

Saint Gatien

SAINT OF THE DAY

18_12_2023



Saint Gatien, or Gratianus, was the founder of the Diocese of Tours a century before Saint Martin was appointed its bishop; apart from this little else is known about his life. He was among the great evangelisers of Gaul, having been sent there by Pope Fabian around the middle of the 3rd century, together with six other missionary bishops (and saints): Denis, the well-known martyr and patron of Paris, Martial of Limoges, Paul of Narbonne, Saturnin of Toulouse, Trophimus of Arles and Stramonius of Clermont. Christian communities already existed in Gaul, such as the one in Lyons (where Saint

Pothinus and Saint Irenaeus had lived), but around the year 250 paganism still prevailed, also because of the Empire's recurrent persecutions against the Christians.

According to Gregory of Tours (538-594), the author of an important *Historia Francorum*, Gatien was bishop of Tours for 50 years (until around 301). Then, for 36 years the episcopal see remained empty, as Christianity struggled to put down roots, due to severe persecutions in the early 4th century – shortly before the introduction of religious freedom; after that, Saint Lydorius was bishop for 33 years followed by Saint Martin, who was therefore the third bishop of this ancient diocese. The hostility that Gatien encountered especially at the beginning of his apostolate had forced him to celebrate the Eucharist in caves and other hidden places.

He founded a hospice for the poor outside the walls of Tours, offering fasts and prayers and serving Christ in everything, who appeared in a vision to comfort him just before his death: "Do not fear, your crown is ready and the saints await your arrival in Heaven" . Gatien was buried in a Christian cemetery and Saint Martin translated his remains to the church on whose ruins the Cathedral of Tours would be built in the 14th century, to be dedicated to Saint Gatien: this is why people call it *La Gatianne*. Together with Saint Humphrey and Saint Anthony of Padua, Saint Gatien is the patron of those looking for lost objects.