



**A TASTE
OF**

TRADITION

Fr. Lorenzo Carraro, MCCJ

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BY

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A Selection of the writings of the Church Fathers

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Introduction

THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

The Fathers of the Church are writers who deal with the faith of the Christian community of the first four centuries of Christianity. They are the witnesses of the tradition which means the faith of the living and believing community of the Church.

They are called “Fathers” because they lived in the beginning of the time of the Church, when the great Ecumenical Councils clarified the content of the Christian faith, especially Christ’s Divinity and Trinity in God.

The Fathers unite in themselves the enduring characteristics of holy life, wisdom and antiquity. They represent the place of the first expansion of Christianity which is the geographical area around the Mediterranean Sea from Spain to Mesopotamia (modern Iraq).

As for as their chronology, they include the writers of the Apostolic time (towards the end of the first century AD) until the middle of the fifth century that witnesses the last great ecumenical council of Chalcedon of the year 451.

1. THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

The Apostolic Fathers can be described as the immediate successors of the Apostles. The ones we examine are:

- **The Letter of Barnabas:** it is a writing attributed to the companion of Saint Paul but most probably is an anonymous composition that speaks of “The Catechesis of the Two Ways” and the Christian usage of the Old Testament against Judaism.

- **The Didache** or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, also anonymous, but very ancient information about the liturgy and the life of the Christian community of the first century.
- **Saint Ignatius of Antioch** and his seven letters about the authority of the bishop, the importance of the Incarnation and his burning desire to die as a martyr.

READINGS

THE LETTER OF BARNABAS

The way of light

This, then, is the way of light. If someone wishes to travel this road to the place marked out, let him hasten on by his works. This, therefore, is the knowledge given us for walking in such a way:

You will love the one who made you, you will fear the one who formed you, will glorify the one who ransomed you from death. You will be simple in heart and rich in spirit. You will not be joined to those walking in the way of death. You will hate everything which is not pleasing to God. You will hate all deceit. You will not forsake the commands of the Lord. You will not exalt yourself, but will be humble in all circumstances. You will not attribute glory to yourself, you will not conceive an evil plot against your neighbour, you will not allow impudence in your soul.

Do not doubt whether your prayer will be heard. Do not take the name of the Lord in vain. You will love your neighbour more than your own life. You will not destroy a child by abortion, nor in turn will you do away what has been born.

Do not hold back your hand from your son or your daughter, but from their youth you will teach them the fear of the Lord.

Do not become desirous of your neighbor's goods. Do not become greedy. Do not be attached with all your heart to the haughty, but consort with the just and the humble. Receive all experiences which happen to you as being good, knowing that, without God, nothing comes to pass.

You will share with your neighbour in all things and will not call anything your own; for if you are sharers in incorruptible things, how much more in corruptible.

Do not be hasty in speech, for the mouth is a snare of death. To the extent you are able, you will be pure for your soul's sake.

Do not be stretching out your hands when it is time to receive but drawing them together when it is time to give.

You will love as the pupil of your eye everyone who speaks the word of the Lord to you.

You will be mindful of the day of judgement both day and night. You will seek each day, either through your speech to bring a word of encouragement and to strive to save a soul, or through your hands to work for the ransom of your sins.

You will not hesitate to give nor, having given, will you boast; you will know who is the just giver of your reward.

You will guard what you received, neither adding to nor taking away from it. You will hate evil to the end. You will judge justly. You will not foment a schism, but you will make peace and bring enemies together.

You will confess your sins. You will not come to prayer with an evil conscience.

(The Letter of Barnabas 19:1-3; 5-6; 8-12)

THE DIDACHE

The way of death

But this is the way of death. First of all, it is evil and filled with a curse: murders, adulteries, passions, fornications, thefts, idolatries, magic arts, deeds of sorcery, robberies, false testimonies, hypocrisies, duplicities, deceit, haughtiness, wickedness, arrogance, greed, obscene speech, jealousy, boldness, pride, boasting, lack of reverence. They are persecutors of good people, hating truth and loving falsehood, who are ignorant of the reward of justice, who do not adhere to the

good nor to just judgement and who do not keep watch for good but for evil. Gentleness and patience are far from them, and they love vain things, run after repayment, do not have mercy on the poor, are not troubled over the oppressed and do not recognize their Creator. They are murderers of infants, abortionists of the creation of God; they turn away the needy and despise the afflicted. They are the advocates of the rich, the unjust judges of the poor, persons altogether sinful. May you be delivered, my children, from all of these.
(The Didache 5)

The Eucharist

The cup and the bread which is broken

Concerning the Eucharist, give thanks in this manner: First, concerning the cup: We give you thanks, our Father, for the holy vine of David your servant, which you have made known to us through your servant Jesus. To you be glory through the ages.

