

Homily for the Feast of St. Justin Martyr
June 1, 2017

Today is the memorial of Saint Justin, Martyr. Saint Justin was born in Palestine around the beginning of the 2nd century. He was educated in Greek thought and studied the preeminent philosophies of his day, a true eclectic. Despite these pagan influences, he came to believe God's message was embodied in Christian teachings and his conversion account describes that Christian moral beauty and truth brought him to Christ.

Justin, like so many since him, came to see in Jesus Christ the one who not only shows us the Father, but the one who brings our lives into perfect conformity so that we can share in the life of the Trinity.

In today's Gospel notice what Jesus says about his relationship to the Father and what he then prays for those who make up His body, the Church:

that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

When speaking of his own relationship with the Father he is stating fact: "you are in me, I am in you".... The glory you have given me, I have given to them...." "even as you have loved me".

Then notice that when speaking of his body the Church, he prays this way: "they may all be one....", "so that they may be one...." That they may become completely one".....

Repeatedly it is the Lord's hope and prayer that his followers will be one. This is something that St. Justin grasped and it changed his life. He saw after years of philosophical searching how true unity and coherence to life's meaning are found in Jesus Christ.

He so understood this that he also came to stake his life on what Jesus says next:

Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

25 "Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me.

Justin so lived his life rooted in the relationship that was his in Christ that he could then face the world's rejection.

At his trial the Roman Prefect Rusticus asked: "You are a Christian, then?" Justin said: "Yes, I am a Christian." The prefect said to Justin: "You are called a learned man and think that you know what is true teaching. Listen: if you were scourged and beheaded, are you convinced that you would go up to heaven?" Justin said: "I hope that I shall enter God's house if I suffer that way. For I know that God's favor is stored up until the end of the whole world for all who have lived good lives."

The prefect Rusticus said: "Do you have an idea that you will go up to heaven to receive some suitable rewards?" Justin said: "It is not an idea that I have; it is something I know well and hold to be most certain."

The prefect Rusticus said: "Now let us come to the point at issue, which is necessary and urgent. Gather round then and with one accord offer sacrifice to the gods." Justin said: "No one who is right thinking stoops from true worship to false worship."

Remember Justin was a philosopher who had been a pagan but left falsehood behind when he discovered the power of the Gospel as expressed by Jesus in today's reading.

St Justin, pray that we like you, in discovering the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ will always reject deception and error and become ever more steadfast in the Faith.