



## A Panegyric on the Occasion of the Commemoration of the Holy Martyrs Cyprian and Justina

by His Eminence, Bishop Photii of Triaditza

In the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

*Holy Hierarchs,  
Reverend Fathers and Mothers,  
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:*

**I**t is with pleasure that I accept the fraternal invitation of His Grace, Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, Acting President of the Holy Synod in Resistance, to address you on this holy day with a festal message.

**You are all** familiar with the Life of the Holy Martyrs Cyprian and Justina, whose memory the Church celebrates today. We have all read and heard many times about the exploits of these Martyrs of Christ.

**But let us** ask ourselves: Are their exploits comprehensible to us modern-day Christians? We, carried away by the common aspiration for a life of greater ease, comfort, and pleasure, set aside—whether openly or secretly, in the depths of our souls—such basic principles of Christian life as self-denial and pa-



tience in the face of temptations, difficulties, and human weaknesses and failings.

**Yes, we can** imagine the tortures undergone by the Martyrs and conclude that they were incredible and excruciating. But here we stop; we are unable to go beyond this. The significance of these tortures is beyond our comprehension, because we do not know from experience even a portion of the faith, hope, and love of the Martyrs.

**The Holy Martyrs'** faith in Christ the God-Man, and in the eternal life that He has granted us, vanquishes trepidation before tortures and fear before bodily death.

**The faith of** St. Justina crushed the power of the demons and put Cyprian the magician to shame, and she was adorned with the crown of martyrdom. The faith of St. Cyprian brought forth two fragrant fruits—those of repentance and martyrdom.

**As for our** own faith.... Our own faith frequently does not suffice for us to make even the first steps in Christian life, to set out towards Christ, and to begin to live together with Him in spirit and in truth. The seed of our faith is choked among the weeds—which, alas, we often take for wheat, though these weeds smother the tender seeds of our faith.

**The Holy Martyrs'** hope rises above all human wishes for health, long life, and worldly prosperity. Indeed, it is not easy to bury all of one's earthly hopes so as to remain rich in one, sole, Heavenly hope, which does not die in the grave and is not obliterated by decay. Yet a Christian is called to just this.

**But as for us....** We, like everyone else today, chase after many desires and hopes—with the sole difference that we also have the hope that God will fulfill above all these desires of ours, which evaporate in time and dissolve in space, until not a trace remains of them....

**How unattainable** for us is the love of the Holy Martyrs! Innumerable are the afflictions of the Martyrs of Christ, but their love for Christ is incomparably greater than all of these tribulations. In the face of such love, torments are diminished and pain is dampened.

**How can we** understand such love, when the earthly love that we know inevitably brings with it torments greater than the love itself? How can we understand such love, when *self-love* firmly binds our hearts, does not accept the Grace-filled waves of love of Christ, and imperiously dictates the measure to which it allows us to be “Christians”?

**But are we** really able to compare ourselves with the Holy Martyrs? Of course not. We can, however, and must follow their goal. Their aspiration is greater than the breadth of the world. Their aspiration is devotion unto death to our Savior, by means of faith, hope, and love.

**Is this not** also the purpose of every Christian? “Be ye faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of Life,” says the word of the Living God (Revelation 2:10). If we contrast this aspiration to our everyday desires and goals—a tranquil, comfortable, prosperous life here on earth, a life in accordance with our own perceptions—then how will our Christian conscience fare?

**Yes, our goal,** our homeland, our house is not here, in the ephemeral, cold embrace of this world, in the bonds of time and place. By means of the forests and the deserts, the precipices and the abysses of this age, the Good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ, leads His faithful back to Himself, towards His Kingdom, of which there is no end.

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*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:*

**Let us pray** to the Holy Martyrs Cyprian and Justina on this their Feast Day that they might protect this Holy Monastery dedicated to them; that they might intercede for the unity of our Sister Churches in Greece, Romania, Ukraine, Russia, and Bulgaria; that they, with the All-Immaculate Theotokos, might beseech the Triune God to vouchsafe us to pass the remainder of our lives in repentance, piety, and chastity; and, at the end of our earthly lives, that He might welcome us into the Heavenly Tabernacles, wherein we shall glorify and hymn Him unto the ages of ages.

**Holy wondrous** Martyrs of Christ Cyprian and Justina, pray for us! Amen!

Delivered during the Divine Liturgy on the Patronal Feast of the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, Phyle, Attica, October 2, 2011 (Old Style).