Cosmas and Damian

Arab Martyr Saints

Born: 3rd century

Died: 297 or 303

Feast Day:

26 September

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DERRY DIOCESAN CATECHETICAL CENTRE

Cosmas and Damian were 3rd century Arab physicians and early Christian martyrs. They practised their profession in the seaport of Aegeae, then in the Roman province of Syria. They saw in every patient a brother or sister in Christ. For this reason, they showed great charity to all and treated their patients to the best of their ability. Yet no matter how much care a patient required, neither Cosmas nor Damian ever accepted any money for their services. For this reason, they were called "the penniless ones." Every chance they had, the two saints told their patients about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Because the people loved these twin doctors, they listened to them willingly. Cosmas and Damian often brought health back to both the bodies and the souls of those who came to them for help.

They reputedly cured blindness, fever, paralysis and reportedly expelled a serpent. They were arrested by Lysias, governor of Cilicia (in modern day Turkey) during the Diocletian persecution because of their faith and fame as healers. Emperor Diocletian was a religious fanatic and favoured the pantheism of the Olympian Gods. He attempted to wipe out Christianity from his empire.

Lysias ordered the brothers, under torture, to recant. However, according to legend they stayed true to their faith, enduring being hung on a cross, stoned and shot by arrows and finally suffered execution by beheading. Anthimus, Leontius and Euprepius, their younger brothers, who were inseparable from them throughout life, shared in their martyrdom.

The veneration of Cosmas and Damian spread quickly. As early as the 4th century, churches dedicated to the twin saints were established at Jerusalem, in Egypt and in Mesopotamia. Devotion to the two saints spread rapidly in both East and West.

The Martyr twins are invoked in the Canon of the Mass and in the Liturgy of the Saints. They are regarded as patrons of physicians, surgeons and pharmacists. They are also regarded as patron saints of twins!