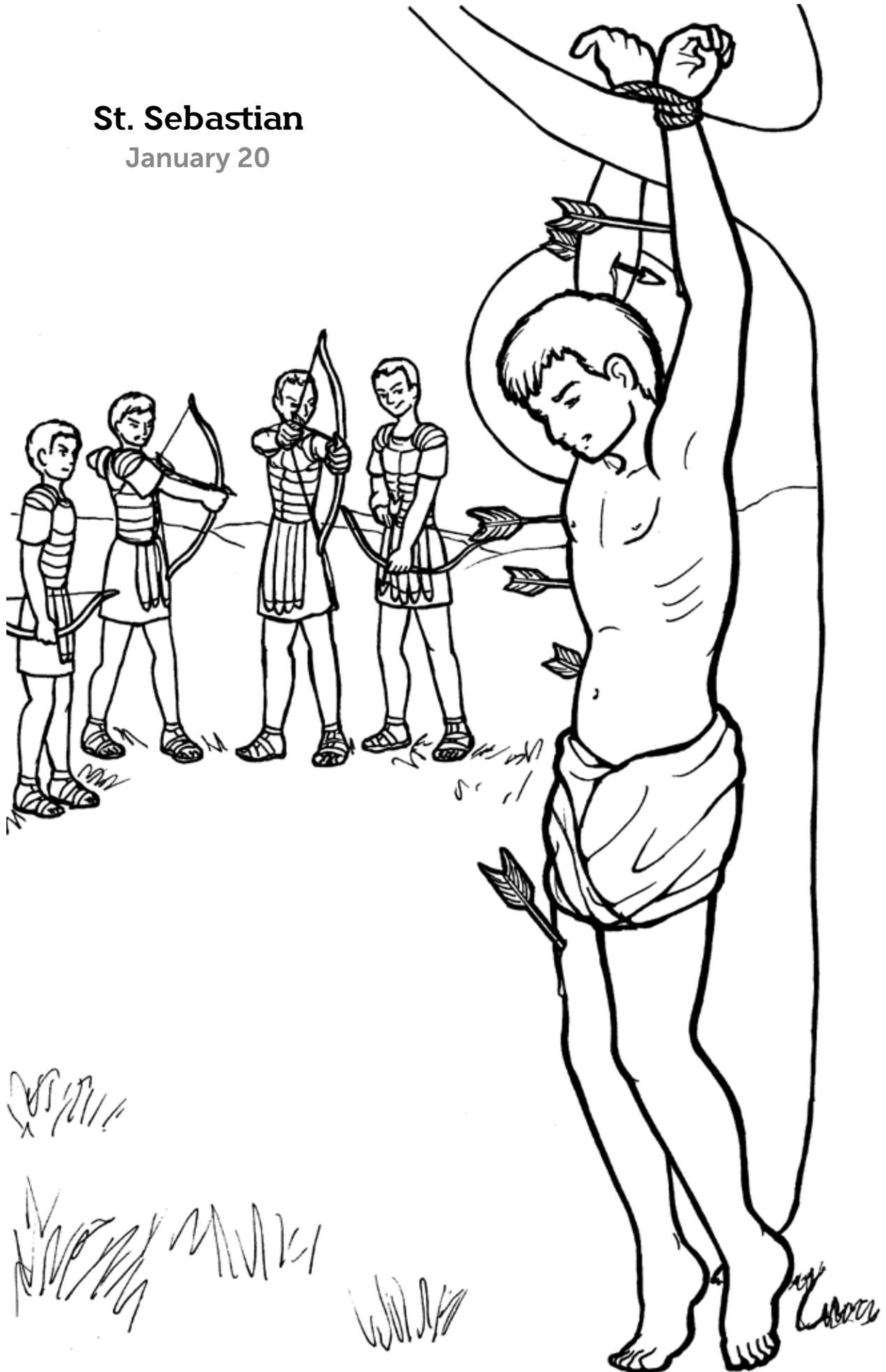


St. Sebastian
January 20



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St. Sebastian

285–305 • Italy

Not much is known about St. Sebastian except that he was an early Roman martyr. Legends have arisen about his life and death. The legends say that Sebastian lived during the reign of Diocletian, a Roman emperor famous for savagely persecuting Christians. Sebastian was a member of the emperor's army, but he kept his Christianity a secret so he could protect the Christians who needed help. Because Sebastian was so brave, the emperor made him a member of the Praetorian Guard (the emperor's own personal guard), not suspecting that Sebastian was also a Christian.

Because Sebastian converted so many soldiers to Christianity, Diocletian finally discovered that Sebastian was a Christian. Enraged, the emperor ordered Sebastian to be tied to a tree and shot dead with arrows. Many arrows sped through the air and pierced the bound Sebastian, and so the soldiers left him for dead. A Christian widow named Irene wished to bury Sebastian. When she untied his body from the tree, however, she discovered that he was miraculously alive! She cared for the wounded Sebastian until he was strong and healthy again.

The Christian soldier could not stand by and do nothing while Diocletian continued persecuting Christians. He snuck into the emperor's palace and waited for the emperor to walk by him. He called out to Diocletian and told him that what he was doing was wrong. The emperor was shocked. His soldiers had reported that Sebastian was dead, yet here Sebastian was, unafraid and defending his fellow Christians. But Diocletian was a hard, cruel man. Not even a miracle could change his mind. For the second time, he ordered his soldiers to kill Sebastian. This time they beat him with clubs, and Sebastian died a martyr, a witness to Christ.

Even though Sebastian's story is mostly a legend, he is an example of how we should not be afraid to show our love for Jesus. St. Sebastian, help me to be a witness to Christ!