

## Reflection Tuesday Christmas Week St Stephen 2023

**St Stephen, the first Martyr** was one of the deacons appointed by the Apostles to organize the distribution of food to the poor. He performed many miracles and confounded the Jews in disputation. They fabricated false charges against him. At his trial he preached the risen Christ to them, so they stoned him to death. He prayed for his persecutors as he was dying. One of them, Saul of Tarsus, who was looking after the cloaks of the stone-throwers, was later converted and became the great missionary St Paul.

Stephen's death is an example of man's inhumanity to man and which is portrayed vividly and picturesquely in the war taking place in Gaza. We never learn. Jesus never hid the difficulties that his followers would face and were eventually realised in the deaths his apostles and disciples underwent.

Unfortunately, all this horror can distract us from the real purpose of the Deacons appointed by the apostles. They were chosen to serve the believing community as well as the wider community. Service, caring, compassion, seeking the best for others in the example of Jesus was their aim. It makes sense therefore to dedicate the service of our altar-servers to this great saint who dedicated his life to serving the needy in terms of material, moral and spiritual support. This call to service is shown by them most particularly in our worship and liturgy.

May St Stephen bless their service and reward their generosity in helping make our celebrations prayerful and grace filled