

To recognize God's will for oneself may be easy, but only if one lives—as Cyril and Methodius did—by faith, in humility, with a pure heart. It is only by God's guidance that an apostle is made, for to be an apostle means being a man of God used by him for his work. Cyril and Methodius were apostles, but only because they were, first and foremost, men of God. Their greatness is perhaps best expressed in the words used of one of them but surely applicable to the other, too: 'he became everything to all so as to bring all to salvation' (*The Life of Methodius*, ch. 17).



## THE LETTER OF ST IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH TO THE ROMANS

*St Ignatius was martyred in the arena at Rome about A.D. 110. He was afraid that the Roman Church would bring influence to bear to secure him a reprieve, and on his journey there as a prisoner he wrote them this letter.*

**I**GNATIUS, also known as Theophorus the God-bearer, to the church on which the majesty of the Father most high and of Jesus Christ his only Son has had mercy, the church loved and enlightened in the measure of its faith and love of Jesus Christ our God by the will of him who has willed all that is, the church which takes first place in the land of the Romans, worthy of God, worthy of renown, worthy of blessing, deservedly praised, deservedly visited, deservedly pure, taking first place in love, marked by the law of Christ and by the name of the Father, which I also greet in the name of Jesus Christ the Son of the Father; to those who are in accord with every one of his commandments in flesh and spirit, filled unmistakably with God's grace, filtered clean of all foreign colourings, I wish every blameless joy in Jesus Christ our God.

Since in answer to my prayers I have come to receive more even than I asked for in seeing your august persons face to face—for as a prisoner in Christ Jesus I hope to greet you, if it is God's will that I should be thought worthy of reaching the end—the

beginning has certainly been well arranged, provided I get to the finishing point and meet no obstacles in receiving my inheritance. What I am afraid of is your love doing me wrong; it is easy for you to get your way, but it is hard for me to reach God if you do not spare me.

I would not have you pleasing men but pleasing God—as of course you are doing—and I will never have such another opportunity as this of reaching God, nor you of having a better deed written down to you, if you keep quiet about me. If you keep quiet about me, I am a meaningful word of God; but if you are enamoured of my flesh, I shall be reduced again to a mere meaningless cry.<sup>1</sup> Grant me nothing more than to be poured out as a libation to God while the altar still stands ready; form yourselves into a choir of love around it, and sing hymns to the Father in Jesus Christ because God has seen fit for the bishop of Syria to be transferred from the sunrise and appear in the land of the sunset. It is good for me to set from the world to God, in order to rise to him.

You have never grudged anyone else this thing; you have given lessons in it to others. All I want is that you should be consistent with the instructions you give your pupils. Pray only for strength for me, inwardly and outwardly, so that I may not only talk but really meant it too, not only be called a Christian but also prove to be one. If I do prove to be one, I can rightly be called one, and show myself then to be faithful, when I no longer show in the world. Nothing that shows is good. Our God Jesus Christ shows more clearly now that he is in the Father. The work to be done is not one of persuasive talk. Christianity is at its greatest when it is hated by the world.

I am writing to all the churches and informing them that I am willingly going to my death for God, provided you do not prevent me. I implore you, do not be 'an unseasonable kindness' to me. Leave me to be shared by the beasts, through which God is to be reached. I am God's wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of beasts in order to turn into pure white bread. Coax the beasts rather, to be my tomb and to leave no scrap of my body over, so that I may be no nuisance to anyone when I am dead. Then I shall

<sup>1</sup> Martyrdom, he means, will give point and significance to his life as a testimony to the gospel; it will speak more clearly than words. But if they deprive him of it by speaking on his behalf, his life will have no more meaning than an inarticulate groan.

really be a disciple of Christ, when nothing of my body is left to be seen by the world. Beseech the Lord for me that by these instruments I may be turned into a sacrifice to God. I am not giving you orders like Peter and Paul. They were apostles, I am a convict; they were free men, I am still a slave. But if I suffer, I shall be the freedman of Jesus Christ, and in him I shall rise again free. Now I am learning in captivity to desire nothing.

(*To be concluded.*)



### GAMALIEL

(*Questions to be addressed to Gamaliel, c/o the Editor, THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, Hawkesyard Priory, Rugeley, Staffs.*)

Q. I was recently asked to baptize a child Mervyn. Is this a Christian name? If so, who was St Mervyn and how does he go into Latin? My P.P., who would only allow the name if coupled with something like Peter, suggested *Merovinus*, whom he postulated as the ancestor of the Merovingian Frankish kings, just as *Carolus* was of the Carolingian.

CURATE

A. I looked up Mervyn in Gumbley on Christian names, and not finding it there I consulted the learned author himself, Fr Walter Gumbley, O.P. He writes:

The Latin form accepted at Woodchester (where a Dominican novice has just been clothed as Brother Mervyn) is *Marianus*! I take it to be a Cornish name identical with Merwin, first abbess of Romsey, Hants, *floruit* A.D. 967. The name appears as Merwin, Meruvina, Merpwyn, Mervenna, Morwenna, Merryn, *et alia aliaque*. Patroness of Morwenstow, where a not completely defaced wall-painting shows a gaunt female clasping to her breast, with her left hand, a book or scroll; the right hand being raised in benediction over a kneeling monk. As ladies can take the names of gentlemen saints, why not conversely? So *Mervennus*?