September 16

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Cyprian of Carthage and Cornelius of Rome (d. 258)

pastors and martyrs

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Born around 210, Cyprian was a pagan orator who converted to Christianity after giving all of his belongings to the poor. Just three years after his conversion, he was elected bishop of Carthage.
In an era in which the Church was sharply divided because of Christians' different responses to their persecutors' attempts to make them deny their faith, Cyprian was always merciful towards those who had fallen into apostasy. He was convinced that the episcopal ministry was one and indivisible, and that Christ himself had granted this ministry to the Church so that its unity would be protected through the remission of sins. He thus defended bishops' authority both against the intrusions of the empire and against those Christians who were damaging Church unity by creating parallel churches of 'perfect' believers.
For this and other reasons, Cyprian defended the legitimate Pope of Rome, Cornelius, against the antipope Novazianus, who had been elected by the most rigorist faction of the Roman clergy.
The similar attitude shown by Cornelius and Cyprian towards those Christians who had lost their resolve under their persecutors' threats of violence, as well as the fact that both were martyred, led the Western Church to commemorate them together on this date.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Rom 5:1-5; Mt 10:17-22

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:
Ninian (d. 432), bishop of Galloway, apostle of the Picts
Edward Bouverie Pusey (d. 1882), priest, tractarian

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
Cornelius, pope, and *Cyprian*, bishop, martyrs (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)
Euphemia of Chalcedon (3rd-4th cent.), virgin and martyr (Spanish-Mozarabic calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (6 tut/maskaram):
Isaiah (7th-6th cent. BCE), prophet (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:
Kaspar Tauber (d. 1524), witness to the point of bloodshed at Vienna

MARONITES:
Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, martyr

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Euphemia of Chalcedon, megalomartyr
Ioannichius il (13th-14th cent.), first patriarch of the Serbs (Serbian Church)

OLD CATHOLICS:
Cyprian, bishop and martyr