Concerning the bread which is broken: We give you thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you have made known to us through your servant Jesus. To you be glory through the ages. As this broken bread was scattered over the mountains and, having been gathered together, became one, so may your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom, for yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ through the ages.

Let no one either eat or drink from your Eucharist except those baptised in the name of the Lord. For concerning this the Lord has said, "Do not give what is holy to the dogs" (Mt. 7:6).

"We give you thanks"

After you have eaten your fill, give thanks in this manner: We give you thanks, holy Father, for your holy name, which you have made to dwell in our hearts; and for the knowledge, faith and immortality which you have made known to us through your servant Jesus. To you be glory through the ages.

You, all-powerful Master, created everything for the sake of your name. You gave food and drink to men for enjoyment so that they might give you thanks. But to us you gave spiritual food and drink eternal life through your servant Jesus. For all of these we give you thanks, for you are mighty. To you be glory through the ages.

“Be mindful of your church, O Lord”

Be mindful of your church, O Lord, to deliver it from all evil and to perfect it in your love. Gather it together, having been sanctified, from the four winds into your kingdom which you have prepared for it; for to you is the power and the glory through the ages!

May your grace come and may this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David! If anyone is holy, let him approach. If anyone is not, let him do penance. Maranatha! Amen.

“On the Lord’s Day”

When you have come together on the Lord’s Day, break bread and give thanks, having confessed your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure. Let everyone who has a quarrel with his companion not come together with you until they are reconciled, in order that your sacrifice may not be defiled. For this is what has been said by the Lord: “In every place and time a pure sacrifice is offered to me, for I am a great king and my name is marvellous among the nations”.

(The Didache 9:1-10:6; 14:1-3)

SAINT IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

Saint Ignatius of Antioch, the bishop of that city of Syria, who succeeded Saint Peter, was arrested and brought to Rome in chains to be thrown to the lions in the Coliseum. During his journey as a prisoner from Antioch of Syria to Rome, he wrote seven letters to the churches he was passing through. They are an extraordinary document, upholding the authority of the local bishop with his clergy and the reality of Christ’s incarnation. He is the first to use the expression “Catholic Church” as a collective designation for Christians. But especially his letters express his heroic

determination to die as a martyr. Ignatius died in Rome around 107 AD under emperor Trajan. He is mentioned in the First Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass.

READING

I am writing to all the churches and I am proclaiming to all that I am dying willingly for Christ, if only you do not hinder me. I plead with you, do not be of an untimely benevolence towards me. Allow me to be the food of wild beasts, through whom it is possible to reach God. I am God's wheat and I am being ground by the teeth of the wild beasts in order that I may be found as Christ's pure bread. Petition Christ on my behalf, that through these instruments I may appear as a sacrifice for God.

The joys of this world and the kingdoms of this age profit me nothing. It is better for me to die for the sake of Christ Jesus than to rule over the ends of the earth. I seek him who died for us; I desire him who arose for our sake. The birth pangs are upon me. Understand me, brothers. Neither hinder me from living nor desire that I die. Do not give to the world the man who wants to belong to God; do not deceive him with material things. Let me grasp the pure light. When I have arrived there, I will be a man. Allow me to be an imitator of the suffering of my God. If someone has God within him, let him understand what I desire and let him have compassion on me, knowing that which oppresses me.

The ruler of this age wishes to snatch me away and to corrupt my mind, which is directed towards God. Let no one of you who are there aid him, but rather be on my side; that is, on the side of God. Do not be proclaiming Jesus Christ, but desiring the world. May envy not dwell in your midst. Do not be persuaded by me if I should plead with you when I am present. Be persuaded, rather, these things which I am writing to you. I, who am writing to you while I live, and yearning to die.

