

November 23

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Clement of Rome (1st-2nd cent.) pastor and martyr

Clement, traditionally the third bishop of Rome and the author of an Epistle to the Corinthians that is one of the most moving early Christian writings, was martyred at the beginning of the second century.

According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, he was born in the first century in the Roman district of Montecelio. It is historically certain that he was a bishop in Rome under the emperors Galba and Vespasian, and that in the name of the elders of his church he attempted to restore concord in the church of Corinth, which was divided over issues related to the expression of authority in the Christian community.

In his letter, which is humble in tone but permeated with evangelical wisdom and *parresia*, Clement reminds the Christians of Corinth that the path of unity and peace on which Christ walked passes through humiliation and loving mutual submission. This was also the message of Paul's teachings, which had helped create a close bond between the Christians of Rome and Corinth.

Clement's gentleness and faithfulness to the Gospel earned him widespread recognition, and many traditions about him flourished in the centuries after his death. According to several of these traditions, he was drowned in Crimea by Roman authorities, thus becoming a martyr.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Prov 15:1-4; Phil 3:17-4:3; Lk 14:7-11

Colombanus (ca. 550-615) monk

On November 23 of the year 615, Columbanus, an Irish monk and pilgrim for Christ, died in the monastery of Bobbio in the Appennine mountains between Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna. Most of what we know about him comes from the *Life* written by his disciple Jonah of Bobbio. A native of the Irish province of Leinster, Columbanus was still young when he heard the call to leave his homeland. Like Abraham, whose story has special meaning for all monks, he set out on a journey towards his heavenly country, walking in Christ's footsteps.

After receiving training in monastic life at the famous cenobitic community of Bangor, Wales, Columbanus took the next step in his pilgrimage by leaving his Celtic homeland with twelve companions. He arrived in Brittany around the year 590 and began to found monasteries and work as a missionary. Because of his strong personality and radical attachment to the Gospel, he often found himself in conflict with the powerful figures of his time, and on several occasions he was forced to resume his wanderings and settle elsewhere. Several of his foundations, especially Luxeuil in France, became important spiritual centers in which continental Europeans discovered the treasures of Irish monasticism. After being exiled from Luxeuil for having sharply reprimanded King Theodoric, Columbanus lived for some time on the shores of Lake Constance in Germany, and finally arrived at Bobbio two years before his death.

Columbanus was an outspoken supporter of Irish church traditions, and did not hesitate to explain to Pope Gregory the Great the reason for the Irish date of Easter, and for the new penitential practices Irish monks had begun to introduce to the rest of Europe. The monastic rules written by Columbanus enjoyed a fairly wide circulation, but they were later suppressed when the Rule of St. Benedict was imposed on all Western monasteries.

BIBLICAL READINGS

1 Kings 19:16b.19-21; Mic 7:21-27

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:

Clement, bishop of Rome, martyr

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

Clement I, pope and martyr

Columba, abbot (Roman and Ambrosian calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (14 hatur/hedar):

Martin (d. 397), bishop of Tours (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:

Clement of Rome, bishop

Columba, apostle of Ireland

MARONITES:

Amphilochius (d. ca. 400), bishop of Iconium

Sisinnius (4th cent.), bishop of Cyzicus

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Amphilochius, bishop of Iconium

Gregory (6th-7th cent.), bishop of Agrigentum

Antony Sihastriul (16th-17th cent.), hesychast (Romanian Church)

EAST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:

Clement, pope and martyr (Malabar Church)

OLD CATHOLICS:

Columba, apostle of Ireland