

# Believers

## Proclamation

All persons who believe that Jesus Christ is God are to be found and put to death.

All persons hiding or sheltering Christians are to be put to death.

All persons attending a Christian service are to be put to death.

All persons writing or teaching about Jesus Christ are to be put to death.

Anyone who assists in finding Christians and aiding in their arrest will be rewarded with 100 gold pieces.

*Emperor of Rome, 150 A.D.*

Why would the emperor of Rome put all Christians to death? What was the Roman emperor afraid of?

He was afraid that Christians would grow in number and get more powerful. But he didn't realize that the empire that the Christians wanted was not the Roman Empire; it was the kingdom of heaven. Christians wanted to worship

God freely without the interference of the Roman government.

When the apostles spread the good news about God's kingdom and about his Son Jesus Christ, many people were converted to the Christian faith. Some of these new Christians were very wealthy people with high positions in government and some were people

who lived average daily lives working and caring for their families. Some were very rich and some were very poor. But in Christianity all people are equal. It doesn't matter how much money or power you have if you want to be in God's kingdom.

Many of the Christians in the first three hundred years after the resurrection of Christ were killed for believing in him. Some of the early Christians believed in him and wrote letters and books about Christ. These people are

still remembered today because they were put to death for their faith. They are regarded as saints and fathers of the church.

A *saint* is a person who has devoted his whole life to Jesus Christ and the church has sanctified him — or declared him to be a holy person.

Saint in Armenian is "soorp." Soorp also means "holy."

A *church father* is a person who has spent his life teaching and preaching about Christ to the people.

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Do you know what these words mean?

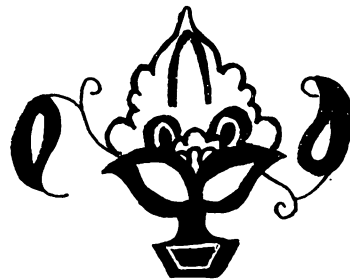
believer  
martyr  
defender  
teacher

Some of the greatest saints and fathers of the church had all of these qualities.

They *believed* in Jesus; they *defended* his good teachings against many old and bad teachings; they *taught* the word of God to the people; and because they tried to do these things, many were *martyred*.

What do you believe in and how strongly do you believe in it?

Are you a Christian every day or only on Sunday?



*On a scale of 1-10, mark how strongly you believe the following: (Ten is for the strongest belief.)*

1. I love my mother and father.
2. I believe in Santa Claus.
3. I think being a good student in school will help to give me a fair chance in life.
4. Money is important.
5. Kindness to others is important.
6. Jesus Christ is God, the Son.
7. I want to be in God's heavenly kingdom.
8. Prayer is important.

Here are stories of two saints who were believers:

#### ST. POLYCARP

*Write His Name Here:* \_\_\_\_\_

Not much is known about the life of St. Polycarp. He was born in 69 A.D. in Smyrna. Some of the apostles of Christ were still alive during St. Polycarp's lifetime. He is called an "Apostolic Father" of the church because of his writings about Christ. At a time when to be a Christian was to break the law, St. Polycarp was the Bishop of Smyrna. Mobs of people who were against Christians demanded that Christians be put to death. When he was 86 years old, St. Polycarp was led into a public stadium where he was killed with a dagger; then his body was burned.

#### ST. JUSTIN, THE MARTYR

*Write His Name Here:* \_\_\_\_\_

St. Justin was born in Samaria about 100 A.D. His parents were not Chris-

tian. He was converted to Christianity in the city of Ephesus where he lived for a time. He was well educated and became the first Christian philosopher. The most famous work he wrote was called, "The Apology," about 153 A.D. It was sent to Emperor Antoninus Pius of Rome. In this work he defended Christianity against government persecutions and heathenism. St. Justin tells us in his writings that we have the power to understand and believe the teachings of Christ.

St. Justin was martyred by beheading in 165 A.D. in Rome.



You are a Christian emperor or empress of an imaginary empire. What will you proclaim to your Christian countrymen? What advice will you give them?

Write it out first on a piece of paper. Then neatly recopy it on the Proclamation Scroll your teacher will give you. Tie it with a red ribbon for security. They will be read in class next week.