Clement 1

First Apostolic Father

Born: 35 AD

Died; 99 AD

Feast Day:

23 November

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DERRY DIOCESAN CATECHETICAL CENTRE

Clement is the first Apostolic Father of the Church and was the fourth Pope of the Catholic Church, (the official title is Bishop of Rome). He was born in Velletri, Latium and came from a very important family. He was the son of a Roman senator, Faustinus, and the cousin of Roman consul Tiberius Flavius Clemens. Tradition tells us that Clement was a disciple of Peter, and perhaps of Paul. It is possible that the Clement whom Paul praises as a faithful fellow- worker was this, Clement. (Philippians 4:3).

Some sources say that he was ordained by Peter and that he ministered to converted Jews. Tradition tells us that Clement was persecuted by Emperor Trajan who sent him to do hard labour in a mine. Clement used that time to teach his fellow Christians and it was said that during that time he led a ministry among fellow prisoners. He is also credited with performing a miracle during that time.

His martyrdom was described as being tied to an anchor and dragged out to sea. His relics and the anchor were retrieved and preserved in a church that was submerged in the Black Sea. During part of the year, it can still be seen and entered into today.

We know little of Clement's time as Bishop, beyond the fact that a letter addressed to the Christians in the city of Corinth is attributed to him. This letter is often called the First Epistle of Clement. Some say that this letter was composed before AD 70 but the common time is at the end of the reign of Domitian (c. AD 96). The letter does not include Clement's name, but it is considered to be the earliest authentic Christian document outside the New Testament.

The letter is a response to events in Corinth, where the congregation had deposed certain elders (presbyters). Clement called on the congregation to repent, to restore the elders to their position, and to obey their superiors. He said that the Apostles had appointed the church leadership and directed them on how to perpetuate the ministry. Writing this letter established the precedent of Popes being the final person to decide the rules within the Church. He either established or continued the practice of recording the laws and customs of the Church.

In Corinth, the letter was read aloud from time to time. This practice spread to other churches, and Christians translated the Greek work into Latin, Syriac, and other languages. Some early Christians even treated the work like scripture. The work was lost for centuries, but since the 1600s various copies or fragments have been found and studied. It has provided valuable evidence about the structure of the early church.

Clement is variously known as the "Pope of Convicts", patron of marble workers and patron of mariners He is mentioned in the Roman Canon of the Mass.