



St. Alban

The Story of St Alban – The First British Martyr

One night, Alban, a British soldier in the Roman army, was on the point of going to bed. All of a sudden, he heard the faint creak of the front gate opening and the sound of whispering. Curious to know who could be calling at this late hour, Alban went out to have a look. There, he saw one of his slaves talking to an old man. Seeing his master, the slave jumped back in terror but when Alban started to ask about what was going on, the old man quickly moved in front of the slave and faced Alban. He explained that his name was Amphibalus and that he was a Christian priest. He was running away from the Romans, because they were trying to make everyone worship the Roman Emperor, and as a Christian priest, this was something he could not do. He begged Alban to let him stay for the night

Feeling pity for the man, Alban decided to let him stay. He had always been curious about these Christians and couldn't understand why they were all so stubborn in their refusal to worship the Emperor. He decided that he would question the priest about it later.

Over the next few days, Alban asked the priest many questions about the Christian religion. The priest explained to him about who Jesus was, what he taught, his miracles, how he died and how God had raised him back to life again to prove that he was really His Son. Through these conversations, Alban came to understand and accept that Christianity was true. Alban also saw how the priest loved God, and how he spent his nights in prayer, and the sight of this moved Alban deeply.

Meanwhile, the Roman governor of the city heard rumours that a priest was hiding at Alban's house and sent a search party of soldiers to find him. Seeing them approach, Alban hurriedly took the priest's cloak from him, and put it over his own head and shoulders, while helping the priest to escape. When he opened the door to the soldiers, Alban was mistaken for the priest and was arrested, bound in chains and brought before the governor. When the cloak was removed and Alban's true identity as a Roman soldier was discovered, the Governor was furious. He demanded to know who Alban was, and for him to prove his loyalty to the Roman beliefs by worshipping the Emperor, or suffer death.

Alban replied: "My parents called me Alban, and I worship and adore the true and living God who created all things" and refused to offer incense to the Emperor. He refused to back track on his new Christian belief. The Romans whipped him cruelly, but he still did not deny his faith so they sent him out of the city, to be beheaded.

On the way to his execution, crowds of people gathered to honour his heroism so that it was difficult for the Execution party to make their way through. When he finally arrived at the hill of execution, the executioner himself decided he also wanted to be a Christian. He threw down his sword and refused to perform duty and took his stand beside Alban, and they faced death together. Another soldier was found to replace the executioner. Alban was beheaded first, and then the executioner. Finally, when the priest, whose life Alban had saved, heard about what was happening, he turned himself in, and was also beheaded.

The governor was so impressed by the heroism of Alban, the Executioner and the priest, and by the miracles that followed Alban's martyrdom, that he immediately ended the persecutions. A church was built on the hill where these martyrdoms took place, and later, a monastery.