

Porphyry of Gaza

Saint Name: Saint Porphyrius, Bishop

Dates: 347 AD – February 26, 420 AD

Location: Greece

Feast Day: February 26

Porphyrius was born 347 AD to a wealthy family in Thessalonica, Macedonia (Greece). At the age of 25 he left his home and friends to become a hermit in the desert of Scete, Egypt. After spending five years with the monks in Scete, he went to visit the holy places of Jerusalem and later resided in a cave near Jordan. With the help of his friend Mark (AKA Mark the Deacon), Porphyrius gave away his inheritance, worked as a humble shoemaker for a time, and then received ordination as a priest. Against his will he was made bishop of Gaza at the age of 45. The people of Gaza were so hostile to Christians that Christian churches had



to be built at a safe distance outside the city. Porphyrius' hardest challenges came from the pagans of the region where he set out to end paganism and close the temples. During the winter of 401-402, Porphyry went to Constantinople to convince the Empress Eudoxia to get her husband to authorize the destruction of pagan temples at Gaza. An imperial envoy executed the decree and the temples of Aphrodite, Hecate, Apollo, Persephone and four others were torn down or burnt. With approved violence, paganism officially ended in Gaza.

St. Porphyrius died February 26, 420 (his feast day). His life, written by Mark the Deacon, is an important source of information about paganism in the Christian East.