

## **Justin Martyr**

A good number of writers in the Roman Empire attacked the early Church. Some said that Christians were ignorant and poor. This was a great put down in a society that was highly structured.

Others said Christians were just bad citizens. They didn't worship the state gods or the emperor. They didn't want the empire to do well.

Still others said that Christians believed in unreasonable doctrine. They attacked the Incarnation, saying it was totally unreasonable. In their minds, the Resurrection was just a lie.

So along comes our saint whom we celebrate today, Justin Martyr. Justin was an apologist. *Apologia* comes from the Greek meaning "defense." Justin's task was to defend the faith, to demonstrate that Christian belief was reasonable.

Born about the year 100 A.D., Justin had a deep hunger for the truth. Justin recounts meeting an old man on the seashore who told him it was impossible to satisfy his aspiration for God on his own. The old man pointed to the Hebrew prophets, who were convicted about God and experienced Him. He told Justin to pray that the gates of light be opened to him. So Justin went to the Scriptures and came to love them.

He became the first great apologist for Christianity. Eventually, he was arrested and brought before the Roman prefect. Just before he was sentenced to death, he was asked, "If you are killed do you suppose you will go to heaven? Justin responded, "I do not suppose it, but I know and am fully persuaded of it." He was beheaded in 165 and went to be with Christ.

Justin's hunger for the truth and his joyful defense of it are truly refreshing in an era where moral relativism reigns. He reminds me of Christ's words, "*Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*" (Jn. 8:32).

Like Justin, ask the Holy Spirit for a deeper hunger for our faith, not only for yourselves, but also for your family members and friends. And may you ask God to open the gates of light for them just as He did for St. Justin, whom we celebrate today. St. Justin, pray for us!