

Prayer of the month • April 2016

St Apollonius

O Lord Jesus Christ,
give us a measure of your Spirit
that we may be enabled to obey your teaching:
to pacify anger,
to take part in pity,
to moderate desire,
to increase love,
to put away sorrow,
to cast away vain glory,
not to be vindictive,
not to fear death;
ever entrusting our spirit to the immortal God
who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns
world without end.



St Apollonius of Rome, 170–245, from part of his defence before Perennis

Apollonius has taken to heart the teachings of Jesus Christ, and summarizes them in his prayer. He is about to give up his life for his faith, and so he wants to be clear about what he is asking for, and what he believes in. He wishes for bad feelings to be cast aside and good feelings to grow, and, in the face of likely death to entrust himself to the immortal God.

Apollonius is presented, according to early sources, as an illustrious Roman, even a Senator, talented and well-versed in pagan philosophy. He also read the Old Testament and the writings of Christians, and, under their influence became a Christian. One of Apollonius's slaves, named Severus, publicly denounced Apollonius as a Christian to Perennis, the praetorian prefect. Though the slave's legs were broken and he was put to death as an informer, the saint was brought before Perennis and told he must renounce his faith or die.

When the senator refused to apostatize, the case was remanded to the Senate, where a remarkable dialogue took place between Perennis and Apollonius. Because of his influence in society, those judging him paid close attention to his defence of Christianity, which is recorded in the Roman Martyrology. Apollonius was not afraid to die, because, he said: 'There is waiting for me something better: eternal life, given to the person who has lived well on earth.' And he argued for the superiority of Christianity's concepts of death and life. In carrying out the death sentence Apollonius's legs were crushed and then he was beheaded. His feast day is 21 April.

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