SAINT CYPRIAN AND JUSTINA

—Commemorated October 2nd—

Saints Cyprian and Justina confessed their faith in Jesus Christ and were martyred in the year 268 AD, during the reign of Caesar Claudius.

Justina was born to idolater parents in Antioch. As she began to come of age, however, she slowly began to realize the fallacy of idolatry and prayed to God to grant her enlightenment and knowledge of the truth. After secretly going to the Christian Church, where she would hear a certain deacon preaching about the incarnation of Christ, His teachings, His life, His miracles, and His Resurrection, she became convinced about the truth of the Christian faith. Wanting to help her mother see the light of the Gospel, she asked her one day, **"Why, dear mother, do we believe in gods that are unresponsive and creations of men? Have you seen how powerful the Galileans are? When one of them appears, our gods become terrified and flee. And rightfully so, because they deceitfully usurp the honor that is due to God, and they also send our souls to Hades."**

Justina's mother initially did not accept her counsel, but, instead, proceeded to inform her husband of their daughter's convictions. When he heard this, Justina's father started to have doubts about the idols, and that very night he had a dream: he saw Jesus Christ standing amidst countless Angels, and Christ said to him, **"Come to Me, and I will grant you the Kingdom of Heaven."** When he awoke, he did not seek any further proof. He immediately took his wife and Justina to the bishop and informed him of the vision. The bishop in turn without delay baptized all of them. Henceforth, Justina's father lived a pure and holy life, and eighteen months later he fell asleep in the Lord, Whom he wholeheartedly came to love.

After her father's death, Justina continued living a careful life, advancing daily in virtue. This did not go unnoticed by the envious and spiteful enemy of our souls, the devil, who could not stand to see a young girl living a peaceful and chaste life. He thus lit the flame of lust within the soul of a wealthy and licentious nobleman named Aglaidas, who caught sight of Justina as she went and came from church. Aglaidas was overcome by such a strong desire, that he would shamelessly come up to her on the street, showering her with compliments and asking her to become his lawful wife. After ignoring him

several times, Justina finally responded one day, **“You are speaking nonsense. My bridegroom is Christ, Who preserves my virginity pure and undefiled.”** These words were like darts to Aglaidas, who, in retaliation, attempted to take hold of Justina by force, right then and there. Fortunately, some of Justina’s family members ran to her aid, and Aglaidas fled the scene disgracefully.

Aglaidas, however, did not give up so easily. He proceeded to seek help from Cyprian, who was a renowned sorcerer. Cyprian was an idolater from Carthage, who after having studied philosophy and sorcery, had come to Antioch to exhibit his sagacity and magical powers. Aglaidas related his heartache to Cyprian, and appealed to him, “You are my final hope. You are the reason I did not take my life. I will give you as much gold as you want, as long as you fulfill my request.” Cyprian, in turn, assured him that he would quickly put an end to his anguish, and thus Aglaidas returned home cheerfully, expecting to soon have Justina in his arms.

Without delay, Cyprian then proceeded to invoke one of the demons who usually executed his requests, and he told him, “If you successfully carry out my order, henceforth I will always call you first.” The demon, replied with his usual cocky manner, **“What is there that I cannot accomplish? I have oftentimes turned cities into desolate wastelands. I have convinced many sons to murder their fathers. I have driven brothers and couples to irreconcilable animosity. I have prevented many people from becoming monastics. I have made monks who dwelled in caves and remote mountains, after prolonged fasting, desire carnal pleasures. But why should I say any more? The events themselves will prove who I am. Therefore, take this jug and sprinkle the maiden’s home with the liquid, and, if she does not carry out your request, O Cyprian, then you are free to forget about me and consider me a weakling.”**

That night, when Justina got up to pray as usual, she experienced a strong carnal temptation incited by the demon. **But she resisted by calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by making the sign of the Cross, and the demon left**. Having returned to Cyprian with great shame and apprehension, the demon was initially embarrassed to reveal that he had been unsuccessful. But after persistent questioning from Cyprian, he ultimately admitted the truth: **“I saw a certain sign,”** he said, **“which was extremely dreadful, and I was not able to endure its power.”**

Having pushed this demon to the side, Cyprian immediately summoned a more powerful demon, who failed exactly as the first demon had. Finally, a third demon, who was considered the governor ruling over the rest of the demons, appeared and told Cyprian to take courage. This third demon went to Justina and presented himself to her as a young woman, informing her that she had been sent by God to dwell together with her, so they can help each other in the acquisition of virtue. During the course of the conversation, the demon also said the following to Justina: **"Please, tell me something. If all woman were to choose to lead a life of virginity, wouldn't there eventually cease to be people on the earth?"** When Justina heard this, she realized that this was a demonic trap, and once again with her prayer and the sign of the Cross, she also put this demon to shame and expelled him from her home. When this third demon returned to Cyprian and was questioned by him, he unwillingly admitted the truth, saying, **"Wherever the sign of the Cross is made, we demons shudder and flee humiliated."**

Upon hearing this, the wise Cyprian became even wiser. He turned his back on the demons, he renounced the deception of idolatry, and he believed in Christ. He then went to meet the regional Bishop Anthimos, to whom he related everything he had heard and learned concerning the power of Christ and the Cross.