

## 14 April: St Justin Martyr

Justin, the son of Priscus, was a Greek by race, but was born at Nablus in Palestine. He passed his youth in the study of letters. When he became a man he was so taken with the love of philosophy and the desire of truth that he became a student in the schools of all the philosophers and examined the teaching of them all. In them he found only deceitful wisdom and error. The light of heaven was given him, through an old man of worshipful aspect whom he knew not, and he embraced the philosophy of the true Christian faith. Henceforth he had the books of the Holy Scriptures in his hands by day and by night, and by meditating thereon the fire of God was so kindled in his soul that, himself possessing the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, he wrote many books, with all the learning which he possessed, to set forth the Christian faith and to spread it abroad.

Among the most famous of the works of Justin are his two Apologies or Defences of the Christian faith. These he brought before the Senate when the Emperors Antoninus Pius, and his sons, as also Marcus Antoninus Verus and Lucius Aurelius Commodus, were savagely persecuting the followers of Christ, and by their means, and his vigorous disputations in favour of the same faith, he obtained a public edict from the government to stay the slaughter of the Christians. But Justin himself did not escape he had rebuked the life and infamous manners of the Cynic Crescens, and was accused and arrested through that person's plotings. He was brought before Rusticus, the President of Rome, who asked him what were the doctrines of the Christians, whereto he answered, in the presence of many witnesses, with this good confession: The right doctrine which we Christian men do keep with godliness is this, that we should believe that there is one God, Who is the Maker and Creator of all things, both those things which are seen and those things which bodily eyes do not see, and that we should confess the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who was foretold of old time by the prophets, and Who will come to be the Judge of all mankind.

In order to rebut the slanders of the heathen, Justin had in his first Apology given an open account of the gathering of the Christians for divine worship, and what were the holy Mysteries celebrated in these assemblies. The President therefore asked him what was the place where he and Christ's other faithful ones in the city were accustomed to meet. Justin, lest he should betray that which was holy unto God and his brethren, told only where was his own lodging, where he was used to abide and to teach his disciples, hard by the famous Church of the Shepherd, in the house of Pudens. The President then gave him the choice whether to sacrifice to the gods or to be hid with scourges over his whole body. The unconquered champion of the faith answered that he had always desired to suffer in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, from Whom he looked to receive a mighty reward in heaven. The President thereupon sentenced him to death, and then this excellent philosopher, giving praise to God, was first beaten and afterwards shed his blood for Christ's sake, and so received the crown of a glorious martyrdom. Some of the faithful secretly stole away his body, and buried it in a fitting place. The Supreme Pontiff Leo XIII commanded that his Office and Mass should be used throughout the whole Church.