

July 2010

A.D.:Anno Domini

A Church history supplement for adult Catholics

This Month's Focus: A.D. 30-100



Diocesan Mission Statement

"We the Catholic faithful of the Diocese of Scranton, in union with our Holy Father, the Pope, are called through baptism to share in the mission which Jesus Christ has entrusted to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Priests, deacons, religious and laity, under the leadership of our Bishop, cooperate to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the teaching of the Church to celebrate the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, for the salvation of all, and to witness by grace to the Kingdom of God so as to promote a culture of life, justice and peace."

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Key Events: A.D. 30-100

30: Jesus is crucified, rises from the dead, and ascends into Heaven. At Pentecost the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to the Church. St. Peter is recognized as head of the Church.

33: St. Paul, on his way to Damascus in order to persecute the Christian community there, has an encounter with the risen Christ which leads to his conversion. He will go on to become the greatest of the early Christian missionaries and the author of 13 New Testament epistles.

35: St. Peter and St. Paul meet in Jerusalem.

45: Herod Agrippa arrests St.

Peter, who makes a miraculous escape.

49: Emperor Claudius expels Christians from Rome; St. Peter presides over the Council of Jerusalem.

56: St. Peter settles in Rome.

64: Estimated date of when St. Peter is martyred during the persecution of Christians in Rome by the Emperor Nero (67-68 A.D. other suggested dates). St. Linus succeeds him as pope. St. Paul is martyred during this same persecution. We are called the Roman Catholic Church because it was in Rome that the "princes of the apostles" were martyred and bur-

ied.

70: Jerusalem—including the Temple—is destroyed by Titus. The "wailing wall" is all that remains of the Temple today.

76: St. Anacletus succeeds St. Linus as pope.

81: Emperor Domitian launches a persecution of the Church that will last 15 years.

88: St. Clement I succeeds St. Anacletus as pope.

97: St. Evaristus succeeds St. Clement as pope.

Key Concept: Apostolic Succession

During His earthly ministry Jesus selected twelve men to be His most intimate followers (Mk. 3:13-19, Lk. 6:12-16, Mt. 10:1-4, etc.). Called apostles ("one who is sent"), these men were the privileged witnesses of all of Jesus' words and deeds. Indeed, on several occasions Jesus explains the meaning of His parables to them alone (e.g. Mt. 13:1-23).

Of His own divine initiative, Jesus gives the apostles a share in His own mission, which includes the ability to retain and forgive sins, to cast out demons, to offer sacrifice, and to govern the community of believers (Mt. 28:18-20, Mt. 18:17-18, Lk. 10:16, etc.). Of the twelve, St. Peter is singled out in a unique way to lead the brethren (Mt. 16, Jn. 21:17, Lk. 22:32, etc.).

This authority—which is a result of God's free decision and not any inherent holiness of the individuals—was passed on to successors so that it could continue after the death of the apostles (Acts 1:20-26). This process is called "apostolic succession." The successors of the apostles are called bishops. Bishops have existed from the beginning of the Church (1 Tm. 3:1, 8; 5:17, etc.).



St. Clement of Rome knew, and was ordained by, St. Peter.

“Let us be kind one to another after the pattern of the tender mercy and benignity of our Creator.”



The Church in Corinth was established by St. Paul about three decades before St. Clement's letter.

Get to Know: St. Clement of Rome (d. A.D. 97)

St. Clement of Rome was an important figure in the first century of the Church, though we know little about the details of his life.

St. Clement was most likely a convert to Christianity from Judaism. Many of the earliest sources identify him as the Clement mentioned by St. Paul in Philippians 4:3. There is unanimous consent among the Fathers of the Church that he knew many of the apostles—especially St. Peter. According to St. Epiphanius, Clement was ordained by St. Peter, though he was not his immediate successor as pope (Clement would become the third successor of St. Peter in A.D. 88).

St. Clement is most famous for his letter to the Corinthians (often called his “first letter” to the Corinthians, to distinguish it from a second letter bearing his name, but not actually written by him). This letter was held in such high regard in the early Church that St. Clement of Alexandria and others read it during the liturgy and considered it part of the New Testament. Indeed, when the canon of the New Testament was settled upon in the fourth century, St. Clement’s epistle narrowly missed the cut. Some important writers of the early centuries actually considered St. Clement to be the anonymous author

of the Letter to the Hebrews (traditionally attributed to St. Paul.).

In his letter to the Corinthians St. Clement seeks to restore unity and peace among the church there, as they had fallen into discord which even scandalized their pagan neighbors. Writing with great eloquence, St. Clement’s letter succeeded in reestablishing peace and order among the Corinthians and was read in that church for generations.

St. Clement died around A.D. 97 and his relics are venerated in San Clemente Church in Rome. His feast day is November 23.

In Their Own Words: St. Clement’s Letter to the Corinthians

“Let us therefore, brethren, be of humble mind, laying aside all haughtiness, and pride, and foolishness, and angry feelings; and let us act according to that which is written (for the Holy Spirit says, ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, neither let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glories glory in the Lord, in diligently seeking Him, and doing judgment and righteousness’), being especially mindful of the words of the Lord Jesus which He spoke, teaching us meekness and long-suffering. For thus He spoke: ‘Be merciful, that you may obtain mercy; forgive, that it may be forgiven to you; as you do, so shall it be done to you;

as you judge, so shall you be judged; as you are kind, so shall kindness be shown to you; with what measure you measure, with the same it shall be measured to you.’ By this precept and by these rules let us establish ourselves, that we walk with all humility in obedience to His holy words. For the holy word says, ‘On whom shall I look, but on him that is meek and peaceable, and who trembles at My words?’

“It is right and holy therefore, men and brethren, to obey God rather than to follow those who, through pride and sedition, have become the leaders of a detestable emulation. For we shall incur no slight injury, but rather great danger, if we rashly yield ourselves to

the inclinations of men who aim at exciting strife and tumults, so as to draw us away from what is good. Let us be kind one to another after the pattern of the tender mercy and benignity of our Creator. For it is written, “The kind-hearted shall inhabit the land, and the guiltless shall be left upon it, but transgressors shall be destroyed from off the face of it.” And again the Scripture says, “I saw the ungodly highly exalted, and lifted up like the cedars of Lebanon: I passed by, and, behold, he was not; and I diligently sought his place, and could not find it. Preserve innocence, and look on equity: for there shall be a remnant to the peaceful man” (13-14).