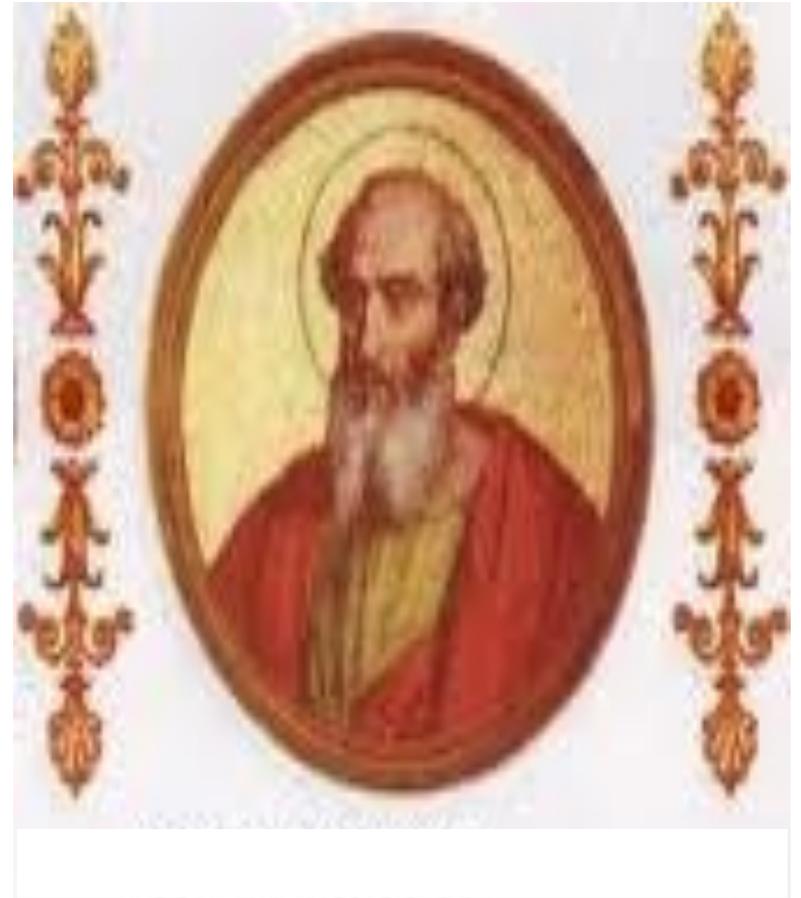


in the “Liber Pontificalis” that Lucius, as he was being led to death, gave the archdeacon Stephen power over the Church, is also a fabrication. The feast day of St. Lucius is held on March 4.

\*(excerpted from: oce.catholic.com)

# Saint Lucius I

**Feast Day: March 4**



**Pope and Martyr**

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## Saint Lucius I

\*After the death of St. Cornelius, who died in exile in the summer of 253, Lucius was chosen to fill his place, and consecrated Bishop of Rome. Nothing is known of the early life of this pope before his elevation. According to the “Liber Pontificalis,” he was Roman born, and his father’s name was Porphyrius. Where the author obtained this information is not known. The persecution of the Church under the Emperor Gallus, during which Cornelius had been banished, still went on. Lucius also was sent into exile soon after his consecration, but in short time, presumably when Valerian was made emperor, he was allowed to return to his flock. The Felician Catalogue, whose information is found... In the “Liber Pontificalis,” informs us of the banishment and the miraculous return of Lucius. St. Cyprian, who wrote a (lost) letter of congratulation to Lucius on his elevation to the Roman See and on his banishment, sent a second letter of congratulations to him and his companions in exile, as well as to the whole Roman Church (ep. lxi, ed. Hartel, II, 695 sqq.).

The letter begins: “beloved brother, only a short time ago we offered you our congratulations, when in exalting you to govern His Church God graciously bestowed upon you the twofold glory of confessor and Bishop. Again we congratulate you, your companions, and the whole congregation, in that, owing to the kind and mighty protection of our Lord, He has led you back with praise and glory to His own, so that the flock can again receive its shepherd, the ship her pilot, and the people a director to govern them and to show openly that it was God’s disposition that He permitted your banishment, not that the Bishop who had been expelled should be deprived of his Church, but rather that he might return to his Church with greater authority.”