My earthly desire has been crucified, and there is in me no fire for material things. But there is a living water in me which speaks and says within me, "Come to the Father". I do not take pleasure in the food of corruption nor in the delights of this life. I desire the bread of God; that is, the flesh of Jesus Christ of the seed of David. As drink, I desire his blood, which is incorruptible love.

I no longer desire to live the life of men. That will come to pass, if only you will wish it. Do wish it, so that you may also be found favourable. I am entreating you in a few words. Believe me. Jesus Christ, the truthful mouth in which the Father has spoken in truth, will make it clear to you that I am speaking the truth. Intercede for me, that I may obtain this. I do not write to you according to the flesh, but according to the mind of God. If I suffer, you felt affection for me. If I be rejected, you hated me.

(Letter to the Romans 4:1-2; 6:1-8:3)

2. THE FATHERS DURING THE TIME OF PERSECUTION

On the whole, the Roman emperors were against Christianity: for almost three centuries Christians paid with their blood their faithfulness to their faith.

During this time, we have chosen the writings of four witnesses:

- Saint Justin who is an apologist i.e. a defender of the faith and who eventually dies as martyr;
- The anonymous author of the “Letter to Diognetus” who shows in a very original and courageous manner the Christians’ way of life in the world;
- Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, witness of the tradition and
- Saint Cyprian of Chartage, witness of the unity of the Church. Their witness is very relevant for our Christian life even today.

SAINT JUSTIN MARTYR

Born at the beginning of the second century at Nablus in Samaria. His family was pagan. He was a philosopher and became a Christian at about the age of thirty. He went first to Ephesus and then to Rome where he established a school. He wrote

many works in defence of Christianity among which the two "Apologies" and his "Dialogue with Tripho" survive. He gives us the earliest description of the rite of Baptism and of a Sunday Mass. He was martyred, together with six others, five men and a woman, during the time of emperor Marcus Aurelius, about 165.

READINGS

Baptism

I will explain by what manner we, who have been renewed by Christ, have dedicated ourselves to God, so that we may not seem to be acting wickedly in our explanation by leaving this out. All those who are convinced and believe that the things we teach and say are true, and who profess to be able to live in this manner, are taught to pray and to ask of God in fasting the forgiveness of their sins while we pray and fast together with them. Then they are led by us to where there is water and are reborn in the same rebirth in which we ourselves were also reborn. They undergo the washing in water in the name of God the Father and Master of the universe, and of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit.

For indeed Christ said, "Unless you be reborn, you will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven". Now it is clear to all that it is impossible for those who have already been born to return again into their mothers' wombs. As we wrote previously, it has been said through Isaiah the prophet how those who have sinned and repented will avoid the consequences of their sins. For thus was it said, <Wash, make yourselves clean, remove the evils from your souls, defend the orphan and do justice for the widow; and come let us converse together, says the Lord. And if your sins are like purple, I will make them white like wool; and if they are like scarlet, I will make them white as snow. But if you do not listen to me, a sword will devour you, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken these things>.

We learned this doctrine from the Apostles. In our first birth we were born unconscious, according to necessity, out of the humid seed from the intercourse of our parents, and we grew up in evil customs and bad habits. But in order that we may not remain children of necessity and ignorance, but of election and understanding and may obtain remission of sins previously committed, the name of God the Father and Master of the universe is invoked in the water over the one who has chosen to be reborn and who has repented of his sins. This name alone is

the one which he invokes who is leading the candidate to the washing. Indeed no one is able to pronounce the name of the ineffable God. If someone would dare to say what it is, he would be seized with incurable madness.

This washing is called “enlightenment”, since those who have learned these things are enlightened in their minds. The one being illuminated is washed in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets foretold all these things regarding Jesus. (*Apology I, 61*)

The Eucharist

It is allowed to no one else to participate in that food which we call Eucharist except the one who believes that the things taught by us are true, who has been cleansed in the washing unto rebirth and the forgiveness of sins and who is living according to the way Christ handed on to us.

For we do not take these things as ordinary bread or ordinary drink. Just as our Savior Jesus Christ was made flesh by the word of God and took on flesh and blood for our salvation, so also were we taught that the food, for which thanksgiving has been made through the word of prayer instituted by him, and from which our blood and flesh are nourished after the change, is the flesh of that Jesus who was made flesh.

