

Saint George is the patron saint of England. He's popularly identified with England and English ideals of honour, bravery and gallantry - but actually he wasn't English at all. Very little, if anything, is known about the real Saint George. Pope Gelasius (*pron:Jelasius*) said that George is one of the saints "whose names are rightly revered among us, but whose actions are known only to God."

Facts as we know them are:

- Born in Cappadocia, an area which is now in Turkey
- Lived in 3rd century AD
- His parents were Christian
- Later lived in Palestine
- Became a Roman soldier
- Protested against Rome's persecution of Christians
- Imprisoned and tortured, but stayed true to his faith
- Beheaded at Lydda in Palestine
- 23rd April was named as Saint George's day in 1222

He is patron saint not only of England but also of Aragon, Catalonia, Georgia, Lithuania, Palestine, Portugal, Germany and Greece; and of Moscow, Istanbul, Genoa and Venice (after Saint Mark). He's also patron saint of soldiers, archers, cavalry and chivalry, farmers and field workers, riders and saddlers. He is also known for healing from Leprosy and in recent years, has been adopted as the patron saint of Scouts.*

There are also many tales and fables surrounding St George.

But truth is, in this world where there is uncertainty and instability both at home and abroad, we need something good and true to cling on to. When we were children we clung to the stories and fables of the great Knights of the realm as we grow we still love to hear about the great feats of the Saints. It encourages us to be something more than we are, to reach out of ourselves to be something or someone better. Even to look for friendship and to be in communion or belong to one another. It is the ideals we encapsulate within us which can enhance the power of unity in diversity that is still as important today as it was then for the sake of what is often an unstable and at times frightening world.

However it is what St George stood for that is the most important, despite being imprisoned and tortured he stayed true to his faith, to the point at which he was beheaded. Some say, he was not English. But that does not matter. What matters is that he belonged to God. We are as one in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Just as, we belong to God and have faith in the profound mystery of Easter and the resurrection of Christ! So did he. It is this that gives us strength to hold fast in an ever-changing world, not only changing but a world that is becoming smaller, where communication is instant and we are alerted to news in a flick of a thumb. Where nothing goes unreported. It is even more profound, because when you get a text alert of the news and you hear of another modern day siege of power over others,

you will know that those people, far away across the globe, also belong to God as equally and immeasurably as we do. What is even more profound, because when everyday people continue to go about their daily lives oblivious to the homeless man or woman who begs for a morsel of food and a crumb of recognition, you will know that those invisible children of God belong to Him as mysteriously and completely as you or I. And something else, when you encounter your deep desire to be known, your burning passion to be loved, your unending search for the beyond, you will find on that long pilgrimage that the One you seek is already with you, poised to place a crown upon your head and a palm in your hand, and to die in your place as the God who gives his all for you. That is what held St George as our patron Saint to remain faithful. He had the courage and more importantly the Love to follow faithfully in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

St Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13 of the 3 things that abide, faith, hope and Love; that the greatest of these is Love. After Jesus death many of the disciples may have lost their hope and even their faith but they would not have lost their Love. Love took Mary Magdalene to the tomb, Love took the disciples to the upper room. It is that Love of God that held them together and the Love to which St George clung to as he fought with the dragons of his time.

To this day there are still dragons to be slain, and Saints still live amongst us today. Our own Prince Harry, once fighting for the safety of his country on the front line in Afghanistan, a brave honest soldier; now quietly and modestly standing up for those weakened and suffering from mental health by identifying his stance next to them in their suffering. But closer to home, I see the Saints walking amongst us here at St Johns. Today they may not be riding in on white horses, but walking out into this world looking much like you and I.

You may wonder why the homeless cling together in our Churchyard? Well it is because of the Saints that care about them here. That is something you should be proud of. It is because this Church cares and helps to look after them through Open Doors. That they feel safe amongst us.

This world needs Saints exactly like you. It needs you to love it, to nurture goodness within it as if it were indeed a precious gem or a fragment of golden tapestry. It needs you to believe that in the end, Love prevails over hate, that the darkness cannot overcome the light, that it is life not death that has the final word. And the world needs you to sing songs of hope, freedom and Glory as never before. It needs you to live bravely for the sake of a gospel that would see all people set free.

God's Kingdom; is the reality of our existence, every other Kingdom is transient. Love is the ultimate reality, not hate; Christ comes to lead us wonderfully with courage and steadfastness into the dark places of this kingdom. Look beyond this life's phenomena to find the spiritual gain that is kept for you in the realm of God's Love. Choose Life not Death.

God bless you St. George for lighting our way. God bless you one and all as you continue on your journeys fighting darkness; with the Light and love of Christ.

Amen

**information gleaned from Wikipaedia*