

## Cincinnatus Saves Rome

*There is perhaps no better account of how the virtues of duty and simplicity enabled good Roman citizens to succeed during the difficulties of the fifth century B.C.E. than Livy's account of Cincinnatus.*

“The city was thrown into a state of turmoil, and the general alarm was as great as if Rome herself were surrounded. The situation evidently called for a dictator [the position of dictator was a temporary one used only in emergencies], and, with no dissenting voice, Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus was named for the post.



Now I would solicit the particular attention of those numerous people who imagine that money is everything in this world, and that rank and ability are inseparable from wealth: let them observe that Cincinnatus, the one man in whom Rome reposed all her hope of survival, was at the moment working a little three-acre farm west of the Tiber. A delegation from the city found him at work on his land- digging a ditch, maybe, or ploughing. Greetings were exchanged, and he was asked – with a prayer for divine blessing on himself and his country – to put on his toga and hear the Senate's instructions. This naturally surprised him, and, asking if all were well, he told his wife to run to their cottage and fetch his toga. The toga was brought, and wiping the grimy sweat from his hands and face he put it on; at once the envoys from the city saluted him, with congratulations, as Dictator, invited him to enter Rome, and informed him of the terrible danger of the enemy's army...

[Cincinnatus proceeded to raise an army, marched out, and defeated the enemy.]

In Rome the Senate was convened, and a decree was passed inviting Cincinnatus to enter in triumph with his troops. The chariot he rode in was preceded by the enemy commanders and the military flags, and followed by his army loaded with its spoils....Cincinnatus finally resigned after holding office for fifteen days, having originally accepted it for a period of six months. He returned to his farm.”