

Eighteenth Week of Ordinary Time (English)
Tenth Sunday after Pentecost (Latin)
August 2, 2026
Year of the Church in History

“Lex orandi, Lex credendi, Lex vivendi” (Ancient Latin Maxim)

As we proceed to read and reflect upon The First Apology of Saint Justin Martyr, I would like us to keep in our minds the ancient Latin maxim which translates into: ***Lex orandi*** (how we worship), ***Lex credendi*** (what we believe), ***Lex vivendi*** (how we live). In essence, the way we pray and worship shapes what we believe which in turn determines how we choose to conduct our lives. It is my intention, in the following reflections, to repeat this first paragraph so we may have a visible reminder each time we read. Likewise, I will present key statements from Saint Justin, using our Eucharistic Liturgy (Mass) as a benchmark.

“. . .and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. . . And if these things seem to you to be reasonable and true, honour them; but if they seem nonsensical, despise them as nonsense, and do not decree death against those who have done no wrong, as you would against enemies”
(Saint Justin, First Apology).

Our quote from Saint Justin provides multiple items which may prove beneficial for our reflection. Yet one main point stands apart: the early Christians BELIEVED. They believed what they were consuming at their Sunday worship service (the Mass) WAS the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Let us take a moment and recall what this belief meant for those early Christians by reading from the martyrdom of two honored saints, Perpetua and Felicity.

“A few days later there was a rumor that we were going to be given a hearing. My father [Saint Perpetua is the one speaking here] also arrived from the city, worn with worry, and he came to me with the idea of persuading me. ‘Daughter,’ he said, ‘have pity on my grey head—have pity on me your father, if I deserve to be called your father, if I have favored you above all your brothers, if I have raised you to reach this prime of your life. Do not abandon me to be the reproach of men. Think of your brothers, think of your mother and your aunt, think of your child, who will not be able to live once you have gone. Give up your pride! You will destroy all of us! None of us will ever be able to speak freely again if anything happens to you.’ This was the way my father spoke out of love for me, kissing my hands and throwing himself down before me. With tears in his eyes he no longer addressed me as his daughter but as a woman. I was sorry for my father’s sake, because he alone of all my kin would be unhappy to see me suffer. I tried to comfort him saying: ‘It will all happen in the prisoner’s dock as God wills; for you may be sure that we are not left to ourselves but are all in his power.’ And he left me in great sorrow. As for Felicity, she too enjoyed the Lord’s favor in this wise. She had been pregnant when she was arrested, and was now in her eighth month. And she gave birth to a girl; and one of the sisters brought her up as her own daughter. The day of their victory dawned, and they marched from the prison to the amphitheater joyfully as though they were going to heaven, with

*calm faces, trembling, if at all, with joy rather than fear. Perpetua went along with shining countenance and calm step, as the beloved of God, as a wife of Christ, putting down everyone's stare by her own intense gaze. At this the crowds became enraged and demanded that they be scourged before a line of gladiators. And they rejoiced at this that they had obtained a share in the Lord's sufferings. For the young women, however, the Devil had prepared a mad heifer. This was an unusual animal, but it was chosen that their sex might be matched with that of the beast. First the heifer tossed Perpetua and she fell on her back. Then sitting up she pulled down the tunic that was ripped along the side so that it covered her thighs, thinking more of her modesty than of her pain. Next she asked for a pin to fasten her untidy hair: for it was not right that a martyr should die with her hair in disorder, lest she might seem to be mourning in her hour of triumph. Then she got up. And seeing that Felicity had been crushed to the ground, she went over to her, gave her hand, and lifted her up. Then the two stood side by side. There Perpetua was held up by a man named Rusticus who was at the time a catechumen and kept close to her. She awoke from a kind of sleep (so absorbed had she been in ecstasy in the Spirit) and she began to look about her. Then to the amazement of all she said: 'When are we going to be thrown to that heifer or whatever it is?' When told that this had already happened, she refused to believe it until she noticed the marks of her rough experience on her person and her dress. Then she called for her brother and spoke to him together with the catechumens and said: **'You must all stand fast in the faith and love one another, and do not be weakened by what we have gone through.'** And so the martyrs got up and went to the spot of their own accord as the people wanted them to, and kissing one another they sealed their martyrdom with the ritual kiss of peace." (excerpts taken from The Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicity)*

My family, our love of God expressed through our lives, **MUST** be held up to the lives of these early Christians. We too must be willing to offer ourselves to God, completely with hearts filled with His Love. The final statement of Saint Justin should ring in our ears long after today's Mass has ended guiding our thoughts, words and actions: "*If these things (everything revealed and believed within our Christian Faith) seem to you to be reasonable and true, honour them.*" For our ancestors did as much.