



## ‘The Word of God abides’ St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Doctor of the Church

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Saint Cyril of Jerusalem declared,  
*"Since He Himself has declared and  
said of the bread: This is My Body,  
who shall dare to doubt any more?  
And when He asserts and says: This  
is My Blood, who shall ever hesitate  
and say it is not His Blood?"*

Feast Day: March 18<sup>th</sup>

### **Catechetical Lectures**

Ordained to the ministerial priesthood in approximately 345 A.D., St. Cyril was put in charge of catechizing those preparing for baptism. It was in this position that he penned his renowned *Catecheses*, a series of 24 catechetical lectures. The first 19 were directed towards pre-baptismal candidates, and the remaining five addressed those newly baptized. These lectures are praised for their completeness, clarity, and profound theology.

Saint Cyril's *Catecheses* focuses on the sacramental life of the Church. These lectures address: sin; sanctifying grace; the Creed; heresies; God as Father and Creator; the Son, Jesus Christ; His Virgin birth; His Passion; Resurrection; Ascension; Second Coming; the Holy Spirit; the resurrection of the body; the renunciation of Satan; the effects of Baptism; Confirmation; Holy Communion; and holy Mass for the living and the dead, a great work of mercy.

### **Transubstantiation**

The first theologian to explain the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ more clearly, he said it is the Holy Spirit that effects this change. Quoted in *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments: The Procatechesis and the Five Mystagogical Catecheses*, St. Cyril said, "All that the Spirit touches is consecrated and changed." With firm faith in Christ's true presence in the Eucharist and zeal for communicating this to others, he continues:

Since He Himself has declared and said of the bread: This is My Body, who shall dare to doubt any more? And when He asserts and says: This is My Blood, who shall ever hesitate and say it is not His Blood? ... if Christ could change water into wine, can He not change wine into His own Blood? ... They do not remain in their original condition, they have been changed, though the senses cannot tell us this ... Do not think it mere bread and wine, for it is the Body and Blood of Christ, according to the Lord's declaration.

Upon the death of his predecessor around the year 350, St. Cyril became Bishop of Jerusalem. At the beginning of his episcopate, a cross of light was seen shining brightly in the noonday sky, extending from Mount Calvary to Mount Olivet. The emperor was informed of this event by Cyril, and the faithful took it as a sign that the Arian heresy, embraced by many, would come to an end. (The Arians denied that Christ was both fully God and fully man.)

### **Banishment**

Saint Cyril suffered his first banishment from Jerusalem in 357 due to the Arian-bent Bishop of Caesarea, Acacius, and some weak charges were brought against him. In 359, the Council of Seleucia restored Cyril to Jerusalem. With intense hatred of St. Cyril, Acacius managed to induce Emperor Constantius to banish Cyril again in 360. Upon Julian's rise as emperor in 362, he allowed all banished bishops, including St. Cyril, to return to Jerusalem.

Emperor Julian, however, planned to rebuild the Jewish Temple, in direct opposition to Christ's words in Matthew 24:2, "Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down." St. Cyril did not fret, however, but declared, "The word of God abides ... one stone shall not be laid on another." At the first attempt to begin construction of the Temple, horrible flames came out of the earth preventing anyone from being able to build. The earth was scorched, and the workmen were terrified. Attempt after attempt proved futile until the plans to rebuild the temple were abandoned. Julian perished soon thereafter in battle with the Persians in 366.

Saint Cyril found himself again banished in 367 by the Emperor Valens, an extreme Arian. This was St. Cyril's longest stint in exile. He was not allowed to return to Jerusalem for 11 years.

### **Bishop of Jerusalem**

Finally, during the Second General Council of Constantinople in 381, St. Cyril was rightfully acknowledged as Bishop of Jerusalem and praised for his unwavering stance against Arianism. He played an important role at the Council, which taught that the Son, Jesus Christ, was consubstantial (of the same substance) as God the Father. This belief had already been officially declared doctrine during the Council of Nicaea in 325!

Saint Cyril died peacefully on March 18, 386, after having been a bishop for 35 years, 16 spent in exile. The book *The Greek Fathers*, by A. Fortescue, states:

At Jerusalem, St Cyril, Bishop, who, having suffered many injuries from the Arians for the faith, and having been many times driven from his see, at last rested in peace, illustrious with the glory of holiness; of whose untarnished faith the second oecumenical synod, writing to Damasus, gave a splendid witness.

**Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, Doctor of the Church, pray for us to understand and defend the faith with the simplicity and fervor you possessed. Amen!**