

*Scenes from the Lives of Sts. Stephen and Lawrence* (1448-1449), by Fra Angelico

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An early Renaissance fresco by Fra Angelico (1395-1455) in the chapel of Pope Nicholas V at the Vatican commemorates St. Lawrence (m. 258) and St. Stephen. Scenes from the lives of the two martyrs extend across three walls of the chapel. The scenes were selected to show the saints' parallel activities: being ordained, preaching, and helping the poor. They were both arrested, persecuted, and martyred. The arrest of Stephen can be seen on the left-hand side of the lunette, and the stoning is visible on the right. The wall of Jerusalem separates the scenes. The Sanhedrin brings Stephen to his doom before the men with the rocks who will stone him. As the stones are hurled at his back, Stephen kneels in prayers of petition, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59; cf. Luke 23:46), and forgiveness, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (7:60; cf. Luke 23:34).