

Basilica of San Saturnino

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ The life of San Saturnino

According to hagiographic tradition (the term 'hagiography' means reading of the saints), Saturnino was a young man raised by parents according to the Christian faith, at a time where Diocletian's persecutions were taking place (fig. 1).

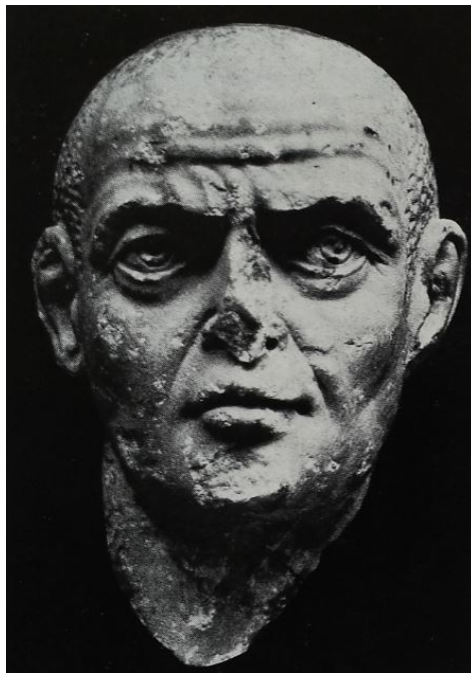


Fig. 1 - Portrait of Diocletian (by Bianchi Bandinelli, Torelli 1986, sheet 188).

According to these tales, (a "passiones" and a "legend", i.e. of the texts in which the trial, arrest and execution of Christian martyrs were told), Saturnino was close to the *Capitolium* (i.e. the temple dedicated to Capitoline Triad, Jupiter, Juno and Minerva) in *Carales* during sacrifices in honour of Jupiter. Recognised by those present as a Christian, he refused to forsake his faith, and was sentenced to be beheaded. The sentence was carried out on 23rd November 304 and his body was mercifully buried. In the days following his martyrdom, his mortal remains were taken from the tomb and placed in a *crypta* outside the city, where they were the subject of veneration.

The worship of San Saturnino therefore dates back to a very ancient period, but the first sign dates to the start of the 6th century, when the bishop Fulgenzio of Ruspe from North-

Africa was exiled to Sardinia by the Vandal kinds of Aryan religion. On reaching Cagliari he asked the Bishop Brumasio for land *iuxta basilicam sancti Saturnini, longe a strepitu civitatis* (near to the basilica of San Saturnino, far from the noise of the city) where he could build a monastery.

Later, over the centuries, both the monastery and the church underwent countless renovations and restorations, until the Giudice Costantino Salusio II, in 1089, gave them to the monks of San Vittore of Marseilles. The church was opened after a long period of work in 1119.

San Saturnino's remains were found on 12th October 1621, during the search for 'holy bodies' started by Monsignor Francisco D'Esquivel. Inside the Cagliari cathedral, in the 'martyrs' crypt", there is a chapel dedicated to the martyr: his remains are kept in the sarcophagus above the altar. In a niche above it, there is a statue of the saint (fig. 2). Inside the cathedral, in the chapel of S. Isidoro, there is also a statue of San Saturnino created by the sculptor Giuseppe Antonio Lonis in 1759 (fig. 3).

San Saturnino is the patron saint of Cagliari and is celebrated on 30th October.



Fig. 2 - The altar of S. Saturnino in the "Martyrs' Sanctuary" at the Duomo of Cagliari (from https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saturnino_di_Cagliari#/media/File:CriptacattedraleCA3.jpg).



Fig. 3 - Duomo of Cagliari, altar of San Isidoro: statue of San Saturnino.

■ Credits

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■ Bibliography

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