

HE BECAME A FRIEND OF CHRIST

In the early days of the Christian Church, professing one's belief in Jesus Christ often meant persecution, torture, and death. My, how we take our religious freedom for granted today.

On the cover today, we see the MARTYR ARTEMIOS. He was a man who fearlessly fought in the army of Constantine the Great in the struggle for religious freedom. He was born in the city of Alexandria in Egypt, and would later return to rule his native land. Artemios, a devout Christian, felt compelled to promote the growth of Christianity throughout Egypt. It was largely through his efforts that the Church attracted many converts.

After the death of Constantine the Great, his son Constantius succeeded his father upon the throne. He, too, was a personal friend of Artemios, and it was common for the new Emperor to call on Artemios to carry out tasks that would require diplomatic skills.

The days of suffering for the church, however, were not quite over. Constantius soon was forced to deal with the evil Julian the Apostate, who wished to overthrow the Emperor. He was a great enemy of the Church, and soon Christian blood began to be shed again throughout the land because of Juilian's bitter hatred for followers of Jesus.

Julian had a brother who had been put to death in Egypt. Thirsty for revenge, he attacked the city of Alexandria and immediately arrested Artemios. After severely torturing him, Julian ordered Artemios to be put to death by beheading. Instead of begging for mercy, Artemios had these final words for Julian: "In exchange for this trivial pain that you have brought upon me, I hope to receive eternal rest in the heavenly abode of my Lord, for whom I suffer."