

Saint Egdunus

Name: Egdunus

Dates: 3rd century – 303 AD

Location: Asia Minor

Feast Day: March 12

Very little is known about the personal life of Egdunus but what is known is that he was martyred in the persecution of Diocletian with seven other Christians in the territory of Nicomedia, Asia Minor on March 12, 303 A.D. They were suspended by their feet over a fire, being left to die of smoke inhalation. We celebrate St. Egdunus because of the horrific torture and death he and many other Christians were subjected to during the early years of Christianity.

It is worthwhile to explain the “Great Persecution” that occurred between 303-312 A.D. in order to fully understand the belief and commitment these persecuted saints had for God and Christianity. Diocletian, born Diocles (December 244-December 311,) was a Roman emperor who believed in the pantheon of gods. He believed that restricting the military and civil activities of Christians would appease the pantheon. However, unfortunate events – fires, oracles that could not be read, and escalation of famine and disease, were blamed on Christianity and brought forth the “Great Persecution.” On February 23, 303, Diocletian ordered the newly built church and its scriptures at Nicomedia to be burned. The next day the first “Edict against the Christians” was published. This Edict ordered the destruction of Holy scriptures and places of worship and prohibited Christians from assembling together to worship. Toward the end of February a fire destroyed part of the Imperial Place and Christians were blamed. The executions began and continued until at late April 303 when six individuals were decapitated, including the bishop Anthimus. Persecution of Christians continued until 324 AD. Christianity later became the Roman Empire’s preferred religion under the Emperor Constantine.

St. Egdunus was not canonized – he was proclaimed a saint by early Christians. Canonization did not begin until the 12th century. His feast day is celebrated March 12. Persecution was a common theme during the early foundations of the Church. As so many Christians suffered, we should pray for their strength and try to avoid the things that drove the Romans to sanction the persecutions in the first place.