

St. Clement the Roman: His Service

+ St. Clement the Roman is one of our Church's forefathers. Some believe that he was one of St. Paul's companions during the latter's service. He could have been either Greek or Roman in origin. He worked for a while in Philippi then later in Rome.

+ On St. Clement, St. Irenaeus said, "He saw the blessed apostles and spoke with them. Their evangelization was still echoing in his ears, and their dogmas before his eyes."

+ He was the third bishop of Rome, during the twelfth year of the reign of Domitian. He departed around 101 A.D., or during the third year of Trajan's reign.

+ A fourth century book says that he converted to Christianity, the Roman noble Theodora and her husband, along with 433 others. This caused the masses to rise up against him; the senate then convened since they could not stand seeing a Roman noble becoming a Christian bishop. When they invited him to renounce his Christian faith, he refused, and they sent a report to emperor Trajan who, in turn, exiled him and sentenced him to hew stones. Where he was exiled, he met with about two thousand Christians; their drinking water being too far, he entreated the Lord on their behalf. God guided him to a rock close by, where they could drink from a spring. At his hands, many pagans were also converted. The land of his exile thus became a centre for worship and evangelization. This angered the rulers even more, and they tied a ship's anchor around his neck and threw him into the sea, where he drowned. It is said that his body remained in the water for a full year without decaying, until the Lord revealed it.

St. Clement's most important writings are his epistles.

The first epistle:

- As Bishop of Rome, he wrote it in 96 A.D. in response to a rebellious movement which occurred in the Church of Corinth during the first century. The movement was started by a group of arrogant youths who considered themselves wiser and more knowledgeable than the leaders of the Church.
- In writing this epistle, he relied on what he had learnt from Christ's apostles. He offered in it some insights about the Church's history, about Nero's persecutions, and about the martyrs.
- He stressed the understanding of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, of the Lord's divinity, of the necessity of works accompanying faith, and of the importance of the continued struggle against sin. He also emphasized sanctification through the Holy Spirit, while accentuating Christian virtues such as humility, tolerance and, especially, love. He said, "Christ is the Christ of the meek - never the proud."
- He proclaimed clearly that the congregation had the right to choose its pastor; he also asked the congregation to obey its leaders.

- This epistle's importance lies in its being the first of its kind in those days: it describes the Church's rites and dogmas, and it identifies the clerical and diaconal ranks. The epistle ends with a magnificently-presented collective prayer for the Church.

Other epistles:

St. Clement wrote a homily about repentance as the way to paradise, and about obeying the commandments. He also wrote two epistles about virginity.