

ST. PHOCAS

THE RUGGED SEA OF LIFE

The Priest Martyr Phocas was born in the second century in the town of Sinope, a busy port on the Black Sea. His father was an accomplished shipbuilder and according to the custom of the times, Phocas was expected to follow in his footsteps. While he loved building ships and sailing the sea, Phocas had a much greater love: he wanted to become a priest and serve the Lord. Although his father was saddened that his son would not be working with him, he fully understood Phocas had to answer the call of Christ.

Young Father Phocas was given a difficult priestly assignment: he was to travel to the many fishing villages along the Black Sea and bring the Gospel to these predominately pagan towns. Because of his familiarity with the way of life lived by the villagers, Phocas was able to win the trust, and ultimately, the conversion of many a rugged seaman and their families. His missionary success left to his elevation to the episcopacy.

As a bishop, Phocas continued to set a good example for his flock with his words and deeds. News of his works, however, reached the court of the emperor Trajan, who had launched a severe persecution of Christians throughout the empire. Phocas was arrested, and was ordered to give a sacrifice to the Roman gods. Instead, he chose to sacrifice his own life for Christ. Phocas was martyred in 117 A.D. by being thrown into a bath of boiling liquid.