

St. Stephen the Younger



A Monk of the East, he lived in the eighth century, during the iconoclast period, of which he was a victim and Martyr. Born in Constantinople in 715, Stephen began at first under the direction of a hermit, then entered the monastery of Monte Sant'Aussenzio in Bithynia, where he became Aabbot. Here he lived, praying and doing the job of copying texts. At that time the emperor Constantine Copronymo, the iconoclast in his battle against the sacred images, had aimed particularly at the monks. Following the council of Hiera, which in 753 condemned the defenders of icons, Stephen openly sided against the emperor. This cost him long harassment, imprisonment and abuse. On November 28, 764 Stephen was killed by some officers of the palace at Constantinople, without the order of the emperor.

Roman Martyrology: At Constantinople, St. Stephen the Younger, Monk and Martyr, who, under the Emperor Constantine Copronymos, was subjected to various punishments for having defended the worship of sacred images, confirmed by the shedding of his blood the Catholic truth. The Life of this eastern Monk, was written around the year 809 by his namesake Stephen, Deacon of Constantinople.

The Monk St Stephen the Younger, was born in 715 in Constantinople, ancient Byzantium, as a young man first began under the leadership of a hermit, but then choose the religious life, entering the monastery of Monte Sant'Aussenzio in Bithynia, near Chalcedon , where he became Hegumen (abbot). Lived here for years devoted to prayer and as amanuensis, the distinguished work of monks who copied ancient texts.

At that time ruled the Eastern Emperor Constantine V Copronymos (718-775), son of Leo III Isaura (675-741) the emperor who in 726 began the religious policy of iconoclasm against the worship of images. The iconoclast movement was continued with his son Constantine V, who engaged in a tough fight, especially against the monks also, convened the Council of Hiera, which in 753 condemned the defenders of the cult of sacred images.

The Hegumen Stephen openly sided against the rules of this Council convened by the emperor and the Papal rules, which will ultimately be disowned with the approval of the veneration of images, with the Second Council of Nicaea in 787. Meanwhile, Constantine V Copronymos in June of 762, commanded the Hegumen of Monte Sant'Aussenzio, respect and adherence to the canons promulgated Hiera, since they refused, he was taken to the monastery of Chrysopoli at Constantinople and from there sent into exile in Island Proconnesus, where his mother and sister were allowed to join him.

After a year, in 763, he was brought back to Constantinople, where more than 300 monks were jailed because of their dedication to the veneration of images. After another year of continued harassment and abuse, on November 28, 764, Abbot Stephen was killed by some officers of the palace, while the festivities were under way for the Empress Eudoxia, but without any order of the emperor.

The Greek Church recognized him as a martyr, with his memorial on November 28, and on that date and title, he is included in the Roman Martyrology.