Indeed, the Apostles, in the records left by them which are called gospels, handed on that it was commanded to them in this manner: Jesus, having taken bread and given thanks said, <Do this in memory of me, this is my body>. Likewise, having taken the cup and given thanks, he said, <This is my blood>, and he gave it to them alone.

Furthermore, after this we always remind one another of these things. Those who have the means aid those who are needy, and we are always united. Over everything which we take to ourselves we bless the Creator of the universe through His Son Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit.

On the day called after the sun, there is a meeting for which all those dwelling in the cities or in the countryside come together. The records of the Apostles or the

writings of the prophets are read as long as time allows. When the reader has stopped, the one who is presiding admonishes and encourages us by a sermon to the imitation of those good examples.

Then we all stand up together and lift up our prayers and, as I said previously, when we have finished our prayer, bread is brought forth and wine and water. The one who is presiding offers up prayers and thanksgiving according to his ability and the people acclaim their assent with <Amen>. There is the distribution of and participation on the part of each one in the gifts for which thanks has been offered, and they are sent to those who are not present through the deacons.

The prosperous and those who are willing give what each wishes according to his own decision. What is collected is put aside with the one who presides, and he aids the orphans and widows, those who are in need on account of sickness or some other cause, prisoners and foreigners who are staying with us. In a word, he is the protector of all who are in need.

We all come together on the day of the sun since it is the first day, on which God changed darkness and matter and made the world. On that day, Jesus Christ our Savior arose from the dead. They crucified him on the day preceding that of Saturn, and on the day of the sun he appeared to his Apostles and disciples and taught them these things which we have presented also to you for inspection.

(Apology I, 66-67)

THE LETTER TO DIOGNETUS

The Christians in the world

For the Christians are distinguished neither by country, by language nor by customs from the rest of men. They do not anywhere inhabit their own proper cities, nor do they make use of a different dialect nor do they lead a special type of life. This teaching of theirs has not been discovered by the design and thought of inquisitive men. They do not champion a human opinion as do others. But they inhabit Greek and barbarian cities as is each one's lot, and , while following the local customs in dress, food and the rest of their life, they manifest the amazing and confessedly incredible manner of their society.

They dwell in their countries, but as strangers; they participate in all things as citizens and endure all things as foreigners. Every foreign land is their homeland and every homeland is foreign to them. They marry as everyone does and give birth, but they do not cast their newborn infants away. They serve themselves from a common table, but not a common marriage bed. They live in the flesh but not according to the flesh. They pass their life on earth, but have their citizenship in heaven. They obey the established laws and by their own lives they vanquish the law.

They love all people and are persecuted by all. They are unknown yet are condemned, are put to death yet are made to live. They are poor, yet enrich many; they are lacking all things yet abound in all things. They are dishonoured and in dishonour they are glorified. They are slandered yet they are justified, they are insulted yet they bless, they are maltreated yet they return honor. Although they do good, they are punished as evil and when they are punished they rejoice as though they are being made to live. The Jews battle them as strangers, the Greeks persecute them and those who hate them are not able to say the cause of their hostility.

To put it simply, that which the soul is in the body, the Christians are in the world. The soul has been spread through all the members of the body and the Christians through the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body but is not of the body and the Christians dwell in the world but are not of the world. The invisible soul is guarded in the visible body and the Christians are known to be in the world, although their service of God remains invisible. The flesh, although it has never been wronged, hates and wars against the soul since it hinders the enjoyment of its pleasures. Likewise the world, though it has never been wronged, hates the Christians, for they are drawn up against its pleasures.

The soul loves the flesh and its members which hate it and the Christians love those who hate them. The soul has been enclosed in the body yet it holds the body together, and although the Christians are held in the world as in a prison, they nevertheless hold the world together. The soul, though immortal, inhabits a mortal dwelling, and the Christians dwell among corruptible things while awaiting incorruptibility in heaven. The soul, maltreated with regard to food and drink, grows better, and the Christians, when they are being chastised, grow more

numerous each day. God has placed them in so great a post, which it is not licit for them to abandon.

(the Letter to Diognetus 5-6)

SAINT IRENÆUS OF LYONS

Born in Smyrna about 130, a disciple of Saint Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who was disciple of Saint John the evangelist and died burned at the stake. Irenaeus was a priest at Lyons in France at the time of the persecution there. He became bishop of the city of Lyons when the previous bishop was martyred. He is known as a theologian, a powerful defender of the faith against the heresy of the Gnostics. He is thought to have been martyred around the year 200.

