

25. October 2024

## Two chaste saints with a special protector

When we begin to discover the lives of the saints, we often come across extraordinary stories. Such is the case of Saints Chrysanthus and Darius, martyrs of the first centuries, whose memory is celebrated today in the ancient liturgical calendar. I shall confine myself here to summarising their story on the basis of the account written by Wilhelm Auer. If you would like to listen to a meditation on today's reading, please click on the following link: <https://en.elijamission.net/2021/07/25/>

The following is told about today's saints:

Saint Chrysanthus was the son of pagan parents. His father, Polemius, was a senator in Alexandria and was held in such high esteem by the Emperor Numerianus that he brought him to Rome and made him his counsellor.

Chrysanthus loved to read, and it was in this way that he came across the Holy Scriptures, which moved him deeply. He knew that what he had found here was the truth, even if he did not yet understand it all. He sought advice from the Christian community and met Carpophorus, a learned and holy priest. He explained all he wanted to know and, with God's help, was able to convince Chrysanthus of the falsity of the pagan gods and the truth of the Christian faith. So he was secretly baptised.

Polemius noticed the change in his son and confronted him. Chrysanthus freely confessed his faith. His father was furious and locked him in a foul-smelling dungeon to starve to death. But when he visited him a few days later, he found his son strong and robust, both physically and in his faith in Christ. Then he took him to an elegant room and sent unclean women to seduce him with lust so that he would fall into paganism. But Chrysanthus cried out to God with all his heart, saying that he would rather die than sin.

He covered his ears so as not to hear the seductive words addressed to him.

The father's plan did not succeed, for the women began to fall asleep one by one in their attempts to seduce the saint. Chrysanthus knew that it was the Lord who had come

to his aid, but his father interpreted this as witchcraft and did not give up his attempt to bring his son back to paganism. His next attempt was to persuade Daria, a maiden consecrated to the goddess Minerva, to marry his son Chrysanthus in order to gradually turn him away from faith in Christ and seduce him into worshipping the gods. Daria gave her consent, and so Polemius led her to his son and offered her as his wife.

But by the grace of God, something very different happened to what the foolish Polemius had expected. Daria was persuaded by Chrysanthus and promised to convert to Christianity. She also agreed to his proposal of a chaste marriage. So they married and lived an edifying marriage that bore great spiritual fruit after Daria was baptised. They helped Christians in need and brought the faith to many pagans.

But it was not long before news of this Christian marriage reached the ears of the tribune Claudius. He then took Chrysanthus to the temple of the god Jupiter to offer sacrifices to his idol. When Chrysanthus refused, they beat him so badly that he was left half dead, and, it is said, bound him with chains and threw him into a dark and foul-smelling pit where all the filth flowed. But when Chrysanthus called upon God, the dark hole was filled with heavenly splendour, the stench became a sweet smell, and his chains fell to the ground.

Tribune Claudius was so moved and enlightened by this miracle that he asked to be baptised himself. Indeed, he was baptised with great joy, along with his wife, his two sons and a large number of soldiers. When the emperor heard of this, he had all the new converts tied to heavy stones and thrown into the Tiber.

And what happened to Daria in the meantime?

Unable to persuade her to renounce her faith, she was taken to a place where she was at the mercy of men's desires. In her great distress, Daria cried out to the Lord and - so the story goes - a lion escaped from its cage, ran to her and offered her protection. When the first young man approached the chaste maiden, the lion seized him, threw him to the ground and looked at Daria as if to ask her if he should tear him to pieces or leave him alive. The saint called the frightened young man to repentance and he promised to become a Christian. So did the next two men who tried to dishonour the maiden.

When the stubborn emperor found out, he ordered the room where the saint was staying to be set on fire to burn her and her husband Chrysanthus. Before this could happen, Daria had already dismissed her protector, the lion, warning him not to harm anyone.

As the holy couple were not burned, the Emperor Numerianus buried them alive in 284.

May these two saints help us in the spiritual struggle, especially in the struggle for the virtue of purity! And if God sends lions to protect the saints instead of killing them, they are welcome!