

EXUPERANTIUS, SAINT

A member of the THEBAN LEGION and one of the saints martyred near the Roman fortress Turicum (Zurich) in the third century (feast day: 1 Tut). According to legend, Exuperantius, his fellow [legionary](#) FELIX, and the latter's sister, Regula, were brutally tortured and beheaded at the hands of DECIUS, imperial governor of this region under Emperor Maximian. After their decapitation, they arose and, carrying their heads in their hands, walked forty ells to a spot that became their resting place. Along with Felix and Regula, Exuperantius occupies a special place in the history of Zurich. In this city three great edifices—the Grossmünster, the Wasserkirche, and the Fraumünster—have been erected to commemorate the sites of their martyrdom and original resting place, and to house their relics. Also, the three headless figures, head in hand, have been on the coats of arms of both the city and the canton of Zurich since the thirteenth century.

Certain scholars have expressed doubts concerning the association of Exuperantius with Felix and Regula, some even maintaining that he and Saint Exuperius, the comrade of St. MAURITIUS at Agaunum and bearer of the Theban banner (*signifer*), were one and the same person. However, the oldest manuscripts seem to refute such opinions. The earliest sources (e.g., Codex C.10.i, Central Library of Zurich) always mention the companions (*socii*) of Felix and Regula. Also, Exuperantius is specifically named in the *Martyrology of Esuard* (ninth century). Moreover, Exuperantius was named with Felix and Regula in different documents—for instance, the cession of the Wasserkirche to the Canons' Foundation in [April](#) 1256 and the confirmation of this cession issued by Bishop Eberhard of Constance on 21 January, 1257. Accordingly, Exuperantius was linked to both Felix and Regula before Rudiger Meyer of Rieden gave the Canons' Foundation all his possessions on condition that Exuperantius be mentioned and commemorated with the other two saints during their collects and prayers (1264).

As to the confusion of Exuperantius with Exuperius of Agaunum, this seems to be refuted by the fact that the earliest sources record that when Decius was questioning the three Thebans, he specifically asked if they had been companions of “Mauritius, Exuperius, Candidus, and Victor.” Such a query in the presence of Exuperantius concerning the [distant](#) Exuperius would indicate that two different men were involved.

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