

Reflection Wednesday Week 24 – Cornelius and Cyprian 2020

Pope St Cornelius became bishop of the church in Rome in 251. He fought against the Novatian schismatics, and established his authority with the aid of Cyprian. (*Novation believed any Christian who had reneged on his/her faith could not be readmitted to the Church.*) The emperor Gallus sent Cornelius into exile, and he died at Civitavecchia in June 253. He is buried in Rome. **St Cyprian (210 - 258)** was born in Carthage and spent most of his life practicing law. He was converted to Christianity and made bishop of Carthage in 249. He steered the Church through troubled times, including the persecution of the emperor Decius, when he went into hiding so as to be able to continue looking after the Church. In 258 the persecution of the emperor Valerian began. Cyprian was first exiled and then, on the 14th of September, executed, after a trial notable for the calm and courtesy shown by both sides. Cyprian's many letters and treatises shed much light on a formative period in the Church's history, and are valuable both for their doctrine and for the picture they paint of a group of people in constant peril of their lives but still determined to keep the faith.

At the Last Supper Jesus said to his disciples (Jn 17) *'Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us.'* In the case of Cornelius and Cyprian the prayer of Jesus was heard. Two great heroes of the Church, they kept the faith alive to be handed on both during and after their lives were taken from them. They give us the sense of fearlessness in the face of great opposition. Yet, it demanded great spiritual courage, great trust in God on their part. The words of scripture must have helped inspire and encourage them. They remind us of the importance of scripture and the call to reflect on its wisdom and insight. Some wisdom from St Cyprian:

- Be constantly committed to prayer or to reading [Scripture]; by praying, you speak to God, in reading, God speaks to you.
- No one is strong in his own strength, but he is safe by the grace and mercy of God.
- If He (Jesus) prayed who was without sin, how much more it becometh a sinner to pray!
- And according as we say, "Our Father," because He is the Father of those who understand and believe; so also, we call it "our Bread," because Christ is the Bread of those who are in union with His Body. And we ask that this Bread should be given to us daily, that we who are in Christ, and daily receive the Eucharist for the food of salvation, may not by the interposition of some heinous sin . . . be separated from Christ's Body.

A man walks up to the Widow at a funeral and asks if he can say a word.

"Of course", she replies.

The man plucks up the courage and says, "**Bargain**".

The Widow looks at him, teary eyed and says,

"Thank you so much, that means **a great deal**".