

## *People of the Bible*

### Stephen

Stephen, “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5), was one of the Church’s first seven deacons.

He was appointed by the leaders of the Church to distribute food and other necessities to the poor in the growing Christian community in Jerusalem, thereby giving the apostles more time for their public ministry of proclamation (Acts 6:2-5).

He and the other deacons apparently were expected not only to wait on tables but also to teach and preach. When some of his colleagues became jealous of him, they brought Stephen to the Sanhedrin and falsely charged him with blaspheming against Moses (Acts 6:9-14).

Stephen’s confession of faith, along with his rebuke of the members of the Sanhedrin for rejecting their Messiah and being responsible for His death, so infuriated them that dragged him out of the city and stoned him.

Stephen is honored as the Church’s first martyr and for his words of commendation and forgiveness as he lay dying: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” and “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” (Acts 7:59-60).