

pope used, calls him an excellent man, a true son of peace, and a true father of Christians. Saint Melchiades died on the 10th of January, 314, having sat two years, six months, and eight days, and was buried on the Appian road, in the cemetery of Calixtus; he is named in the Roman Martyrology and in some calendars he is styled a martyr, doubtless on account of his sufferings in preceding persecutions.

This holy pope saw a door opened by the peace of the church to the conversion of many, and he rejoiced at the triumph of the cross of Christ. But when a worldly spirit broke into the sanctuary itself, the words of Isaiah ring out, *"That hast multiplied the nations, and hast not increased my joy."* Under the pressures of severe persecution, the true spirit of the Catholic Church was maintained. The Christian spirit often reigns in a great number of chosen souls whose lives are hidden from the world, but in whom God will always provide for his honored faithful servants on earth, who will praise him in spirit and truth...

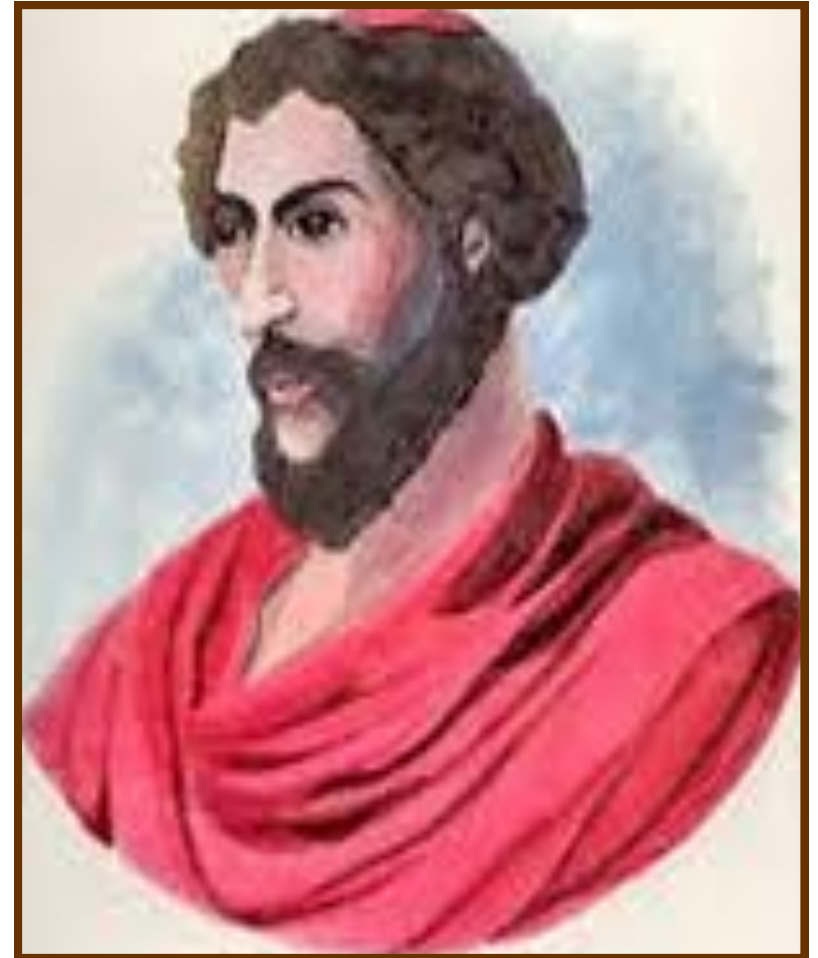
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Saint Melchiades, Pope

Feast Day: December 10



***Pope Saint Melchiades,
Successor of Peter and Holy Martyr,
pray for us.***

Saint Melchiades, Pope

*Melchiades, or Miltiades, succeeded Eusebius in the see of Rome, being chosen on the 2nd of July, 311, in the reign of Maxentius. Constantine vanquished that tyrant on the 28th of October in 312, and soon after issued edicts, by which he allowed Christians the free exercise of their religion, and the liberty of building churches.

To pacify the mind of the pagans, who were uneasy at this innovation, when he arrived at Milan in the beginning of the year 313, Constantine, by a second edict, ensured to all religions except heresies, liberty of conscience. Among the first laws which he enacted in favor of Christians, he passed one to exempt the clergy from the burden of civil offices. He obliged all his soldiers to repeat on Sundays a prayer addressed to the one only God; and no idolater could scruple at such a practice. He abolished the pagan festivals and mysteries in which lewdness had a share. Unnatural impurity being almost unrestrained among the heathens, the Romans, when luxury and debauchery were arrived at the highest pitch among them, began to shun marriage, that they might be more at liberty to follow their passions. Laws were passed to encourage and to command all men to marry, inflicting heavy penalties on the disobedient.

The abuses being restrained by Constantine's edicts, Melchiades rejoiced exceedingly at the prosperity of God's house, and by his zealous labors, very much extended its pale; but he had the affliction to see it torn by an intestine division, in the Donatus schism,

which blazed with great fury in Africa. Mensurius, bishop of Carthage, being falsely accused of having delivered up the sacred scriptures to be burnt in the time of the persecution, Donatus, bishop of Cassa-nigra in Numidia, most unreasonably separated himself from his communion, and continued his schism when Cecilian had succeeded Mensurius in the see of Carthage, and was joined by many jealous enemies of that good prelate, especially by the powerful lady Lucilla, who was personally piqued against Cecilian while he was deacon of that church. The schismatics appealed to Constantine, who was then in Gaul, and entreated him to commission three Gaulish bishops, whom they specified, to judge their cause against Celilian. The emperor granted their request, but ordered the three bishops to repair to Rome, by letter, entreating Pope Melchiades to examine into the controversy, together with the three Gaulish bishops, and to decide it according to justice and equity. Pope Melchiades opened a council in the Lateran palace on the 2nd of October, 313, at which both Cecilian and Donatus of Cassa-nigra were present; and the former was pronounced by the pope and his council innocent of the whole charge brought against him; Donatus was the only person who was condemned on that occasion; the other bishops who had adhered to Donatus were allowed to keep their sees upon their renouncing the schism.

Saint Austin, speaking of the moderation which the