

for their faith in this century. Offer a prayer for the persecuted Church and for the modern martyrs.

These two Roman soldiers threw away their past existence for the glory of God. They gave their lives for Christ. Examine how much you are willing to sacrifice for the love of Christ and offer up a small sacrifice today.

Saint Pancratius was the descendant of a noble Phrygian family. As a youth of fourteen, he came to Rome while Diocletian and Maximian were in power (about 304). He was converted to Christianity and baptized by the Pope and given instructions in the Christian religion. Arrested for his actions, he steadfastly refused to sacrifice to the pagan gods and boldly defended before the Emperor the cause of the Christians. He was condemned to death and was beheaded on the Via Aurelia in Rome. His body was buried in the cemetery of Calepodius which afterwards took his name. Around the year 508, Pope Symmachius built a basilica over his tomb near the Porta de San Pauerazion which became a station church.

Pancratius is the patron saint of fidelity to oaths. On the first Sunday after Easter, Pope Symmachius exhorted the catechumens gathered at the saints station church to remain loyal to their baptismal vows. He warned those present to proceed slowly and prudently before taking an oath or vow. But once our word is given we must remain true to our pledge, true unto death, whether it concerns baptismal vows, ordination vows, profession vows, or marriage vows.

The symbols for Saint Pancratius are the sword and stone; armor; and the Saracen crown under his feet. He is the patron against false witness; against perjury; children; cramps; headaches; fidelity to oaths; and treaties. When not pictured with SS. Nereus and Achilleus, he is portrayed as a very young knight with a palm and pennant and having a cross on his lance. He may also may be shown as a young, unarmed Christian martyr. *(excerpted from: www.newadvent.org; www.catholicculture.org; [//feastofallsaints.com](http://feastofallsaints.com); [//stfrancisenid.com](http://stfrancisenid.com))

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Saints Nereus, Achilleus and Domitilla and Saint Pancrastius

Feast Day: May 12



Saints Nereus, Domitilla and Achilleus



Saint Pancratius

Saints Nereus, Achilleus and Domitilla And Saint Pancratius

*The commemoration of these four Roman saints is made by the Church on May 12, in common, and all four are named in the Proper of the Mass as martyrs. The old Roman lists, of the fifth century, and which passed over into the Martyrologium Hiernonymianum, contain the names of the two martyrs Nereus and Achilleus, whose grave was in the Catacomb of Domitilla on the Via Ardeatina; in the same calendar was found the name of Saint Pancratius, whose body rested in a catacomb on the Via Aurelia. In the invocation of the mass for their feast, in the "Sacramentarium Gelasianum", the names of Nereus and Achilleus alone are mentioned, and this is because only their invocation in the Mass was entered in the collection; the feast of Saint Pancratius being celebrated in the church built over his grave on the Via Aurelia. In the Mass of his festival, the formula of which is unknown to us, his name, without doubt, was alone mentioned. In the fourth and following centuries there was celebrated on 12 May in both places, at the grave of Saints Nereus and Achilleus on the Via Ardeatina, and at that of Saint Pancratius on the Via Ayrelia, a special votive Mass.

According to Pope Saint Damasus, Nereus and Achilleus were soldiers in the Praetorian Guard, the elite corps of soldiers entrusted with guarding the very person of the Roman emperor. According to an inscription found in the tomb over their remains in 1874-- in the family vault in the cemetery of Saint Flavia Domitilla, in the underground church built by Pope Saint Siricius in 390-- they were ordered by Emperor Domitian to slay his niece Flavia Domitilla on account of her allegiance to the Christian Faith. She had decided to consecrate her life to God. Moved by her example they became Christians themselves and refused to carry out the order. They were instructed and converted by Saint Peter. They were discovered by Aurelianus, the fiancée of Domitilla, who reported all three of them to the Roman authorities as being Christians. All three were thus banished and sent into exile to the island of Pontia and then under the reign of the

Emperor Trajan, to the island of Terracina. Here they were martyred-- Nereus and Achilleus were beheaded in circa 100, while Domitilla, whose banishment Saint Jerome describes as one, long, martyrdom, was burnt alive.

The bodies of these three Saints reposed, for several centuries, in the Basilica, called the Fasciola, on the Appian Way; and we have a Homily which Saint Gregory the Great preached in this Church on their feast. The holy Pontiff dwelt on the vanity of the earth's goods; he encouraged his audience to despise them by the example of the three martyrs whose relics lay under the very altar around which they were assembled. "These Saints," said he, "before whose tomb we are now standing, trampled with contempt of soul on the world and its flowers. Life was then long, health was uninterrupted, riches were abundant, parents were blessed with many children; and yet, though the world was so flourishing in itself, it had long been a withered thing in their hearts."

"Nereus and Achilleus joined the army and carried out the cruel orders of the tyrant emperor, obeying his will continually out of fear. Then came a miracle of faith. They suddenly gave up their savagery, they were converted, they fled the camp of their evil leader, throwing away their shields, armor, and bloody spears. Professing the faith of Christ, they are happy to witness to its triumph." From these words spoken by Pope Damasus "understand what great deeds can be brought about by Christ's glory."

In art, Nereus and Achilleus are presented as richly dressed boys holding palms. At other times they may be holding swords, or, when pictured with Flavia Domitilla, as soldiers. Sometimes Nereus and Achilleus are shown together with Pancratius. Pancratius is also presented as a richly dressed boy holding palms. The symbols for Nereus, Achilleus, and Domitilla are two posts and lions; fire; and two swords.

Even though Nereus and Achilleus died for Christ over 1900 years ago, Christians today, are still suffering and dying