

Saint George • Saint stories

“I want to be a soldier when I grow up!” How many of you have said that? St. George did, too—and he lived way back in the 4th century.

St. George was raised a Christian and always wanted to be a soldier. When he was old enough, he joined the army. The man in charge of the army, Diocletian, hated Christians and had many put to death—including St. Philomena. The fact that George was a Christian AND a soldier didn't bother Diocletian, especially since George was a good one. Eventually, though, Diocletian decided that EVERYONE in his army must worship him and the Roman gods instead. George refused. The army officials begged him to deny the one, true God. “We don't want to lose you, George! We need you in our army! What a waste to die just for your God!” But George knew it is a mortal (deadly) sin to deny our God.

Knowing that he would soon be arrested and executed, George gave all his money away to the poor and prepared himself for death. He was cruelly tortured and then beheaded on April 23, 303.

As with many of the saints from the early church, there are legends about Saint George. Most people think, “He's the one who slew the dragon” when they hear his name. But few people know much more of the story. Here is the rest of the story.

There was a city that had a dragon living in its lake. This wouldn't have been too much of a problem if the city people could have avoided the lake. But they needed to go to the lake every day to get water. (This was LONG before indoor plumbing.) Each time they came to the lake to get water, they needed to make a sacrifice so that the dragon wouldn't eat them.

At first, they fed him a sheep. After a while, either there

were no more sheep to feed him or the dragon demanded something more to eat. It's unsure which happened. Anyway, the people began offering the young maidens of the city for a sacrifice . Each day, they would draw lots to see which girl would be fed to the dragon.

One day, the king's daughter's name was drawn. "NO, no, not my daughter!" cried the king. (I am sure every parent thought that if their daughter's name was chosen.) Even though the king pleaded, the citizens decided that she needed to be sacrificed. As the princess was led away, St. George rode by the lake and saw what was happening. George made the sign of the cross and slew the dragon, saving the princess's life. The citizens were so grateful to George that they all converted to Christianity.

And now you know the rest of the story about St. George and the dragon!

Feast day: April 23

St. George, pray for us!

Activity: Let's Cast Lots!

What you'll need:

- a bag of Skittles, M&Ms, chocolate chips, or any small candy
- drinking straws

Directions:

For every person playing, cut a straw to a different length. Have one person hold all the straws in a fist, making it so that the straw parts sticking out are each the same length. Each person draws a straw. The one with the longest straw goes first, next longest second, etc. (This is one way to "cast lots.")

Dump the candy on a table. The person who gets to go first takes his straw and puts one end in his mouth. While sucking in air, the person tries to pick up a piece of the candy with the straw. Pretend the straw is a vacuum cleaner and your mouth is the suction. Use one hand to guide/hold the straw. You are trying to pick up and move your piece of candy into your empty hand. After you do this, pop the candy in your mouth and enjoy. Now it is the next person's turn.

You can make this more challenging by increasing the distance you must move your candy with the straw.

Have fun!