

St. Justin Martyr

June 1



June 1

St. Justin Martyr

100–165 • Samaria

Justin was a pagan philosopher who wanted more than anything to find out the truth about God. He studied under teacher after teacher, and none of them could tell him what the truth was.

One day, Justin strolled by the sea, lost in thought. Then he noticed an old man walking beside him. The old man smiled and asked Justin what he was thinking about. Justin explained that he was trying to find out the truth about God. The old man's smile grew wider. He told Justin that he was a Christian. He explained to Justin that we cannot figure out who God is on our own: God is too great, and we are too small. Instead, God must tell us about Himself. The man then explained how the prophets foretold the coming of Jesus Christ, and that Jesus was God, and that Jesus teaches us the truth about Himself; to know Jesus is to know the truth about God.

The old man's words touched Justin's heart and set him thinking. But Justin was not ready to become a Christian yet. He kept the old man's words in his mind, thinking about them, wondering if what he had said was true.

Christians at that time suffered terrible persecution because they would not sacrifice to the Roman gods. Now, Justin paid attention to these Christians. He saw their courage and their joy. He saw that they were not afraid to die for Jesus. They would not die with such courage and joy if what they believed was not true, Justin thought. The martyrs' blood gleamed as an unarguable witness to truth, and Justin became a Christian.

Justin dressed in the philosopher's robe and staff and moved to Rome. There he taught and wrote the truth about God: that Jesus is God.

Justin and another philosopher in Rome, named Crescens, held a public philosophical debate in which Justin soundly defeated Crescens's arguments. Furious and spiteful because he had lost, Crescens denounced Justin as a Christian to the Roman authorities. Soldiers arrested Justin, and the Roman official warned him that he would receive no mercy if he did not sacrifice to Roman gods. Justin shook his head. He declared that he would go to heaven if he died for Jesus. So the Roman official ordered Justin's beheading. Justin became a martyr for Jesus, his blood a gleaming witness to the truth.

St. Justin Martyr, help me to bravely seek out the truth about God!