

September 16: St. Cyprian (d. 258)

Cyprian is important in the development of Christian thought and practice in the third century, especially in northern Africa.

Highly educated, a famous orator, he became a Christian as an adult. He distributed his goods to the poor, and amazed his fellow citizens by making a vow of chastity before his baptism. Within two years he had been ordained a priest and was chosen, against his will, as Bishop of Carthage (near modern Tunis).

Cyprian complained that the peace the Church now enjoyed had weakened the spirit of many Christians and had opened the door to converts who did not have the true spirit of faith. Many Christians had easily abandoned the Church during times of persecution - it was their reinstatement that caused the great controversies of the third century, and helped the Church progress in its understanding of the Sacrament of Penance.

Cyprian held a middle course on this issue, holding that those who had actually sacrificed to idols could receive Communion only at death, whereas those who had only bought certificates saying they had sacrificed could be admitted after a more or less lengthy period of penance. Even this was relaxed during a new persecution.

During a plague in Carthage, Cyprian urged Christians to help everyone, including their enemies and persecutors. He was exiled by the emperor and then recalled for trial. He refused to leave the city, insisting that his people should have the witness of his martyrdom.

Cyprian was a mixture of kindness and courage, vigour and steadiness. He was both cheerful and serious, so that people did not know whether to love or respect him more. He waxed warm during the baptismal controversy; his feelings must have concerned him, for it was at this time that he wrote his treatise on patience. St. Augustine remarks that Cyprian atoned for his anger by his glorious martyrdom.

SEPTEMBER 2020

Prayer from Taizé

Christ Jesus, even if your presence remains invisible you are close to each person. You never give us up. And more still, you find your joy in each one of us. You give us a look of goodness for others.

Prayers of Intercession for our parish

- Let us pray for Fr Tom, who is retiring, and Fr Anthony, who is joining us, that this transition in their ministries will be fruitful for them and for our parish.
- Let us pray that all of us, including those who remain confined to home and unable to celebrate the sacraments in person, may be attentive to the Holy Spirit as we seek to bring others to hope and joy in Jesus Christ.
- Let us pray for the Holy Spirit to come down upon everyone in our parish community, so that we may become ever-faithful disciples, and witness joyfully to the world.

Some tweets by Pope Francis

- On the Day of Judgement we will not be judged for our ideas, but for the compassion we have shown to others.
- The Kingdom of Heaven is the opposite of the superfluous things the world offers, the opposite of a dull life; it is a treasure that renews everyday life and leads it to extend towards wider horizons.
- Men and women who pray know that hope is stronger than discouragement. They believe that love is more powerful than death, and that love will surely triumph one day, even if it be in times and ways that we do not know.
- We are all in need of the Father who extends his hand to us. To pray to Him, to invoke Him, is not an illusion. Illusion is to think that we can do without Him!

September 27: St. Vincent de Paul (1580?-1660)

The deathbed confession of a dying servant opened Vincent's eyes to the crying spiritual needs of the peasantry of France. This seems to have been a crucial moment in the life of the man from a small farm in Gascony, France, who had become a priest with little more ambition than to have a comfortable life.

It was the Countess de Gondi (whose servant he had helped) who persuaded her husband to endow and support a group of able and zealous missionaries who would work among poor tenant farmers and country people in general. Vincent was too humble to accept leadership at first, but after working for some time in Paris among imprisoned galley slaves, he returned to be the leader of what is now known as the Congregation of the Mission, or the Vincentians. These priests, with vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and stability, were to devote themselves entirely to the people in smaller towns and villages.

Later, Vincent established confraternities of charity for the spiritual and physical relief of the poor and sick of each parish. From these, with the help of St. Louise de Marillac, came the Daughters of Charity, "whose convent is the sickroom, whose chapel is the parish church, whose cloister is the streets of the city." He organized the rich women of Paris to collect funds for his missionary projects, founded several hospitals, collected relief funds for the victims of war and ransomed over 1,200 galley slaves from North Africa. He was zealous in conducting retreats for clergy at a time when there was great laxity, abuse and ignorance among them. He was a pioneer in clerical training and was instrumental in establishing seminaries.

Most remarkably, Vincent was by temperament a very irascible person—even his friends admitted it. He said that, except for the grace of God, he would have been "hard and repulsive, rough and cross." But he became a tender and affectionate man, very sensitive to the needs of others.

Pope Leo XIII made him the patron of all charitable societies. Outstanding among these, of course, is the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, founded by his admirer Blessed Frédéric Ozanam.

Speak Lord

In the silence of the stars,
In the quiet of the hills,
In the heaving of the sea,
Speak, Lord.

In the stillness of this room,
In the calming of my mind,
In the longing of my heart,
Speak, Lord.

In the voice of a friend,
in the chatter of a child,
in the words of a stranger,
Speak, Lord.

In the opening of a book,
In the looking at a film,
In the listening to music,
Speak, Lord.

For your servant listens.
(David Adams, Tides and Seasons, Triangle 1989)

Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven:

The baby has no skies but Mother's eyes,
Nor any God above but Mother love;
His angel sees the Father's face
But he, the Mother's, full of grace.
And yet the heavenly kingdom is
Of such as this.....