

## Archdeacon's Corner CONT.

Stephen was accused of saying blasphemous things. This accusation provoked a public outcry and the local population demanded that he be tried and sentenced. His opponents dragged him before the Sanhedrin, the supreme rabbinic court in Jerusalem. In front of the Sanhedrin, Saint Stephen seemed unperturbed.

*All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel. Acts 6:15*

Stephen gave a long speech about the history of Israel and the blessings that God had given upon His chosen people. Concluding with a condemnation of the Sanhedrin.

*“You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always oppose the holy Spirit; you are just like your ancestors. Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They put to death those who foretold the coming of the righteous one, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become. You received the law as transmitted by angels, but you did not observe it.” Acts 7:51-53*

The Sanhedrin then immediately had Stephen dragged out of the city and stoned. Just before his death Saint Stephen uttered similar words spoken by his Lord and Savior Jesus, at the cross.

*“Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”*

Saul of Tarsus, later known as Saint Paul, a Pharisee and Roman citizen who would later become a Christian apostle, participated in Stephen's martyrdom. Saint Paul's friend Luke would write the Acts of the Apostles.

The English word martyr is derived from a Greek word which literally means “witness.” In the same way, each and every Christian is called to bear witness to Jesus Christ. This does not necessarily mean shedding blood. Being a witness means we are living testimonies of our faith in Jesus.

Praying that our Lord finds you and yours well.

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Archdeacon