

THE LIVES OF SAINTS

I find reading the lives of the saints and martyrs a very enjoyable and inspirational hobby. One day recently, it amazed me when I found two of them from two very different periods in history, had defied similar rulers. One was the Ancient Romans, who brutally conquered and controlled most Mediterranean land areas. The other was the German Nazis during World War 11 in the 1940's. They had brutally conquered and controlled most of Europe.

- 1. ST. LAWRENCE (early 2ND Century)**
- 2. ST. SISTER MARIA RESTITUTA (During 1940 -1945)**

ST. LAWRENCE

Lawrence was born early in the second century and raised in a Christian household. In his early twenties, he met the future Pope Sixtus 11 in the modern Spanish town of Zaragoza. From here, they travelled together from Spain to Rome.

When Sixtus became the Pope in 257, he ordained Lawrence, who was only 22, as a deacon and later appointed him as "Archdeacon of Rome." This was a senior position of trust, responsible for the treasury and riches of the Church and the giving of alms to the needy.

At that time, Rome was still anti-Christian and in 258, the Emperor Valerian ordered all Christian bishops, priests, and deacons to be put to death. Pope Sixtus II was captured and put to death.

Around the same time, the Prefect of Rome captured Lawrence and reminded him that Jesus had said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." Then, the Prefect ordered him to turn over the Church's riches to the emperor Valerian. Lawrence said it would take three days to gather the wealth.

He was given the time and used it to distribute much of the Church's riches to the needy, preventing Rome from seizing it.

On the third day, he went to the Prefect, who was expecting him to deliver the Church's treasures.

Lawrence showed the Prefect people who were blind, crippled, lepers, orphans and widows, saying, "Here are the treasures of the church. You see, the church is rich and far richer than your emperor!"

The Prefect was so annoyed that he tied Lawrence to a gridiron and placed him over burning coals. It's said that before he died, he cried out, "I'm well done on this side. Turn me over." He was martyred four days after Pope Sixtus.

The feast day of St. Lawrence is 10TH August.

He's the Patron of Cooks, Chefs and Comedians.

ST. SISTER MARIA RESTITUTA

Helena Kafka was born in Austria on May 1, 1894, the sixth child of Anton and Marie Kafka, devout Catholics.

At age 19, she became an assistant nurse at Lainz City Hospital. This was Helena's first contact with the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. On October 23, 1915, she joined that order and became Sister Maria Restituta. She soon began working as a nurse and became the lead surgical nurse within a year or two at Modling Hospital in Vienna.

In March 1938, the Austrian Nazi Party succeeded in taking control of the Austrian government. Adolf Hitler now controlled Austria.

Sister Restituta did not support the Nazi regime and said so. When a new wing to the hospital was built, she hung a crucifix in each of the new rooms. The Nazis demanded that she remove them, but she refused. The crucifixes remained on the walls.

She was denounced to the Nazi party by one of the doctors. On Ash Wednesday, 1942, she was arrested by the Gestapo as she came out of the operating room. The charges against her included:

"Hanging crucifixes, and writing a poem that mocked Hitler."

She was sentenced to death by the guillotine for:

"Favouring the enemy and conspiracy to commit high treason."

They offered her freedom if she would abandon the Franciscans, but she refused. Although many nuns lost their lives in the extermination camps, Sister Restituta would be the only Catholic nun ever charged, tried, and sentenced to death by a Nazi court.

An appeal for clemency was sent to Hitler's secretary and Nazi Party Chancellor, Martin Bormann. He refused, saying that her execution "would provide effective intimidation for others who might want to resist the Nazis."

Sister Maria Restituta spent her final days in prison caring for the sick. **She was beheaded on March 30TH, 1943. She was 48 years old.**

Pope John Paul II visited Vienna in 1998 and beatified Helena Kafka, declaring her Blessed Maria Restituta.

Her feast days are 30TH March, and 29TH October.

When I read the lives of the saints and martyrs, I often wonder if I would have the bravery to respond to persecution as they did.