

# Who is St. Justin Martyr?

## Truth Seeker

St. Justin is known as the patron saint of philosophers. The word philosophy, from the Greek *philosophia*, means “love of wisdom.” In his youth he was deeply passionate about the study of philosophy and searched for truth in many different “schools of thought” present at his time. This later contributed to his powerful and succinct written defenses of the Christian faith.



**Symbol of Philosophy:** Justin was painted with the cloak Greek culture associated with philosophers, which was specifically tied at the neck. He continued to wear it even after his baptism into the Christian faith. In Raphael’s painting, *School of Athens*, Plato, a Greek philosopher, was the inspiration for the way Justin’s cloak is painted.

## Convert to Christianity

Justin *was not* born or raised a Christian. Often times we just assume saints are men and women who were born that way. Justin was born around the year 100 A.D. in Palestine and raised in Rome in the Greek pagan religion by his father. It was through an encounter with an older Christian man that Justin was encouraged to study the writings of the Jewish Prophets. This kindled a divine fire in his heart and at the age of 30 he was baptized.



**Symbol of Conversion:** No one recorded what color Justin’s eyes were, however it is said that the eyes are the window to the soul. The eyes have been painted blue to represent the divine fire of the Holy Spirit which burned within him much like the color blue that shows us the hottest part of a flame, closest to the source of the heat.

## Servant of the Sacred Scripture

Justin was most likely, although we don’t know with complete certainty, ordained a deacon and never married, focused solely on providing religious instruction in his home. His conversion occurred through an encounter with the inspired Word of God through the prophets of the Old Testament and sharing this Word became his purpose and mission for the rest of his life.



**Symbol of Sacred Scripture:** In Justin's left hand is a rolled up scroll, the form in which scripture was written and studied in the ancient world. He walks towards us holding high the Sacred Word, emphasizing its essential role in growing in our relationship with God. He seems to step towards us almost as if to place the scroll in our hand. Justin wanted all people to know the saving power of Jesus Christ revealed through the scripture.

## Man of the Eucharist

Justin believed in the True Presence in the Holy Eucharist. He wrote often and with great zeal about the Eucharist being the true Body and Blood of Christ.

**Symbols of the Eucharist:** To the right of the painting are two boxes with two different symbols representing the Eucharist.



***The top symbol*** pictures the chalice, grapes, and wheat, a familiar depiction of the Eucharist. The grapes and wheat are taken from the stained glass window inside the church, located to the right of the altar on the back wall. The chalice is reminiscent of the 2 handled chalice that would have been used in 2<sup>nd</sup> century during Justin's life.



***The bottom symbol*** pictures the 5 loaves and 2 fish, which would have been a familiar symbol for early Christians of the Eucharist. This symbol is dated back to the earlier Christian catacombs, and this particular image was taken from the main mosaic tile in front of the altar at the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fish located at Tabgha, on the Sea of Galilee in Israel.

## Witness, Companion, Intercessor

Justin not only spoke the truth, he witnessed to it with his life. He was called before the Prefect of Rome, Rusticus, and questioned about his writings on the Christian faith. When asked after giving a powerful profession of faith, "You are a Christian then?" His response was, "Yes, I am a Christian," which has been significantly placed between the Eucharistic symbols. He was 65 when he was martyred. The Eucharist gave him strength to speak the truth and witness to truth of the Eucharist with the sacrifice of his own life.

### **Symbol of Witness, Companion, Intercessor:**



***Witness***- Justin was martyred for his faith and refusal to worship false idols. He was scourged and beheaded, which is portrayed by the scar on his neck. This may have been the means of his earthly death but it also signifies the way he entered into eternal life.



***Companion***- Important to note, Justin did not die alone. He had several companions that were with him, also willing to die in defense of their faith. We do not become a saint alone or approach the throne of God without others whom we have invited or who have thankfully invited us along the path of holiness. This is symbolized by the light beneath Justin's feet.



***Intercessor***- This is symbolized by the silver cross Justin is holding. Silver was chosen because it is the same precious metal as the cross the parish gathers around inside the church. This is a reminder that when we gather around the cross of Christ, we find the strength we need in the Eucharist and through the intercession of all those saints, like St. Justin Martyr, who clung to the cross of Christ and found victory and resurrection through it.

*May you meet St. Justin Martyr at the banquet feast of the Lord at Mass, and feel his powerful and specific intercession for you, who have been entrusted to his care.*