



December 26

Festival: Stephen, Deacon and Martyr

According to The Acts of the Apostles Stephen was tried by the Sanhedrin for blasphemy against Moses and God (Acts 6:11) and speaking against the Temple and the Law (Acts 6:13–14). While on trial, he experienced a theophany in which he saw both God the Father and God the Son:

"Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." (Acts 7:56)

Acts 6–7 describe his trial. He was stoned to death (c. A.D. 34–35) by an infuriated mob encouraged by Saul of Tarsus. Stephen's final speech was presented as accusing the Jews of persecuting prophets who spoke out against their sins:

"Which one of the Prophets did your fathers not persecute, and they killed the ones who prophesied the coming of the Just One, of whom now, too, you have become betrayers and murderers." (7:52)

*Saint Stephen in Glory* (detail) by Giacomo Cavedone Date: 1577-1660