

third century cyprian unity church CLEANED

St. Cyprian: Third Century Unity Church To Donatus, from Cyprian You reminded me of my promise, Donatus, and this is a fitting time to fulfill it. The present year invites our men to rest, and the peace of the gardens matches the gentle autumn breeze, soothing and lifting spirits. Here among the vines, we can talk undisturbed, sheltered from the noise of others, and focus on matters divine. Listen with eagerness and affection, but I must ask: what can my limited understanding give to yours? Though my intellect is modest, I will speak as best I can. When speaking about the Lord, it is substance, not eloquence that matters. And my truth is plainly spoken and sincerely felt, delivered not by effort but by the grace that fills me. I once wandered in darkness, lost and unsure, unable to believe how anyone could be "born again," as I was to find by divine mercy and salvation. I thought it impossible that a person could change so quickly to cast off deep-seated habits and nature endured for years. Could the indulgent learn thrift? The honored embrace the proud accept obscurity? Could the ingrained in us ever truly be overcome? I doubted it. I surrendered my faults, believing them a part of me. But, after cleansing baptism of the new birth, the stains of past years were washed away, and a pure light in me reconciled. By the Spirit's work, I was made new. Suddenly, things that had seemed impossible became possible. While my body remained, my heart and soul were changed, and I began to live, not by old habits, but by Spirit of holiness. You know the transformation as well as I do: not boasting in ourselves, but grateful to God, since all strength, wisdom and goodness from Him. He gives us life, foresight, and the power to strive for virtue, as long as we guard innocence with humility and gratitude. If you continue firmly in your new path, relying wholly on God, you are given grace in measure to faith. The Spirit knows no limits; its gifts overflow where faith makes room for them. With this grace, you can keep virtue, heal broken souls, bring peace where there is strife, and oppose the darkness with light. Though our bodies remain, the Spirit empowers us to withstand the world's assaults. To help you see this more clearly, imagine yourself on a high mountaintop, gazing down upon the world's chaos filled with robbers, seas with pirates, lands torn by war. The earth is stained with blood. When murder is committed in a multitude, it is praised, not condemned. Look also at the cities: gladiatorial games feed the appetite for blood, people are fattened for slaughter, and crime celebrated as entertainment. In theaters, ancient crimes and vices are paraded for show, so no sin is forgiven; each new generation is encouraged by the old. Even if a woman enters modestly, she may return corrupt. Wickedness pervades public and private life; what is done in secret is worse than what is seen. Those who find vice in others are guilty themselves. Laws exist, but as if justice is bought and sold. Deceit and fraud run rampant; the virtuous are mocked and the innocent suffer. But even the so-called good

things of the world honors, riches, power are traps. Those who appear fortunate are in anxiety and the wealthy hoard their treasures, gaining no joy from them, serving their possessions rather than mastering them. They live in constant dread, terrorized by their own position and by envy and threat. True peace and security are not found in these things. The only certain tranquility is to withdraw from the storm of the world and anchor yourself in the harbor of salvation, looking from earth to heaven. When you know God, even esteemed human affairs seem trivial earthly snares and purified from worldly influences, you are prepared for eternal light. The Spirit's gift is free and open all; as the sun shines and the fountain flows, so does grace pour out. You who are now enrolled in the spiritual keep to the discipline of faith. Be constant in prayer and reading that you speak to God and hear Him speak to you. God enriches you, no one can make you poor, for true riches to one filled with heavenly nourishment. Splendid hoards of gold are nothing compared to the soul perfected for God's dwelling. Let us beautify ourselves with innocence and justice. Such beauty and honor will last forever, changing only for perfection when our bodies are restored. The Donatus, are my thoughts for now. Though divine things delight you most, and though we will have no conversers pause for the day and spend our evening joyfully. Let our meal be accompanied by psalms always, let your voice in songs of praise, making our fellowship a spiritual feast.