



Catechetical Series:

What Catholics Believe & Why

THE WRITINGS OF SAINT JUSTIN THE MARTYR

Behold The Truth

Discovering the What & Why of the Catholic Faith
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Catechist and Martyr

- ❖ Saint Justin the Martyr was born and raised in Flavius Neapolis in Samaria, where he was schooled in ancient Greek philosophy.
- ❖ Meeting an elderly man from Syria one day, who was a follower of Jesus Christ, Justin was moved to convert to Christianity.
- ❖ Traveling about as a teacher of the faith, he eventually settled in Rome, where he founded a school.
- ❖ In about the year 165 A.D., during the reign of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, he was arrested for being a Christian and beheaded.



A Look into Ancient Christian Life

- ❖ Justin's writings provide invaluable insight into the beliefs and practices of the early Church.
- ❖ Describing the process by which converts enter the Church, Justin writes: "As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we praying and fasting with them. ..."



A Look into Ancient Christian Life

- ❖ “Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19), they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, “Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven (John 3:3).” *First Apology* 61



A Look into Ancient Christian Life

- ❖ In Justin's words we discover the importance of the sacrament of Baptism to the early Christians.
- ❖ We also see their belief in baptismal *regeneration* or *rebirth*, the same as Catholics believe today.
- ❖ It is the belief that the Sacraments are not mere symbols, but true vehicles of divine grace where one encounters the living Christ.

How the Early Christians Saw God

- ❖ We find evidence in Justin's writings for the doctrines of the Blessed Trinity and the divinity of Christ.
- ❖ He writes: "They who assert that the Son is the Father are proved to know neither the Father, nor that the Father of all has a Son, who is both the first-born Word of God and is God." *First Apology* 63

How the Early Christians Worshiped

- ❖ Justin likewise describes in great detail the form of worship practiced by the early Church.
- ❖ “We call this food *Eucharist*,” he writes; “and no one else is permitted to partake of it, except one who believes our teaching to be true and who has been washed in the washing which is for the remission of sins and for regeneration, and is thereby living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by Him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nourished, is both the flesh and blood of that incarnated Jesus. . . .”
- ❖ In this we see the centrality of the Holy Eucharist to the early Church’s form of worship, as well as the belief the Eucharist was not merely a symbol, but the real Flesh and Blood of Christ.

How the Early Christians Worshiped

- ❖ Justin continues: “The Apostles, in the Memoirs which they produced, which are called Gospels, have thus passed on that which was enjoined upon them: that Jesus took bread and, having given thanks, said, “Do this in remembrance of Me; this is My Body” (Luke 22:19). And in like manner, taking the cup, and having given thanks, He said, “This is My Blood” (Matt. 26:27-28). And He imparted this to them only. ...”
- ❖ Here we see the part of the Mass in which the Gospels are read, or the Liturgy of the Word as it is called.

How the Early Christians Worshiped

- ❖ “Afterwards we continually remind each other of these things. And those who have possessions come to the aid of all those who are poor; and we are always at one with each other. For everything that has been given to our use, we praise the Creator of all through His Son Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit. ...”
- ❖ Here is the Collection.

How the Early Christians Worshiped

- ❖ Justin goes on to specify how the early Church regarded Sunday as its principal day of worship.
- ❖ “On the day which is dedicated to the sun [i.e., Sunday], all those who live in the cities or who dwell in the countryside gather in a common meeting, and for as long as there is time the Memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read. Then, when the reader has finished, the president verbally gives a warning and appeal for the imitation of these good examples. ...”
- ❖ After the reading of the Gospels, then, comes the Homily, just as the order of the Mass has come down to us today.

How the Early Christians Worshiped

- ❖ He goes on to describe the Prayer of the Faithful, the Offertory, and the Great Amen.
- ❖ “Then we all rise together and offer prayers, and, as we said before, when our prayer is ended, bread is brought forward along with wine and water, and the president likewise gives thanks to the best of his ability, and the people call out their assent, saying the *Amen*. Then there is the distribution to each and the participation in the Eucharistic elements, which also are sent with the deacons to those who are absent. Those who are wealthy and who wish to do so, contribute whatever they themselves care to give; and the collection is placed with the president, who aids the orphans and the widows, and those who through sickness or any other cause are in need, and those who are imprisoned, and the strangers who are sojourning with us—and in short, he takes care of all who are in need. ...”

How the Early Christians Worshiped

- ❖ “The Day of the Sun [i.e., Sunday] is the day on which we all gather in a common meeting, because it is the first day, the day on which God, changing darkness and matter, created the world; and it is the day on which Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Kronos [i.e., Saturday]; and on the day after that of Kronos, which is the Day of the Sun, He appeared to His Apostles and disciples, and taught them these things which we have also submitted to you for your consideration.” *First Apology* 66-67



Reverence for Mary, the New Eve

- ❖ In Justin's writings we also find evidence for the veneration of the Virgin Mary in ancient Christianity.
- ❖ Around the year 155, in his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, he writes: “[Jesus] became Man by the Virgin so that the course which was taken by disobedience in the beginning through the agency of the serpent, might be also the very course by which it would be put down. For Eve, a virgin and undefiled, conceived the word of the serpent, and bore disobedience and death. ...”



Reverence for Mary, the New Eve

- ❖ “But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy when the angel Gabriel announced to her the glad tidings that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her and the power of the Most High would overshadow her, for which reason the Holy One being born of her is the Son of God. And she replied: ‘Be it done unto me according to thy word’ (Lk. 1:38).” 100



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