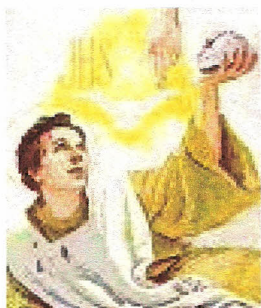


## December Holy Heroes



### *Saint Stephen*

**First Christian martyr and deacon  
Feast Day Dec. 26**

The Apostles of Jesus were chosen to build up His Church. They lived with Him and learned from Him. Jesus also had many disciples who came to learn from Him. From these disciples, seven men were chosen to be special helpers in looking after and caring for the poor. The Apostles ordained them as the first deacons by praying and placing their hands on their heads. Stephen was named first of the deacons.

God worked many miracles through Stephen. He talked with great wisdom and courage and caused many people to become followers of Jesus. As he spoke about Jesus, the Bible tells us his face became like that of an angel. When Stephen proclaimed that Jesus was the Savior that God had promised to send, the enemies of Jesus became furious and falsely accused Stephen of blasphemy, which means telling lies about God. He was brought in front of a judge, just as Jesus was, and bravely continued to teach about Our Lord. Stephen, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to Heaven and said he saw the Heavens open up and Jesus at the right hand of God.

At this, the crowd dragged him outside the city of Jerusalem and stoned him to death. As he was dying, he asked God to forgive his killers just as Jesus had done and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Stephen was the first Christian martyr, the first to die because he loved and believed in Jesus so much.