

## A QUIET AND HOLY PEOPLE

Saint Cyprian was bishop of Carthage and an important early Christian writer. He was born around the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century in North Africa, perhaps in Carthage, where he received a classical education. After converting to Christianity, he became a bishop (A.D. 249) and eventually died a martyr at Carthage.

He once wrote to a friend named Donatus:

*This seems a cheerful world, Donatus, when I view it from this fair garden. But if I climbed some great mountain and looked out, you know very well what I would see; brigands on the high road, pirates on the seas, in the amphitheaters men murdered to please the applauding crowds.*

*Yet in the midst of it, I have found a quiet and holy people. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They have overcome the world. These people, Donatus, are Christians.*

Max Lucado, author and minister, in his book entitled *Grace for the Moment*, referred to Cyprian's letter and observed: "What a compliment! A quiet and holy people. Quiet – Not obnoxious. Not boastful. Not demanding. Just quiet. Holy – Set apart. Pure. Decent. Honest. Wholesome."



In his own life, Bishop Cyprian experienced the persecution he wrote about. At the end of 256, a new persecution of Christians under Roman Emperor Valerian I broke out. In Africa, Cyprian courageously prepared his people for the expected edict of persecution in his *De exhortatione martyrii*, and he himself set an example when he was brought before the Roman proconsul Aspasius Paternus on Aug. 30, 257. He refused to sacrifice to the pagan deities and firmly professed Jesus Christ.

The consul banished him to Curubis, modern Korba, and subsequently, on Sept. 13, 258, he was imprisoned. The next day, he was sentenced to die by the sword. His only answer was "Thanks be to God!" The execution was carried out at once in an open place near the city. Cyprian removed his garments without assistance, knelt down, and prayed. After he blindfolded himself, he was beheaded by the sword.

What does it mean to be a Christian? Were it so that we all could be "a quiet and holy people," rising above persecution to overcome the world, remaining steadfast in our faith and witness, no matter what may come.

– Beecher Hunter