# Pope St. John I

## May 18

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d. 526 • Italy

Pope St. John was the fifty-third pope. While he was pope, King Theodoric ruled over Italy. King Theodoric was an Arian, which meant that he did not believe the truths of the Catholic Faith. His rival was Emperor Justin, who was a faithful Catholic and the ruler of the great Byzantine Empire.

The Emperor Justin passed a law that took away the churches and positions of the Arian bishops. This made King Theodoric furious. He threatened the lives of the Catholics in his kingdom if the emperor did not change his law. Because of the king's violent threats, Pope John I agreed to Theodoric's order to travel to Constantinople (the capital of the Byzantine Empire) to try to change Emperor Justin's mind. The pope knew that, if he did not go, King Theodoric would persecute the Catholics in Italy and throughout the rest of his kingdom.

When Pope John I landed on Constantinople's shore, Emperor Justin and the crowds of Constantinople marched twelve miles to meet him. They carried crosses and candles, and Emperor Justin was dressed in his finest robes. The emperor bowed deeply to Pope John I, doing him great honor. The crowds of Constantinople cheered. Later, the emperor held a magnificent ceremony where the pope re-crowned him as emperor. This showed Emperor Justin's alliance with the Roman Catholic Church.

Pope John I discussed with the emperor the things that King Theodoric had asked. Though he did not wish to have the law overturned, he did convince Emperor Justin to treat the Arians in his kingdom kindly.

The pope sailed back to Italy to report back to King Theodoric. But when he arrived, he received a very different welcome from King Theodoric than he had received from Emperor Justin.

Instead of dressing himself in his best robes, King Theodoric dressed the pope in chains. Instead of throwing a joyous celebration, the king threw the pope into prison. While in prison, Pope John I was mistreated, and he soon died as a holy martyr.

Pope St. John I, help me to endure what I suffer in Jesus's name!