September 16th: Memorial of Saints Cornelius, Pope, and Cyprian, Bishop, Martyrs

Gospel text (*Jn* 17,11b-19): Jesus looked up to heaven and prayed, «I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world whereas I am going to you. Holy Father, keep them in your Name that you have given me, so that they may be one, just as we are. When I was with them, I kept them safe in your Name, and not one was lost except the one who was already lost, and in this the Scripture was fulfilled (...)».

Saints Cornelius, pope (+253), and Cyprian, bishop (+258), martyrs

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

Today we celebrate these two saints who opposed the heresies of their time, until they gave their lives as martyrs. Cornelius means "strong as a horn", precisely the attitude he maintained before the heresy of Novatian (the antipapa, who defended the "Church of the pure", denying forgiveness to those who had sinned by denying the faith during the persecutions).

Among those who supported Pope Cornelius was St. Cyprian, the first African martyr bishop. His fame is linked to both literary production and pastoral activity. After the cruel persecution of Emperor Decius, Cyprian had to strive to restore discipline in the Christian community: many faithful refused before the test, the "lapsi" (= "fallen") and wished to become part of the community . The debate about his readmission came to divide the Christians of Carthage into "laxists" and "rigorists." Cyprian was severe, but not inflexible with the "lapsi", granting them the possibility of forgiveness after an exemplary penance.

Defender of the healthy traditions of the African Church, Cyprian wrote numerous treaties and letters, always related to his pastoral ministry, seeking the edification of the community. The Church is - by far - the topic he discussed the most. He also emphasizes his teaching on prayer (treatise on the "Our Father"): God does not listen to the voice, but the heart; The heart is the privileged place of prayer.

- “No one can have God for his Father, who does not have the Church for his mother” (Saint Cyprian)