READING

The Strength of Tradition

The church, which is spread throughout the whole world even to the ends of the earth, has received from the Apostles and their disciples that faith in one God, the Father Almighty who made heaven, earth, the sea and all that is in them, and in Jesus Christ the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation, and in the Holy Spirit. Through the prophets, the Holy Spirit preached the designs of God and the advent, the birth from a virgin, the passion, resurrection from the dead and bodily ascension into heaven of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ, as well as his coming in the glory of the Father.

He will come to <recapitulate all things> (*Ephesians 1:10*) and to raise up all human flesh so that, according to the pleasure of the invisible Father, every knee may bend of those in heaven, on the earth and under the earth and every tongue may confess (*Philippians 2:10*) Jesus Christ our Lord and God, our Savior and King, and that he might pronounce a just judgement on all.

Since she has received this preaching and this faith, as we have said, the church spread throughout the world carefully preserves them as though inhabiting one house, and likewise both believes them as though with one heart and one soul, and fittingly preaches, teaches and passes them on as though with one mouth.

Although there are different languages in the world, nevertheless the strength of the tradition is one and the same. Those churches which have been founded in Germany do not believe or hand on any other doctrine than those in Spain, or among the Celts, or in the East, in Egypt, in Libya or in the center of the world. Just as the sun, God's creature, is one and the same in the whole world, so does the preaching of the truth shine everywhere and enlighten all who desire to come to a recognition of the truth. Neither will the one who is accomplished in oratory among church leaders say anything other than these things – for no one is above his master – nor will the one who is weak in speech diminish the tradition. Since the faith is one and the same, the one who is able to say much concerning it does not increase it, nor does the one who is able to say little diminish it.

(Refutation of the False Gnosis I, 10,1-2)

SAINT CYPRIAN OF CHARTAGE

We celebrate Cyprian and Cornelius together on September 16. Cornelius was pope in Rome and renown because he opposed the rigorist position in dealing with the "Lapsi" i.e. the Christians who had given up the Holy Books during the persecution, in this way betraying their faith and later asked to come back and be reconciled. Pope Cornelius died in exile in Civitavecchia in 253 and was buried in the cemetery of Callistus (catacomb). Cyprian was bishop of Carthage in Northern Africa and took the rigorist position, but then he died as a martyr by decapitation on September 14, 258, under emperor Valerian. He wrote: "On the unity of the Catholic Church". He is the first African bishop to suffer martyrdom. Both Cornelius and Cyprian are mentioned in the Roman Canon (First Eucharistic Prayer).

READING

The Unity of the Church

The pure and chaste bride of Christ is not able to commit adultery. She knows one home and guards the sanctity of one bedchamber with modest chastity. She keeps us for God and destines the children she has begotten for the Kingdom. Whoever has separated from the church and is joined to an adulteress is cut off from the promises of Christ. He is a stranger, profane, an enemy. He is not able to

have God as Father who does not have the church as mother. If anyone outside Noah's ark was able to escape, then he who is outside the church escapes.

The Lord admonishes and says, "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters" (*Matthew 12:30*). He who breaks the peace and concord of Christ works against Christ; he who gathers elsewhere than in the church scatters the church of Christ. The Lord says, "The Father and I are one" (*John 10:30*). Again, it has been written concerning the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, "And the three are one" (*1 John 5:7*).

Does anyone believe that this unity in the church which derives from divine constancy, which is bound to the heavenly mysteries, is able to be torn asunder and be split apart by the divergence of opposing wills? Whoever does not hold fast to this unity does not hold fast to the law of God, does not hold fast to the faith of the Father and the Son, does not hold fast to life and salvation.

The mystery of unity, this bond of abiding concord is manifested when, in the gospel, the tunic of the Lord Jesus Christ is in no way divided or torn. Rather, the entire garment is received. Whole and undivided, it becomes the possession of the ones casting lots for the garment of Christ, who would have done better to put on Christ. Divine Scriptures says, "But concerning the tunic, since it had been woven in one piece from top to bottom and was without a seam, they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it but cast lots for it, to see whose it will be'" (*John 19:23ff*).

