

“Attend closely to catechesis, always remain attentive.”

St Cyril of Jerusalem: Memorial, 18th March

Opening Prayer

O God, who through the Bishop Saint Cyril of Jerusalem led your Church in a wonderful way to a deeper sense of the mysteries of salvation, grant us, through his intercession, that we may so acknowledge your Son as to have life ever more abundantly. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.
(Collect for the Memorial)



Scripture Reflections 1 John 5:1-5

Beloved:

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

John 15:1-8

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples, I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

Already you are clean because of the word
that I have spoken to you.
Abide in me, and I in you.
As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine,
neither can you, unless you abide in me.
I am the vine; you are the branches.
Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit,
for apart from me you can do nothing.
If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch
and withers;
ask whatever you wish,
and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned
If you abide in me, and my words abide in you,
and it will be done for you.
By this my Father is glorified,
that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.'

- Is there a word or phrase that stands out or remains with you after reading these passages?

Historical Context

St. Cyril lived during the time of the controversy surrounding the Arian heresy which denied the divinity of Christ. At one point on his return to Jerusalem from exile, he found Jerusalem torn with heresy, schism and strife and wracked with crime! He became, along with St Athanasius and others, champions of faith in the fight against Arianism.

Biography

- Born 315
- Raised a Christian in Jerusalem.
- Well educated, especially in religion and scripture
- Priest, ordained by the bishop of Jerusalem, Saint Maximus.
- A great teacher of catechumens, Cyril's instructions, his 'Catecheses' or 'Catechetical Instructions' are still source documents and examples of the ritual and theology of the Church in the mid-C4th. (see below)
- Bishop of Jerusalem in 348.
- Exiled three times by the Arians, usually on some trumped up charge like selling church furniture, but actually on theological grounds: they could not bear his fierce opposition to their heresy.
- Attended the Council of Seleucia in 359.
- Attended the Council of Constantinople in 381, when the amended form of the Nicene Creed was promulgated, and Cyril accepted the

word 'consubstantial' (ie Christ is of the same substance or nature as the Father).

- Greek Father of the Church. Doctor of the Church.
- Died 386 of natural causes

'Catecheses'/'Catechetical Instructions'

Consist of 24 discourses, 19 were directed to catechumens during Lent as a preparation for baptism, while 5 so-called mystagogical instructions were given during Easter time to make the mysteries of Christianity better known to those already baptized. They defend each dogma of religion against the enemies of the faith which refuted the heresies of his own time and those which were to arise later!

Significance for Catechists

For reflection: What does the life of St Cyril say to us as catechists? What can we learn from him?

Closing Prayer

Lord God, we thank you for the gift of St. Cyril of Jerusalem and his legacy in the Church. Help us to learn from his life on how we can best serve you.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in the earliest days of your priestly ministry you were charged with the education and care of those seeking to come into the Church.

You taught the faith with clarity and conviction and took care to form not only the minds of those who heard your words, but their hearts as well.

You left us a model for sharing the truth and beauty of our faith with both our words and our deeds.

Open our minds and hearts, and help us to pursue knowledge of the Church and her teachings. Set our hearts on fire with love of the word of God like yours.

Teach us to recognize our unique roles in the building up of the Body of Christ. Help us pay attention to the opportunities God gives us to proclaim the Gospel to others—both in word and action.

Pray that we may have the courage to follow that call whenever it should arise and pray that those who need it may be open to receiving it.

St Cyril of Jerusalem, pray for us!

Adapted from Day 1 of the Novena to St Cyril:

<https://www.praymorenovenas.com/cyril-of-jerusalem-novena>

Acknowledgements

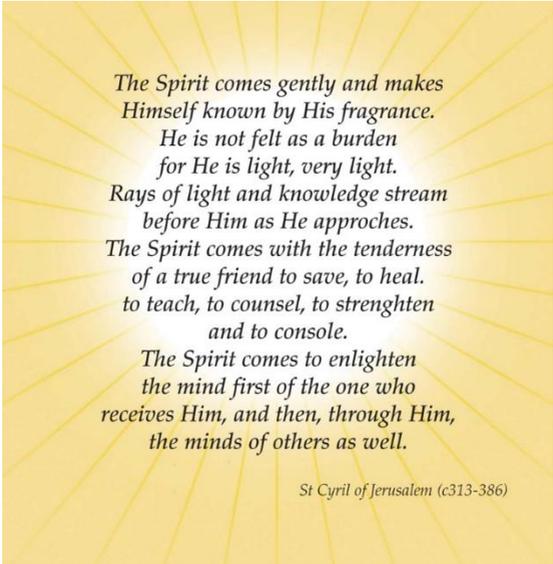
Biographical notes based on information from : [Catholic Culture](#), [Franciscan Media](#)

'Take Away' : Going Deeper

- Read more about St. Cyril of Jerusalem:
 - [Catholic Encyclopedia](#), [Saints Stories for All Ages](#)
- Read Pope Benedict XVI's catechesis on [St. Cyril of Jerusalem](#).
- Catholic Culture's [Fathers of the Church](#) resource, which includes 23 of St. Cyril's Catechetical Lectures and his Procatechesis.
- [Way of the Fathers Cyril of Jerusalem, Mystery and Mayhem](#) by Mike Aquilina.
- [CatholicSaints.info](#) multiple resources for further reading and listening.
- St. Cyril's Catechetical Lectures [On the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ](#), which is very fitting meditation material for Lent, and the two other audiobooks read by [James Majewski](#).
- Read [The Arian Heresy](#) (Chapter Three of Hilaire Belloc's *The Great Heresies*).

Video Resources

- Watch this [video](#) on St. Cyril of Jerusalem from the Apostleship of Prayer.
- Who was St Cyril of Jerusalem? (Christian Channel)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4821HpCOL4&t=44s>
- Explaining the Legendary Catechesis of St Cyril of Jerusalem (St Paul Center)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emNL2uilDyk&t=79s>
- Mystagogical Lectures on the Eucharist (Catholic Culture Audiobooks)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdV4h-DmAFI>
- Cyril of Jerusalem: Mystery and Mayhem | Way of the Fathers with Mike Aquilina (Catholic Culture podcast)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s662AjBMTak>
- Who is St Cyril of Jerusalem? (Young Catholics)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0oO9d130N4>



*The Spirit comes gently and makes
Himself known by His fragrance.
He is not felt as a burden
for He is light, very light.
Rays of light and knowledge stream
before Him as He approaches.
The Spirit comes with the tenderness
of a true friend to save, to heal.
to teach, to counsel, to strengthen
and to console.
The Spirit comes to enlighten
the mind first of the one who
receives Him, and then, through Him,
the minds of others as well.*

St Cyril of Jerusalem (c313-386)