Cyprian continues, alluding to the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, that the return from exile did not lessen the glory of the confession, and that the persecution, which was directed only against the confessors of the true Church, proved which was the Church of Christ. In conclusion he describes the joy of Christian Rome on the return of its shepherd. When Cyprian asserts that the Lord by means of persecution sought to bring the heretics to shame and to silence them, “and thus to prove where the Church was, who was her one Bishop chosen by God’s dispensation, who were her presbyters bound up with the Bishop in the glory of the priesthood, who were the real people of Christ, united to His flock by a peculiar love, who were those who were oppressed by their enemies, and at the same time, who those were whom the devil protects as his own,” he obviously means the Novatians. The schism of Novatian, through which he was brought forward as the anti-pope, in opposition to Cornelius, still continued in Rome under Lucius.

In the matter of confession and the restoration of the “Lapsi” (fallen) Lucius adhered to the principles of Cornelius and Cyprian. According to the testimony of the latter, contained in a letter to Pope Stephen (ep. lxxviii, 5, ed. Hartel, II, 748), Lucius, like Cornelius, had expressed his opinions in writing: (for they, filled with the Spirit of the Lord and confirmed in glorious martyrdom, judged that pardon ought to be given to the Lapsi, as signified in their letters that, when these had been penance, they were

not to be denied the enjoyment of communion and reconciliation).

Lucius who was born in the year 253 died in the beginning of March, 254. In the “Depositio episcoporum” the “Chronograph of 354” gives the date of his death as March 5, the “Martyrologium Hieronymianum” as March 4. The first date is probably correct. Perhaps Lucius died on March 4 and was buried on March 5.

According to the “Liber Pontificalis” this pope was beheaded in the time of Valerian, but this testimony cannot be admitted. It is true that Cyprian in the letter to Stephen mentioned above (ep. lxxviii, 5) gives him, as well as Cornelius, the honorary title of martyr: “for the glorious memory of our predecessors the blessed martyrs Cornelius and Lucius is to be preserved;” but this was probably on account of Lucius’s short banishment. Cornelius, who died in exile, was honored as a martyr by the Romans after his death; but not Lucius.

In the Roman calendar of feasts of the “Chronograph of 354” he is mentioned in the “Depositio episcoporum,” and not under the head of “Depositio martyrurum.” His memory was, nevertheless, particularly honored, as is clear from the appearance of his name in the “Martyrologium Hieronymianum.” Eusebius, maintains (Hist. Eccl., VII, 10) that Valerian was favorable to the Christians in the early part of his reign. The emperor’s first persecution edict appeared only in 257.

Lucius was buried in a compartment of the papal vault in the catacombs of St. Callistus. On the excavation of the vault, de Rossi found a large fragment of the original epitaph, which only gives the pope’s name in Greek: GK LOUKIC. The slab is broken off just behind the word, so that in all probability there was nothing else on it except the title EPICKOPOC (Bishop). The relics of the saint were transferred by Pope Paul I (757 – 767) to the church of San Silvestro in Capite, or by Pope Paschal I (817 – 824) to the Basilica of St. Praxedes [Marucchi, “Basiliques et eglises de Rome,” Rome, 1902, 399 (inscription in San Silvestro), 325 (inscription in S. Praxedes)].

The author of the “Liber Pontificalis” has un-authorizedly ascribed to St. Lucius a decretal, according to which two priests and three deacons must always accompany the Bishop to bear witness to his virtuous life: “Hic praecepit, ut duo presbyteri et tres diaconi in omni loco episcopum non desererent propter testimonium ecclesiasticum.” Such a measure might have been necessary under certain conditions at a later period; but in Lucius’s time it was incredible. This alleged decree induced a later forger to invent another apocryphal decretal, and attributed it to Lucius. The story