He brought that unity which comes from above; that is, from heaven and from the Father. Such unity was not at all able to be torn by the one who took it into his possession, but continued whole and undamaged. He is not able to possess the garment of Christ who tears and divides the church of Christ.
(*On the Unity of the Catholic Church, 6-7*)

3. THE FATHERS DURING THE CENTURIES OF FREEDOM

It was emperor Constantine who gave Christians the freedom to exercise their religion with the Edict of Milan in the year 313 AD. We have selected

- only one Father from the East, writing in Greek: Saint John Chrysostom
- and two from the West, writing in Latin: Saint Jerome, the great biblical scholar, and
- the greatest, Saint Augustine.

Freedom for Christianity doesn't mean absence of problems or difficulties for the Church. As a matter of fact, Saint John Chrysostom died in exile because of his opposition to the emperor and Saint Augustine saw the siege and looting of the city of Rome by the Vandals, one of the nomadic tribes (Barbarians) that will eventually destroy the Roman empire but will in the end be converted to the Catholic Church.

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Born at Antioch about 349, where he was ordained and exercised his pastoral ministry for many years. His preaching bore great fruit and his writings revealed the brilliance of his intellect and his strength of faith. He lived an austere life, striving to reform the morals of clergy and people. In 397, he became bishop of Constantinople; he was exiled by the emperor who took exception to his work. He died in Turkey.

READING

Do you wish to honor the body of Christ? Do not neglect him when he is naked. Do not honor him here inside with silken robes but neglect him outside as he is perishing of cold and nakedness. The one who said, "This is my body", and established the fact by his word, is also the one who said, "You saw me hungry and did not give me to eat", and "As much as you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do to me". The body of Christ in the Eucharist has no need of garments but of a pure soul; the body of Christ outside needs much care.

Let us learn how to become wise and to honor Christ as he wishes. The most agreeable honor for a person being honoured is the honor he desires, not that which we think best. Peter thought he was honouring Christ when he refused to let him wash his feet, yet what resulted was not honor but its opposite. Thus, render him the very honor which he himself prescribed by spending your wealth on the poor. God has no need of golden vessels but of golden souls.

Now in saying this, I am not hindering you from making such votive offerings as these. I am insisting that, along with these and before these, you give alms. He accepts the former but is much more pleased with the latter.

In the former instance, only the one who offers the gift receives some benefit; in the latter instance, the one who receives benefits, too. In the former instance the matter can be a cause of ostentation, but alms are all kindness. What use is it to Christ if his table is loaded with golden vessels but he himself is perishing of hunger? First, fill him when he is hungry, then also adorn his table with what remains. Do you fashion a gold cup but not give a cup of cold water? What good is that? Do you prepare his table with cloth of gold but not provide him with the necessary covering? What gain is to be had from this?

Tell me, if you saw someone lacking the necessary food and failed to satisfy his hunger but only surrounded his table with gold, would he then be grateful to you or would he not rather be angry? If you saw him wrapped in rags and stiff from the cold and failed to give him a cloak but set up gold columns and said you were doing it in his honor, would he not say he was being mocked and consider it the very worst of insults?

Consider this with regard to Christ when he comes by as a beggar or a stranger needing shelter. You fail to take him in but you adorn the foundations and the walls and the capitals of the columns. You fashion silver chains for the lamps but do not even wish to see him chained in prison. When I say these things, I am not hindering you from being zealous to provide these ornaments but I am urging you to provide other things along with them and to provide them before the ornaments.

No one has ever been accused for not providing ornaments. Those who do not provide for their neighbour, however, are threatened with hell and

unquenchable fire and torments with demons. Do not decorate this house and neglect your suffering brother. He is more truly a temple than this building.
(Homily 50 on the Gospel of Matthew)

SAINT JEROME

Jerome concluded his long life at Bethlehem in the year 420. He hails from Dalmatia. Devoted monk and Ascetic, he wrote numerous commentaries on the Bible and authored the Latin translation of the Bible which is called VULGATA which means popular. One of four great doctors of the Western (Latin) Church. He is patron of scriptures scholars.

READINGS

To be ignorant of the Scriptures is to be ignorant of Christ

I therefore am paying back what I owe to you (Eustochium) and to him (Pammachius). I obey the commands of Christ who says, <Search the Scriptures> (John 5:39), and, <Seek, and you will find> (Mt. 7:7), in order that I may not hear along with the Jews, <You go astray, since you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God> (Mt. 22:29). If, according to the Apostle Paul, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, then whoever is ignorant of the Scriptures is ignorant of God's power and wisdom. To be ignorant of the Scriptures is to be ignorant of Christ.

