

## **St. Alban**

**Alban is the earliest Christian in Britain who is known by name and, according to tradition, the first British martyr. The traditional date of his martyrdom is 303 or 304, although recent studies suggest that the year was actually 209, during the persecution under the Emperor Septimius Severus.**

**According to the Venerable Bede, Alban was a pagan soldier in the Roman Army, stationed at Verulamium (now the town of St. Albans in Hertfordshire), a city about 20 miles northeast of London. When a persecution of the Christians broke out, Alban sheltered a certain cleric who took refuge in his home. After some days, moved by the priest's example of devotion to Christ, Alban himself was converted and baptized. When the officers came to search the home, Alban disguised himself in the priest's cloak and gave himself up in place of the priest.**

**He was dragged before the judge, scourged, and, when he would not deny his faith, condemned to death. The Venerable Bede gives this account of Alban's trial: "When Alban was brought in, the judge happened to be standing before an altar, offering sacrifice to devils . . . 'What is your family and race?' demanded the judge. 'How does my family concern you?' replied Alban. 'If you wish to know the truth about my religion, know that I am a Christian and am ready to do a Christian's duty.' 'I demand to know your name,' insisted the judge. 'I am called Alban' he replied, 'and I worship and adore the living and true God, who created all things.'"**

**On the way to the place of his execution, Alban arrested the waters of a river, so that they crossed dry-shod. He further caused a fountain of water to flow on the summit of the hill on which he was beheaded. Upon Alban's arrival, his executioner threw down his sword and was converted and executed with Alban.**

**A church was later erected on the hill where the martyrdoms took place and King Offa of Mercia established a monastery there about the year 793. The great Norman abbey church, begun in 1077, now serves as the cathedral of the diocese of St. Alban's, established in 1877. It is the second longest church in England (Winchester Cathedral is the longest, by six feet) and it is built on higher ground than any other English cathedral. In a chapel east of the choir and high Altar, are the remains of the fourteenth century marble shrine of St. Alban.**

**Our tie to the site is the Roman brick from the site of St. Alban's martyrdom set into the north wall of the Church, near the St. Alban window. It was sent to us from the Dean of St. Alban's Cathedral when the new church was built. St. Alban's statue was relocated to the wall during the refurbishing in 2002.**