

# The Ante-Nicene Fathers

(and a Mother!)

# What do we remember from the Patristic Fathers?

- Friends and students of the Apostles
- Longing to unite with Christ in suffering/martyrdom
- Christian Identity
  - Broadness of the Church culturally – open to Jew, Greek, free, slave, women, men
  - Developing a more defined structure for unity

# What do we remember from the Patristic Fathers?

- Persecutions by the Roman government are increasing
- Schisms and divisions
- Heresies spreading and proliferating
  - Judaizing
  - Gnosticism

# 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> c. Christianity

- Confronting Heresies
- Evangelizing
- Maintaining Unity
- Responding to Persecutions

# Saints of Week Three

St. Justin Martyr

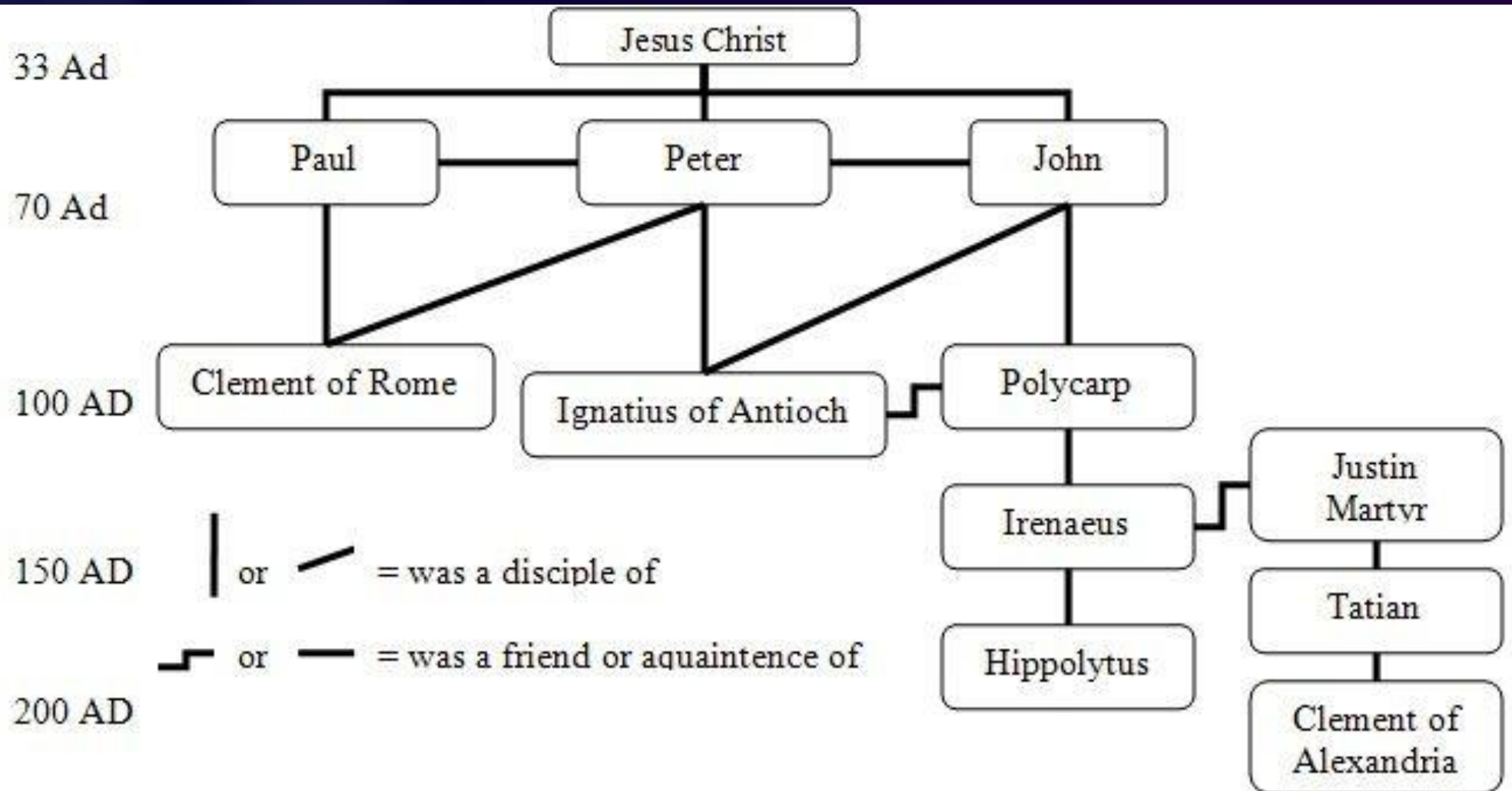
St. Irenaeus of Lyons

St. Cyprian of Carthage

St. Clement of Alexandria

St. Helena

# Org Chart



# St. Justin Martyr

One of the first 'apologists'

- Rational demonstration of superiority of orthodox Christian doctrine to the errors of infidels and heretics.
- Rigid obedience to Christian morals and Theological teaching
- How will world accept the faith if we can't prove it and willing to die for it?

Former: Samaritan, Stoic, Peripatetic, Pythagorean, Platonist, etc.

Converted by an 'old man' near a beach who taught him the only truth would be found in the Prophets

Three works defending Christianity:

- Letters to the emperor/senate
- A dialogue with 'Trypho the Jew'

# St. Justin Martyr

## Mass

“And this food is called among us Εὐχαριστία [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined.”

~1st Apology, 66

Chapters 65-67 detail the Mass start to finish – the same structure we follow today.

## Defense against athiesm and impiety:

“Hence are we called atheists. And we confess that we are atheists, so far as gods of this sort are concerned, but not with respect to the most true God, the Father of righteousness and temperance and the other virtues, who is free from all impurity.”



