

monastery in their honor. The story of the translation of their relics, including the miracles that then took place, is recorded in Eginhard's own writings, as well as in works by Sigebert, Aymoinus, Rabanus Maurus, and others. Pope Gregory the Great preached his twenty homilies on the gospels in the church of Saints Marcellinus and Peter at Rome.

Saints Marcellinus and Peter are generally represented as men in middle age, with tonsures and palms of martyrdom, sometimes they hold a crown each. In the catacombs named after them, a fresco dating from the fourth or fifth centuries, represents them without aureolae, with short beards, next to the lamb of Christ. In another fresco from the fifth or sixth centuries, in the catacombs of Pontian, they are beardless and depicted alongside Saint Pollio. There is a church dedicated to them at Imbersago.

In art, both Marcellinus and Peter are depicted together, in priestly garments, and bearing palms. In the early seventeenth century, the archaeologist Antonio Bosio (called the "Columbus of the Catacombs") claimed in his book *Roma Sotterranea* describes that an ancient fragment representing Peter, Marcellinus, and Paulina standing together. The Slovenian-born Archbishop of Toronto, Cardinal Aloysius Matthew Ambrozic, is the present cardinal priest of the Church of Saints Marcellinus and Peter in Rome.

Why are these men included in our Eucharistic prayer, and given their own feast day, in spite of the fact that almost nothing is known about them? Probably because the Church respects its collective memory. They once sent an impulse of encouragement through the whole Church. They made the ultimate step of faith.

*(excerpted from: www.catholicireland.net; www.saintpatrickdc.org; [//en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org); www.americancatholic.org)



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Saints Marcellinus and Peter

Feast Day: June 2



"The Church has always believed that the apostles, and Christ's martyrs who had given the supreme witness of faith and charity by the shedding of their blood, are quite closely joined with us in Christ."

(Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 50)

Saints Marcellinus and Peter

*Peter and Marcellinus are two Roman martyrs who suffered under the Diocletian persecution, about the year 303-304. Peter was an exorcist, while Marcellinus was a priest. Their cults were so important that after peace was restored to the Church, Constantine built a basilica in their honor. Their names are mentioned in the Canon of the Mass (Eucharistic prayer I). Besides a church, there is a catacomb named in their honor on the Via Labicana in Rome, not far from Saint John Lateran's basilica.

Peter, an exorcist, was cast into prison at Rome, under the emperor Diocletian, by the judge Serenus, for confessing the Christian faith. There, he set free, Paulina, the daughter of Artemius, the keeper of the prison, from an evil spirit which tormented her. Upon this, Artemius and his wife and all their house, with their neighbors who had run together to see the strange thing, were converted to Jesus Christ. Peter, therefore, brought them to Marcellinus the priest, who baptized them all. When Serenus heard of it, he called Peter and Marcellinus before him, and sharply rebuked them, adding to his bitter words threats and terrors, unless they would deny Christ. Marcellinus answered him with Christian boldness, whereupon he caused him to be buffeted, separated him from Peter, and shut him up naked, in a prison strewn with broken glass, without either food or light. Peter he also confined. But when both of them were found to increase in faith and courage in their bonds, they were beheaded, unshaken in their testimony, and confessing Jesus Christ gloriously by their blood.

Very little is known about the two martyrs' lives. Pope Damasus I (366-384) claimed that he heard the story of these two martyrs from their executioner who became a Christian after their deaths. Damasus' account is the oldest source concerning these two martyrs. Damasus states that they were killed at an out-of-the-way spot by the magistrate Serenus, so that other Christians would not have a chance to bury and venerate their bodies. The two saints happily cleared the spot chosen for their death; a thicket overgrown with thorns, brambles, and briars three miles from Rome. They were

beheaded and buried in that spot. The place where they were executed and their bodies abandoned was called the Black Wood so that other Christians would not be able to bury and venerate their bodies.

Two women, Lucilla and Firmina, assisted by divine revelation, found the bodies, however, and had them properly buried. They buried their bodies near the body of Saint Tiburtius on the Via Labicana in what became known as the Catacombs of Marcellinus and Peter. The emperor Constantine is said to have built a church in their honor and he had his mother Saint Helena buried there. He also donated to the church a pure gold paten weighing thirty-five pounds. Honorius I and Adrian I later repaired this church. The place where their bodies later were buried on the Via Labicana was afterwards called the White Wood.

Pope Saint Damasus, who opened their catacombs, also remarked that he composed a Latin epitaph with the details of their death with which he adorned their tomb: it states that through their martyrdom God gives us proof of his constant presence to his Church. A fragment of it survives in a nearby church. The fact that Marcellinus and Peter are mentioned in the Roman canon indicates that they were held in high honor from soon after their death.

It may seem somewhat odd that the bodies of Marcellinus and Peter were translated to Germany. This is how it happened. In the early ninth century, Eginhart, the favorite secretary to and biographer of Charlemagne, became a monk in later life and was chosen abbot of Fontenelle and in 819, of Ghent. Eginhart sent his secretary to Rome to procure from Pope Gregory IV relics of martyrs to enrich the monasteries which he had founded or repaired. The pope sent him the bodies of Saints Marcellinus and Peter, which Eginhard translated to Strasburg, France. Later he translated them to Michlenstadt, then to Seligenstadt, between Frankfurt and Aschaffenburg, Germany where in 829, he built a church and