

# Legend of the Quatvor Coronati

(The Four Crowned Martyrs)  
by **Sir Knight Hugh A. Cole**

In the third century of the Roman Empire, Diocletian summoned whom he believed to be his most especially skilled craftsmen. He ordered that they erect a marble statue depicting Asculapius, the god of healing and medicine. In Breviary of Rome, published in 1474 A.D., it names the craftsmen as Claudius, Castorius, Symphorianus, and Nichostratus (three masters and an apprentice). They had recently converted to the newly emerging Christianity and considered the statue to be a pagan god. "Let the Emperor know that we truly are Christians, and never can depart from the worship of our God!" They thus politely informed the Emperor that they must decline to erect the statue.

Diocletian fumed and ranted at such a display of insubordination! They would pay for their actions serving to dissuade others from such disrespectful behavior! They were subsequently caused to strip off their clothing and be scourged by scorpions before returning to their work. Remaining steadfast in refraining to obey the Emperor's orders, Diocletian had them encased alive in lead coffins and tossed into the Tiber River! Their punishment intended to set an example of the fate awaiting the disobedient!

Eventually, the bodies were retrieved from the river and buried along the road leading from the river to the Colosseum. In about 311-314 A.D., Pope Melchiades caused the four steinmetzen (stonemasons) to be distinguished for their martyrdom by the Roman Catholic Church as the Quatvor Coronati, (four crowned martyrs.) The church considered that the martyrdom must have taken place on November 8, 287 A.D. and designated November 8th in the Christian calendar on which to distinguish and commemorate the Quatvor Coronati (the four crowned martyrs) of steinmetzen (German stonemasons.) Regulations of Strasburg steinmetzen in 1459 A.D. begin "In the name of the Father, Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and of our gracious Mother Mary; and also of her blessed servants, the Four Crowned Martyrs of everlasting memory."

The earlier Regius Manuscript of the Constitutions of Masonry of 1390 A.D. (Ars Quatvor Coronatorum) mentions this same legend. From these references we may conclude that the Four Crowned Martyrs precede mention of John the Baptist having been a Patron Saint of steinmetzen (our ancient forefathers, the German operative stonemasons), and as John the Apostle's being regarded as a Patron Saint as speculative forefathers founded the fraternity on emerging from its operative roots in the 18th century!

Quatvor Coronati Lodge of Research Lodge in London, England perpetuates the inclusion of this legend in our fraternity.

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