

The Passion of St. Florian (BHL 3054)

1. In those days, when Diocletian and Maximianus were emperor, there was a persecution of Christians, when Christians, competing in their different struggles, welcomed the tortures inflicted upon them by the tyrants with wholehearted devotion to God and came to share in the promises of Christ. Then it was that some hid themselves on the mountains, some in caves. Then it was that holiness and faith crowned the holy athletes on account of their suffering; this victory led them to eternal life. Then it was that the most impious judges, at the commands of the emperors, competed in madness; the athletes of Christ struggled against them and overcame their madness. Accordingly, venerable faith triumphed.

2. Accordingly, in those days, when the command of the sacrilegious leaders had reached Noricum Ripensis under the command of the *praeses* Aquilinus, the *praeses*, when he had reached the fort of Lauriacum, then began to seek out Christians vigorously. And no less than 40 saints were seized, and when they had competed for a very long time and had suffered many tortures, they were thrown into prison. Blessed Florianus followed after their confession rejoicing. Although he lived at Cetius, when he heard about the things

happening at Lauriacum, he said to his [fellow soldiers/family ?], "I must walk to the *praeses* at Lauriacum and suffer various punishments there for the name of Christ." And saying goodbye to his [fellow soldiers/family ?], he took to the road.

3. So when he had arrived not far from Lauriacum and had entered upon the bridge by which he was accustomed to cross the river, he met [some soldiers] with whom he had served previously. And when he asked them where they were going, they said to him, "Have you not heard the emperor's commands which reached the *praeses*, in accordance with which he orders all men to offer libations to the gods, and that those who refuse should be put to death by various means ?" Hearing these things, blessed Florianus said, "Brothers and fellow soldiers, what else do you need seeing that I am a Christian ? Go and tell the *praeses* that I am a Christian and am here."

4. So they arrested him, led him to the *praeses*, and said, "What else do we need seeing that the head of our office, Florianus, declares that he is a Christian ?" The *praeses* said to him, "Florianus, why are these things being said about you ? Come and offer sacrifice to the gods, just as I or your fellow soldiers do, so that you may live with us and not be punished with the blasphemers in

accordance with the emperors' command." Blessed Florianus replied, "This I will not do. And now you do what you have been told to do."

5. The the *praeses*, seized by a furious anger, ordered him to offer sacrifice against his will. But blessed Florianus raised his voice and said, "Lord my God, in you I have placed my hope and I cannot deny you, but you I serve and to you I offer the sacrifice of praise. May your right hand protect me, since your name is blessed in Heaven and earth. Lord, give me the strength to endure, raise me to your holy athletes, those who have been converted before me and have confessed your holy name. Clothe me, Lord, with the shining robe of your courage and strengthen your Holy Spirit in me. And do not allow me to be trampled by the devil, but guide me in justice and strengthen me in your courage, that I may praise and offer hymns to you, since you are blessed forever. Amen."

6. But when the *praefectus* Aquilinus heard this, he mocked him saying, "Why do you speak foolishly and mock the kings' orders?" Blessed Florianus replied, "Even when I was serving in a human army, nevertheless I used secretly to worship my God, for which reason the devil cannot seize possession of me entirely. You do indeed possess power over my body, but you cannot touch

my soul. For God alone prevails there. I have obeyed your commands in so far as it befits a soldier [to do so], but no-one persuades me of this, to offer sacrifice to demons. For I do not worship their phantoms."

7. So the *praefectus* was enraged and ordered him to be beaten with clubs. Blessed Florianus said, "Be as angry and do as much harm as you can, since you possess power over my body which has been given to you for now. If you want to know why I do not fear your tortures, light a fire, and I will climb upon it." So the soldiers beat him. Moreover, while they were beating him, the *praeses* said to him, "Sacrifice to the gods, Florianus, and free yourself from [these] tortures." Blessed Florianus replied, "I sacrifice to my Lord God Jesus Christ who has deigned to lead me to this hour and this joyful situation in which I am now." So when the holy man said this, the *praeses* ordered him to be beaten again. But when blessed Florianus began to be beaten, he raised a cheerful countenance as if in a state of joy or great happiness. Then the *praeses* ordered his shoulder-blades to be shattered by means of sharp iron spikes. When this had been done, blessed Florianus kept praising God further, and declaring that he would always be a Christian.

8. Then the most wicked *praeses*, when he saw that he had been beaten in everything, passed sentence against him and ordered him to be brought to the river Anesus and to be thrown headlong from the bridge there. Blessed Florianus, when this sentence had been passed against him, rejoicing and exulting in the eternal life which the Lord has promised to those who love him, set out as cheerful as if he were being led to the baths. When he reached the place from which they had to hurl him, they bound a stone to his neck. Blessed Florianus asked the soldiers who were holding him to allow him to pray to God. So standing facing towards the East and raising his hands to heaven, blessed Florianus said, "Receive my soul, Lord Jesus Christ." And he prayed for the space of an hour, so that those that had brought him became fearful and were afraid to touch him. Then a certain youth arrived, full of anger, and said to the soldiers, "Why are you standing about and not carrying out the command of the *praeses*?" And saying this, he hurled him from the bridge into the river, and his eyes immediately fell out. The river received the martyr of Christ, and was terrified. It raised its waves and deposited his body on a certain rocky prominence. Then, as a sign of divine favour, an eagle came and protected him with its wings spread in the shape of a cross.

9. Blessed Florianus then revealed himself to a certain woman by the name of Valeria whose heart was devoted to God in order for her to bury him in a more secret location. With precise signs, he revealed to her the place where she was to hide or bury him rather. The woman, when she had understood this vision, yoked her beasts and hurried towards the river. Because of her great fear of the pagans, she wrapped him in branches or cuttings and pretended that she was bringing this to fence a little garden. While she was bringing him to the place which he had shown her, it happened that her beasts grew tired because of the excessive heat of the sun, and halted, so that they could not walk nor advance any further. Troubled at heart, the woman then prayed to God to assist her with his divine mercy, and there immediately burst forth in that very place a most copious spring which has survived right up until today as a witness to her. And in this way she reached the place which [Florianus] himself had revealed to her, and there the woman buried him in secret and with great haste on account of the most bitter persecution which was threatening. Great cures occur in that place. The sick are healed, the feverish are cured, and all who have kept observance in accordance with the faith will attain mercy [there].

10. These things happened in the time of the emperors Diocletian and Maximian, when the most wicked Aquilinus was *praeses*, during the reign, in truth, of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose is the honour and the glory and power immeasurable, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever. Amen.

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