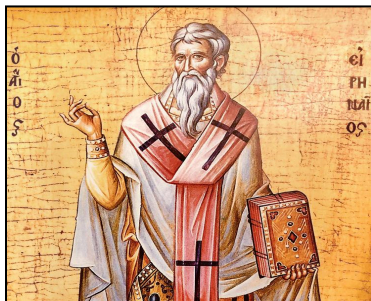


Saint Irenaeus



Date of birth: c. 130
Birthplace: Smyrna
Date of death: c. 202
Feast Day: June 28

Patron Saint of: Apologists and Catechists

About:

Raised in a Christian family in 2nd century A.D., Irenaeus would go on to become a student of St. Polycarp and earn the title of Church Father and Doctor of the Church.

Irenaeus was a priest in the Church of Lyon during the persecution of Christians by Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius between 161 and 180. In 177, he was sent by imprisoned clergy to deliver a letter to Rome concerning the heresy of Montanism.

After returning to Gaul and being appointed Bishop of Lyon, Irenaeus began writing his most famous work, *Against Heresies*, in which he argued against the heresies of Gnosticism. The predominant heresies were these: the belief that Christ's humanity was an illusion and that He did not die, and the belief that the God of the Old Testament is evil. These Gnostic teachings rested upon their claim of having received secret knowledge from Christ; however, Irenaeus rebuked their teachings for having no authority, as they were absent from the successors of the apostles. This doctrine of apostolic succession protected the Church from heretical preachers who were unable to trace their teachings back to Christ himself. Irenaeus also provides us with the names of the four Gospels in a time when Christians were in disagreement about the scriptural authority they held. In addition to *Against Heresies*, he wrote many other works which, though lost to time, are referenced by Eusebius in the 4th century.

The works of Irenaeus in the second century live on in the traditions of the Church and are the first example of systematic theology, providing internal coherence of faith to those who came after him. Though we know nothing of Irenaeus's death, his body was buried in the crypt of the Church of St. John in Lyon, later named the Church of St. Irenaeus. The church was damaged in 1562 by the Huguenots, and his relics were destroyed.

A word from Irenaeus:

"As I have already observed, the Church, having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it. She also believes these points [of doctrine] just as if she had but one soul, and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them, and teaches them, and hands them down, with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth."

Find out more:

Books:

Against Heresies and *On the Apostolic Preaching*, both by Irenaeus;
Fathers of the Faith: Saint Irenaeus by Mike Aquilina

Formed.org:

Apostolic Fathers: Handing on the Faith