

143// HERE FOLLOW THE LIVES OF SAINTS COSMO AND DAMIAN

Cosmo and Damian were brethren germane, that is of one father and of one mother, and were of the city Egea, and born of a religious mother named Theodora. They were learned in the art of medicine, and of leechcraft, and received so great grace of God that they healed all maladies and languors, not only of men but also cured and healed beasts. And did all for the love of God without taking of any reward.

ST. DAMIAN ACCEPTS A GIFT

There was a lady which had spent all her goods in medicines, and came to these saints, and anon was healed of her sickness, and then she offered a little gift to St. Damian, but he would not receive it. And she sware and conjured him by horrible oaths that he granted to receive it, and not for covetise of the gift, but for to obey to the devotion of her that offered it, and that he would not be seen to despise the name of our Lord of which he had been conjured. And when St. Cosmo knew it, he commanded that his body should not be laid after his death with his brother's. And the night following our Lord appeared to St. Cosmo and excused his brother.

Cosmo is said of cosmos, which is to say a form, shape, or ornamtion. Or, after Isidore, cosmos in Greek is said clean in Latin. He was a form to others in example, he was ornate in good virtues, and clean from all vices. Damian is said of dama, which is a beast humble and meek. Or damianus is said of dogma, which is doctrine, and ana, that is above, or of damum, that is sacrifice. Or Damianus is said as it were the hand of our Lord. He had meekness in conversation, supernal doctrine in predication, his sacrifice was in mortification of his flesh, and he was the hand of our Lord in medicinal curation and healing.

THEIR MARTYRDOM

And when Lysias heard their renomee he made them to be called tofore him, and demanded their names and their country. And then the holy martyrs said: Our names be Cosmo and Damian, and we have three other brethren which be named Antimas, Leontius, and Euprepus. Our country is Arabia, but Christian men know not fortune.

They Are Thrown Into the Sea

Then the proconsul or judge commanded them that they should bring forth their brethren, and that they should all together do sacrifice to the idols. And when in no wise they would do sacrifice, but despised the idols, he commanded they should be sore tormented in the hands and feet. And when they despised his torments, he commanded them to be bound with a chain and thrown into the sea, but they were anon delivered by the angel of our Lord, and taken out of the sea, and came again tofore the judge.

And when the judge saw them, he said: Ye overcome our great gods by your enchantments; ye despise the torments and make the sea peaceable. Teach ye me your witchcraft, and in the name of the god Adrian, I shall follow you.

And anon as he had said this two devils came and beat him greatly in the visage, and he crying said: "O ye good men, I pray you that ye pray for me to our Lord." And they then prayed for him and anon the devils departed.

Then the judge said: Lo! ye may see how the gods had indignation against me, because I thought to have forsaken them, but I shall not suffer my gods to be blasphemed.

Cast into a Great Fire

And then he commanded them to be cast into a great fire, but anon the flame sprang far from them and slew many of them that stood by. And then they were commanded to be put on a torment named eculee [the rack], but they were kept by the angel of our Lord, and the tormentors tormented them above all men, and yet were they taken off without hurt or grief, and so came all whole tofore the judge.

Crucified, Stoned, Shot with Arrows, and Beheaded

Then the judge commanded the three to be put in prison, and made Cosmo and Damian to be crucified, and to be stoned of the people, but the stones returned to them that threw them, and hurt and wounded many of them. Then the judge, replenished with woodness, made the three brethren to stand by the cross, and commanded that four knights should shoot arrows to Cosmo and Damian, but the arrows returned and hurt many, and did no harm to the martyrs. And when the judge saw that, he was confused in all things, he was anguishous unto the death, and did do behead all five brethren together.

Buried Together with Their Brothers

Then the Christian men doubted of the word that St. Cosmo had said, that his brother should not be buried with him, and as they thought thereon there came a voice which cried and said: They be all of one substance, bury them all together in one place. And they suffered death under Diocletian about the year of our Lord two hundred and eighty-seven.

MIRACLES OF SAINTS COSMAS AND DAMIAN

The Husbandman and the Snake

It happened that a husbandman after that he had laboured in the field about reaping of his corn, he slept with open mouth in the field, and a serpent entered by his mouth into his body. Then he awoke and felt nothing, and after returned into his house. And at even he began to be tormented and cried piteously, and called unto his help the holy saints of God, Cosmo and Damian, and when the pain and anguish increased he went to the church of the saints, and fell suddenly asleep, and then the serpent issued out of his mouth like as it had entered.

The Woman Attacked by the Devil

There was a man that should have gone a long voyage, and recommended his wife to Cosmo and Damian, and left a token with her that, if he sent for her by that token she should come to him. And the devil knew well the token, and transfigured himself in the form of a man, and brought to the woman the sign of her husband and said: Thine husband hath sent me from that city to thee for to lead thee to him.

And yet she doubted for to go with him and said: I know well the token, but because he left me in the keeping of the saints Cosmo and Damian, swear to me upon their altar that thou shalt bring me to him surely, and then I shall go with thee.

And he sware like as she had said. Then she followed him. And when she came in a secret place the devil would have thrown her down off her horse for to have slain her. And when she felt that, she cried to God and to the saints Cosmo and Damian for help, and anon these saints were there with a great multitude clothed in white, and delivered her, and the devil vanished away. And they said to her: We be Cosmo and Damian, to whose oath thou believedest, therefore we have hied us to come to thine help.

The Man With the Cankered Thigh

Felix, the eighth pope after St. Gregory, did do make a noble church at Rome of the saints Cosmo and Damian, and there was a man which served devoutly the holy martyrs in that church, who a canker had consumed all his thigh. And as he slept, the holy martyrs Cosmo and Damian, appeared to him their devout servant, bringing with them an instrument and ointment of whom that one said to that other: Where shall we have flesh when we have cut away the rotten flesh to fill the void place?

Then that other said to him: There is an Ethiopian that this day is buried in the churchyard of St. Peter ad Vincula, which is yet fresh, let us bear this thither, and take we out of that morian's flesh and fill this place withal.

And so they fetched the thigh of the sick man and so changed that one for that other. And when the sick man awoke and felt no pain, he put forth his hand and felt his leg without hurt, and then took a candle, and saw well that it was not his thigh, but that it was another. And when he was well come to himself, he sprang out of his bed for joy, and recounted to all the people how it was happed to him, and that which he had seen in his sleep, and how he was healed. And they sent hastily to the tomb of the dead man, and found the thigh of him cut off, and that other thigh in the tomb instead of his.

Then let us pray unto these holy martyrs to be our succour and help in all our hurts, blechures and sores, and that by their merits after this life we may come to everlasting bliss in heaven. Amen.

The [iconography of Saints Cosmas and Damian](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

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