(Commentary on Isaiah, prologue)

God's word is a source of joy

I entreat you, dearest brother, does not dwelling among these things, meditating on them, knowing and seeking nothing else seem to you to be the dwelling place of the heavenly kingdom on earth? I do not wish that you be offended in the Sacred Scriptures by the simplicity and almost banality of the words. They have been set down in this manner either through the fault or the skill of the translators so that they might more effectively instruct the uneducated multitude. Thus, in one and the same sentence, the learned person might hear one thing and the unlearned another. I am not so impudent and dumb as to state that

I know these things and that I gather on earth the fruits of those things whose roots are in heaven. But I have the desire and show that I am making an effort. Although I refuse to be a teacher, I offer myself as a companion. The one who asks receives, the one who knocks is admitted and the one who seeks finds. Let us learn on earth the knowledge of things which will remain with us in heaven.

(Letter 53,10)

SAINT AUGUSTINE

Augustine was born in Tagaste, North Africa. After a dissolute life, he converted also thanks to the prayers of his devout mother Monica and received baptism at age 33 from Saint Ambrose in Milan. After his conversion, he returned to North Africa and lived a kind of monastic life. Then he was ordained priest and bishop of Hippo. Possibly the most beautiful mind of Christianity, he fought against heretics and wrote many books the most famous of which are “Confessions” and “The City of God”. We still have also more than 500 homilies of Augustine. He is considered a founder of monastic life in the West; his rule is observed by some 150 religious communities today. He is one of the four great doctors of the Latin Church. He is called “The Doctor of Grace”. He died in the year 430.

READINGS

On the Anniversary of his Ordination as a bishop

Ever since this burden, for which I must render a difficult accounting, has been placed on my shoulders the concern of my position [as bishop] has disturbed me. Nevertheless, I am all the more concerned by thoughts of this nature when the anniversary of my ordination renews the memory of that day and so places it before my eyes that I seem to be going to take up a fresh today that burden which I already accepted several years ago. What indeed is feared in that office except that what is a danger in regard to our honor may be more pleasing to us than what is fruitful in regard to your salvation.

May I thus be helped by your prayers that the Lord may condescend to carry this burden with me as though it were his own. When you pray, pray likewise for

yourselves. For what is this burden of mine about which I am now speaking if not you? Pray for me, indeed, as I pray, that you may not be a heavy burden. In fact, the Lord Jesus would not call his burden light unless he carried it with the one who bears it. Bear me up, then, so that, according to the Apostle's precept, we may carry one another's burdens and thus fulfil the law of Christ (cf. *Galatians* 6:2). If Christ does not carry this burden with us, we will fall; if he does not carry us, we will fall.

Although I am terrified by what I am for you, I am consoled by what I am with you. For you, I am a bishop; with you, I am a Christian. The former is a title of an office which has been undertaken, the latter is a title of grace. The first is a danger, the second salvation. Furthermore, we are tossed about as though in a great ocean by the tempest of our responsibilities. However, when we recall by whose blood we have been redeemed, it is as though we enter into a safe harbour by the tranquillity of this recollection. Precisely as we struggle in this office we find rest in our common good.

It consoles me more that I have been redeemed with you than that I have been placed over you. I will seek to make my service to you all the more bountiful, as the Lord has commanded, lest I show myself ungrateful for the redemption by which I have merited to become your servant.

I must indeed love the Redeemer. I am aware of what he said to Peter, "Peter, do you love me? Tend my sheep" (*John* 21:17). He asked this once, again, and a third time. Love was first asked for then the burden imposed since, where love is greater, the burden is lesser. Aid us by your prayers and your obedience that we may rejoice not so much in being set over you as in serving you.
(*Sermon 340,1*)

I hunger and thirst for you, my God

Having then been admonished to turn my attention upon myself, I entered into the most intimate part of my being with you as my guide. I was able to do this because you were my helper. I entered and with the eye of my soul saw everywhere an unchangeable light above that very eye of my soul and above my mind. It was not this ordinary light visible to all flesh nor was it a light of this same kind but merely stronger, as though it were shining so very much brightly as to be able to

