

St Justin Martyr lived at a time when becoming Catholic could cost you your life.

And in the end, it did.

He was beaten, condemned, and executed in Rome because he would not deny Jesus Christ.

And yet Justin did not become bitter.

He became fearless.

Because he believed something the modern world struggles to understand:

Truth is worth dying for.

Today's Gospel is severe.

Jesus tells the parable of the vineyard.

The owner lovingly prepares the vineyard and entrusts it to tenants.

But when he sends servants to collect the fruit, the tenants reject them, beat them, and kill them.

Finally he sends his beloved son.

And they say: **“This is the heir. Come on, let us kill him.”**

The parable is about Israel's history,
the prophets rejected,
and finally Christ Himself rejected and crucified.

But it is also about something deeper still.

God gives humanity everything:
life,
truth,
grace,
the world itself.

And yet fallen humanity constantly tries to seize God's gifts while rejecting God Himself.

People want the vineyard without the owner.

Creation without the Creator.

Morality without obedience.

Religion without conversion.

Salvation without surrender.

And that is why the Cross happens.

Not because Christ failed.

But because sinful humanity resists divine authority.

The tenants do not merely dislike the son.

They want him gone.

Because his presence reminds them the vineyard is not theirs.

And perhaps this is why Christianity still provokes hostility now.

People often say: "Live and let live."

Until the Church speaks with authority.

Until the Gospel challenges sin.

Until Christ demands repentance.

Then suddenly the modern world reacts much like the tenants in the parable:
"We will not have this man over us."

And that is where St Justin Martyr becomes so important.

Justin was a philosopher before he became Catholic.

He searched for truth everywhere:

Greek philosophy,
schools of wisdom,
human reasoning.

And eventually he discovered that truth is not merely an idea.

Truth is a Person.

Jesus Christ.

And once Justin found Christ, he refused to let go.

What is remarkable about Justin is that he did not become Catholic because it was safe or popular.

Christianity in Rome was mocked, misunderstood, and dangerous.

Christians were accused of strange crimes.

The Mass was hidden.

Martyrdom was always possible.

And yet Justin looked at the Church and said:
This is true.

Not convenient.

True.

And truth mattered more to him than comfort.

Today's first reading from St Peter speaks about growth in holiness.

Faith.

Goodness.

Knowledge.

Self-control.

Perseverance.

Devotion.

Love.

Notice:
the Christian life is meant to grow.

Holiness is not passive.

A Catholic cannot simply drift spiritually and expect maturity.

And the martyrs especially show us this.

People do not suddenly become courageous at the moment of death unless they have already been learning courage in ordinary life.

Justin trained his soul in truth.

Prayer.

Study.

Worship.

Sacrifice.

So when persecution came, he stood firm.

And when the Roman prefect demanded sacrifice to pagan gods, Justin answered calmly:

“No right-thinking person turns from true worship to false worship.”

Extraordinary courage.

But perhaps the most beautiful thing about Justin is that he loved the Church openly.

He wrote one of the earliest descriptions of the Mass.

And what he describes is recognisably Catholic even now:

- readings from Scripture,
- preaching,
- prayers,
- the kiss of peace,
- bread and wine becoming the Eucharist,
- Holy Communion.

Justin recognised something many Catholics forget:

The Eucharist is worth dying for.

Because the Eucharist is Christ Himself.

And perhaps that is the challenge hidden inside today's Gospel.

The tenants wanted control.

But holiness begins when we finally admit:
the vineyard is not ours.

Our life is not ours absolutely.

Truth is not ours to reinvent.

The Church is not ours to reshape according to fashion.

Everything belongs to God.

And we are called not to seize the vineyard, but to bear fruit within it.

And there is one final line in the Gospel that matters enormously.

Jesus says: **“The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.”**

The world rejected Christ.

But Christ reigns anyway.

The martyrs died.

But the Church survived.

Empires collapsed.

The Gospel remained.

And that is still true now.

The modern world may mock the Faith.

Many may reject Christ.

But the cornerstone does not move.

Jesus Christ remains the foundation of salvation.

Yesterday. Today. And forever.

So today let us ask St Justin Martyr for courage.

Courage to seek truth sincerely.

Courage to remain faithful when faith is costly.

Courage to love the Mass and the Eucharist deeply.

And courage to bear real fruit in the vineyard of God rather than trying to possess it for ourselves.