June 1st: Memorial of Saint Justin, Martyr

Gospel text (*Mt* 5:13-19): Jesus said to his disciples: “You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father..."

St. Justin, martyr (100-165)

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)
(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today, we will talk about St Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, the most important of the second-century apologist Fathers. Justin was born near ancient Shechem, in the Holy Land. He spent a long time seeking the truth, moving through the various schools of the Greek philosophical tradition. Finally, as he himself recounts in his “Dialogue with Tryphon”, a mysterious figure, an old man he met on the seashore, initially leads him into a crisis by showing him that it is impossible for the human being to satisfy his aspiration to the divine solely with his own forces. He then pointed out to him the ancient prophets as the people to turn to in order to find the way to God and “true philosophy”. In taking his leave, the old man urged him to pray that the gates of light would be opened to him.

The story foretells the crucial episode in Justin's life: at the end of a long philosophical journey, a quest for the truth, he arrived at the Christian faith. He founded a school in Rome where, free of charge, he initiated students into the new religion, considered as the true philosophy. Indeed, in it he had found the truth, hence, the art of living virtuously.

—For this reason he was reported and beheaded in about 165 during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher-emperor to whom Justin had actually addressed one of his Apologia.