

## Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem (315-386)

*Observed 18 March*



Cyril is one of those uniquely influential and inspiring leaders of the early church to have been officially named a Doctor of the Church. As an ordained leader, Cyril strove for reconciliation in a time of fearsome controversy. The Arian controversy (which led to the Council of Nicaea) was raging and caused severe conflict everywhere. At one time, Cyril was deposed from his diocese for his Orthodox teaching, and later reinstated when his Arian opponent was in turn deposed. Cyril was both loved and resented for his care of the poor in his city. He was consistent and resolute in their support, at one point going so far as to sell sacred church vessels to secure money to buy food for the starving in a time of famine. Cyril is best known for his lectures written for new Christians around the time of their baptism (especially the *Mystagogical Catecheses* which were delivered during Easter Week to those who had just been baptized at the Easter Vigil.) The years of preparation for baptism dealt with scripture and theology, morality and lifestyle, but the sacraments were not explained until they had been experienced for the first time. These lectures, characteristic of Cyril's writings, are eloquent, beautiful, and filled with vivid images. They speak clearly to the intellect, but simultaneously to the heart and spirit. His lectures to the catechumens (those still preparing for baptism) are notable for their enthusiastic love of God and for their accessible, non-technical explication of the various subjects. Cyril is like the other Fathers of the Church in his orthodox teaching, but unlike them in his emphasis on the loving forgiveness of God. "The Spirit comes gently and makes himself known by his fragrance. He is not felt as a burden for God is light, very light. Rays of light and knowledge stream before him as the Spirit approaches. The Spirit comes with the tenderness of a true friend to save, to heal, to teach, to counsel, to strengthen and to console"

*Lessons* Ecclesiasticus 47:8-10; Psalm 122; Hebrews 13:14-21; Luke 24:44-48

*Collect* Strengthen, O Lord, the bishops of your Church in their special calling to be teachers and ministers of the Sacraments, so that they, like your servant Cyril of Jerusalem, may effectively instruct your people in Christian faith and practice; and that we, taught by them, may enter more fully into celebration of the Paschal mystery; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.