in overcoming the temptation to live according to our fears.

The other way we could interpret this part of the story is with St. George simply representing himself. George and the princess working together to conquer the dragon can represent the importance of how we cannot spiritually succeed on our own; we need the help of one other. That means we need to reach out for help when we need it, to family, friends, clergy, religious, and spiritual directors.

A martyr – Like many saints, George was described as a martyr after he died for his Christian faith. It is believed that during the persecutions of the Emperor Diocletian in the early 4th century, St George was executed for refusing to make a sacrifice in honor of the pagan gods.