

In his four ordinations, Saint Telesphorus, created thirteen bishops, fifteen priests, and eight deacons. It is said that this pope ordered that all priests should celebrate three Masses on Christmas day. However, this observance was followed under Pope Saint Gregory the Great. Saint Telesphorus presided over the Holy See for eleven years, eight months, and eighteen days.

**Prayer to Saint Telephorus:**

O glorious martyr Pope Saint Telephorus of Rome, entreat the merciful God to grant us such grace that we, like you, can courageously bear witness to His wondrous deeds in our everyday lives, even unto death, and that we one day join you in the Kingdom of Heaven and see God face to face. Amen. Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

\*(excerpted from: [www.cfpeople.org](http://www.cfpeople.org); [www.third-millennium-library.com](http://www.third-millennium-library.com);  
// [thebananarepublican.blogspot.com](http://thebananarepublican.blogspot.com))

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## ***Saint Telesphorus, Pope and Martyr***

**Feast Day: January 5**



**Courageous Martyr for the Faith  
and  
Testimony to Deeds for Everyday Living**

## ***Saint Telesphorus***

\*Saint Telesphorus was a Greek by birth, though some authors say that he was born in Terranova, in Calabria. It is by some affirmed that his father was an anchorite, and that Telesphorus himself was Roman by birth. He ruled the Church in the time of Emperor Antoninus Pius. To Saint Telesphorus are attributed some church practices which endure to this day. According to the "Liber Pontificalis" Saint Telesphorus ordered a fast for seven weeks before Easter. That the Lenten fast goes back even before the time of Saint Telesphorus, as Saints Irenaeus, Jerome, and Ignatius give testimony. But the length of the fast varied considerably in those early days. It is probable enough that Pope Saint Telesphorus did make some regulation as to the length of the Lenten fast. Some say that by his decrees he confirmed the observance of Lent while affirming the quadragesimal fast which came down by tradition.

A custom much loved even today is also attributed to Saint Telesphorus. He is said to have ordered that although Mass was not celebrated before the hour of tierce (i.e., nine to twelve o'clock in the morning) at Christmas time Mass

should be celebrated at night. This is the first mention of the beloved Midnight Mass. However, scholars doubt whether this decree actually does go back to the time of Saint Telesphorus.

At any rate, Saint Telesphorus is credited with having decreed the introduction that the "Gloria in Excelsis" should be sung at the Christmas Mass and only at the Christmas Mass. This magnificent hymn of praise is not said at all Masses even today. As late as the eleventh century, though the Pope could say it oftener, priests were not allowed to say it except at Easter.

This holy pope suffered martyrdom in, A.D. 139 under the Roman Emperor Hadrian. He is known as a martyr not only from the "Liber Pontificalis" but also from the earlier testimony of Saint Irenaeus. He was buried near Saint Peter on the Vatican. His feast is kept on January 5 in the Roman liturgy and February 22 in the Greek.