# What is Gnosticism?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f281VnRtcns>



# St. Irenaeus of Lyons

## Key points:

- Student of Polycarp, influenced by St. John, Bishop of Lyons (Gaul, France)
- He was an intellectual power house. He played key role in developing theology as science: Systematic Theology
- Fearless fighter against Gnostic errors(Gnosticism: goodness of creation; divinity of Christ)
- Eucharist Brings us in communion with God, bread of Immortality-spirit of the Father

# St. Irenaeus of Lyons

## Key points:

- Scriptural canon: the first to list the four Gospels
- Mariology: Promoted Marian devotion: Second Eve, obedient to God, Human race had fallen into death bondage
- Ecclesiology: The Church has great role in the world-calls it paradise in the world
- Primacy of the Church of Rome: Unity through the Church of Rome
- Soteriology: Christ undoing the original through the tree of the cross.
- Original Sin: Disobedience with severe consequence

# St. Irenaeus of Lyons

Prolific writer, most famous for *'Against Heresies'*

*"Nor, if He wasn't what He seemed to be, was there any measure of truth in Him."*

*"And thus, as the human race fell into bondage to death by means of a virgin, so is it rescued by a virgin; virginal disobedience having been balanced in the opposite scale by virginal obedience. For in the same way the sin of the first created man (protoplasti) receives amendment by the correction of the First-begotten, and the coming of the serpent is conquered by the harmlessness of the dove, those bonds being unloosed by which we had been fast bound to death." ~Bk V, Ch 19*

# For Discussion

How do we understand conversion?

What do we do about the 'Feel good syndrome' that tolerates grave errors?

Are Christians converting the world or vice versa?

Where do we see Gnosticism today?

# St. Cyprian of Carthage

He came from a rich pagan in Africa. He received secular education; Philosophy and rhetoric, helped many through arguments in courts. He earned good money that was spent in lavish banquets. This kind of life did not quench his thirst for truth.

Tertullian: Influenced greatly him with his apologetics, was led to the truth of Christianity.

Baptism: Called it a second rebirth that opened new reality, a whole new life. He lived a Christ-like life that impressed, led to him being ordained deacon, later, priest and eventually ordained Bishop

# St. Cyprian of Carthage

Legacy: Unity of Christ and His Church, fought against schematics that sought to destroy the unity of the Church. He was a proponent of welcoming prodigal children of the Church-lapsi after true repentance ( Pope Francis??) If God is the Father, the Church is the Mother, the Bride of Christ

Faith: Steadfast, embodiment of true piety and holiness, died a martyr on September 14, 258  
Feast day Sept. 16

# St. Cyprian of Carthage

## On Unity:

“And does any one believe that this unity which thus comes from the divine strength and coheres in celestial sacraments, can be divided in the Church, and can be separated by the parting asunder of opposing wills? He who does not hold this unity does not hold God's law, does not hold the faith of the Father and the Son, does not hold life and salvation.”

## On the Lapsed:

“I entreat you, beloved brethren, that each one should confess his own sin, while he who has sinned is still in this world, while his confession may be received, while the satisfaction and remission made by the priests are pleasing to the Lord. Let us turn to the Lord with our whole heart, and, expressing our repentance for our sin with true grief, let us entreat God's mercy. Let our soul lie low before Him. Let our mourning atone to Him. Let all our hope lean upon Him” ~ Treatise 3, ch. 29



# St. Clement of Alexandria

Very little is known about his early life: Born AD 150 - 215

He presided over the famous school at Alexandria

Philosophy preambles faith, on which truth constructs knowledge

“I seek after God, not the works of God. Whom shall I take as a helper in my inquiry? We do not, if you have no objection, wholly disown Plato. How, then, is God to be searched out, O Plato? For both to find the Father and Maker of this universe is a work of difficulty; and having found Him, to declare Him fully, is impossible. Why so? By Himself, I beseech you! For He can by no means be expressed. Well done, Plato! You have touched on the truth. But do not flag. Undertake with me the inquiry respecting the Good.” ~ Ex. to the Heathen, Ch.6

# St. Clement of Alexandria

## Main themes:

- Faith and Knowledge: He viewed it as personal service that loves and teaches the ignorant and instructs the whole creation to honor God. All science is at the service of faith – faith is rational, reasonable – no contradiction between faith and science
- God is in motion to save us – constantly reaching out – Death and Resurrection is the apex of our calling. The death of Christ revealed the inner life of God

# St. Clement of Alexandria

## Main themes:

- Views on wealth: Logos does not command us to renounce property but to manage it without inordinate affection. It should be dispensed with discernment to the deserving – take from the lazy and give to the poor
- Additional: Generalities/miscellaneous: Missionary Theology/ Apologist/ Polemist.
- He influenced the Christian world in the areas of monasticism, political and economic thought, theology, Christology

His feast day December 4, Pope Sixtus V deleted his name his name from martyrology – escaped persecution

For more: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmTLEn4xQvw>

# St. Helena

Married a rising star in the Roman military who later divorced her to marry for political alliances. Her son Constantine remained faithful to her, when he converted to Christianity, she converted

She was 'sent' to Jerusalem to find Christian relics and holy places

- Jerusalem was a wreck
- A temple to Venus was built on the site of Christ's tomb

She destroyed the temple, excavated the site and built a church  
(Bethlehem, Mt. of the Ascension)

Died (mostly likely in Jerusalem) and is buried in Rome.

Influenced:

- Pilgrimages, specifically for women
- Activity and influence of women in the Church – St. Ambrose wrote of her

# Questions?

Next Week:

Desert Fathers

St. Ambrose

St. Athanasius

St. Agnes of Rome