

Opening Prayer



Prayer to God the Father – St Irenaeus of Lyons (130–202 AD)

I appeal to you, Lord, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob and Israel, You the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Infinitely merciful as You are, it is Your will that we should learn to know You. You made heaven and earth, You rule supreme over all that is. You are the true, the only God; there is no other god above You.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ...and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, grant that all who read what I have written here may know You, because You alone are God; let them draw strength from You; keep them from all teaching that is heretical, irreligious or godless.

St Irenaeus of Lyons, 130–202 AD

The Patristic Era

– The Apostolic Fathers

Four Marks of the Church



One



Holy



Catholic



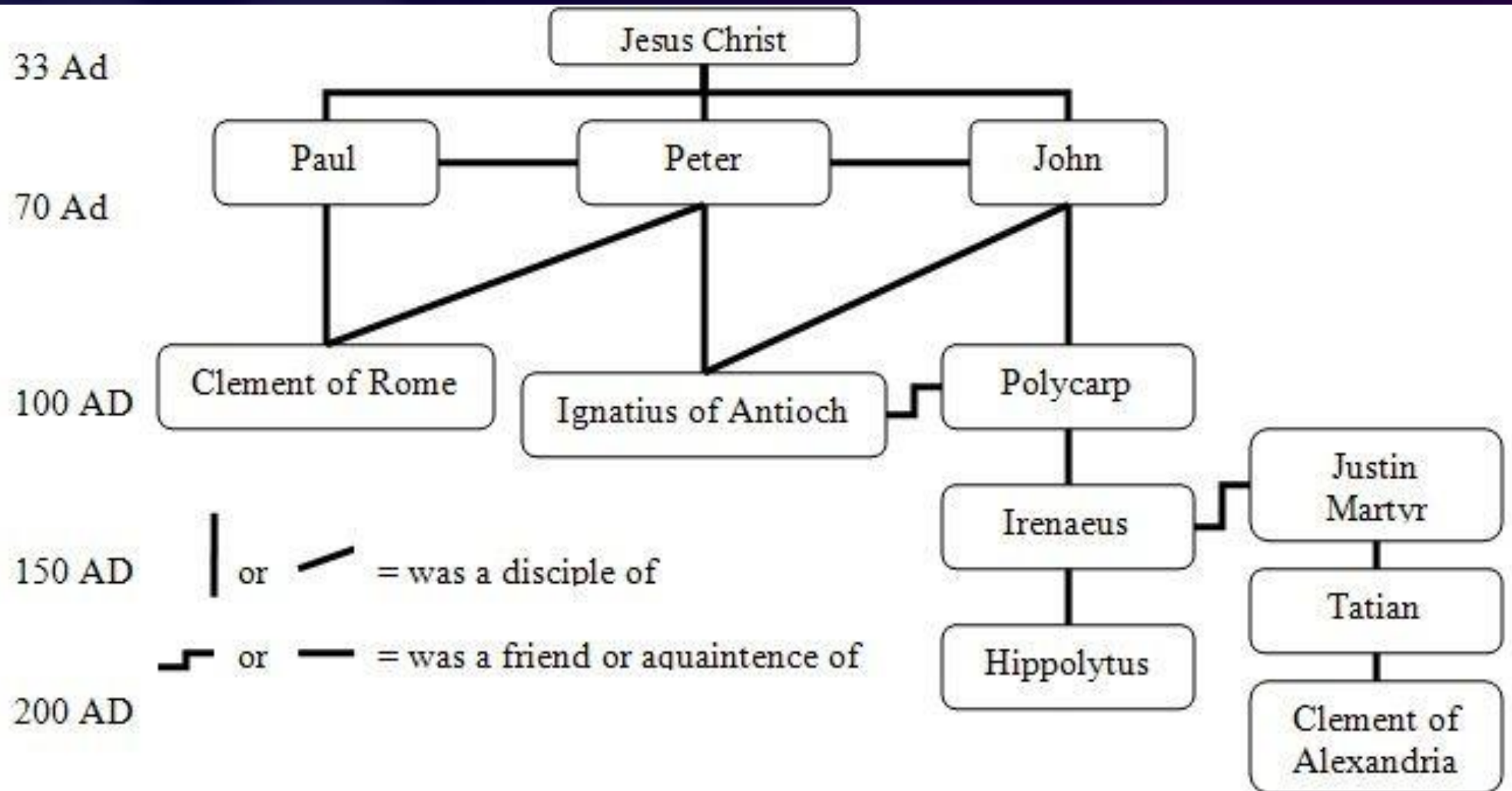
Apostolic



Clement, Ignatius and Polycarp

- Friends and students of the Apostles
- Witnesses to the destruction of Jerusalem
- Beginnings of the persecutions by Rome and yet....
 - Ignatius was bishop for 40 years
 - Polycarp died in his mid 80's

Org Chart



St. Clement of Rome

We don't know much, but...

He was Bishop of Rome - 3rd in succession from St. Peter

St. Peter may have
consecrated him as bishop

Died a martyr in the persecution by Trajan

1st Clement to the Corinthians
was considered for the New Testament canon

1st Letter of Clement to the Corinthians

Circa 95 (around the time of John's Gospel)

- Their gifts weren't being recognized
- They have overthrown their leadership, he wrote to end the schism
- Early signs of gnosticism
- Corinthians honored the letter and sent it all over the world

1st Letter of Clement to the Corinthians

A key significance is Clement's blending of Jewish, Christian and Hellenistic imagery

- Appeals to Christian texts and the Saints

“Peter, through unrighteous envy, endured not one or two, but numerous labors; and when he had at length suffered martyrdom, departed to the place of glory due to him. Owing to envy, Paul also obtained the reward of patient endurance, after being seven times thrown into captivity, compelled to flee, and stoned.”

Chapter 5

“Abraham, styled "the friend," was found faithful, inasmuch as he rendered obedience to the words of God.”

Chapter 10

1st Letter of Clement to the Corinthians

Jewish, Christian and Hellenistic imagery

- Appeals to the natural order of the world

“Let us contemplate, beloved, the resurrection which is at all times taking place. Day and night declare to us a resurrection. The night sinks to sleep, and the day arises; the day [again] departs, and the night comes on. Let us behold the fruits [of the earth], how the sowing of grain takes place. The sower goes forth, and casts it into the ground, and the seed being thus scattered, though dry and naked when it fell upon the earth, is gradually dissolved. Then out of its dissolution the mighty power of the providence of the Lord raises it up again, and from one seed many arise and bring forth fruit”

1st Letter of Clement to the Corinthians

Jewish, Christian and Hellenistic imagery

- Old Testament writings are referenced

“For thus says the holy Word: **"The Lord has severely chastened me, yet has not given me over to death." "For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." ...And you shall come to the grave like ripened grain which is reaped in its season, or like a heap of the threshing-floor which is gathered together at the proper time."** Job 5:17-26
You see, beloved, that **"protection is afforded to those that are chastened of the Lord; for since God is good, He corrects us, that we may be admonished"** by His holy chastisement.

1st Letter of Clement to the Corinthians



Themes we recognize

- Unity is key – humility and obedience
- Discusses the structure of the Church as developed and appointed by the Apostles
- Appealing to the lives of the saints as models
- Saved by Christ, but we must live worthily of this lest we be condemned
- Awaiting the resurrection of the body

For Discussion

“Why are there strifes, and tumults, and divisions, and schisms, and wars among you? Have we not one God and one Christ? Is there not one Spirit of grace poured out upon us? And have we not one calling in Christ? Why do we divide and tear in pieces the members of Christ, and raise up strife against our own body, and have reached such a height of madness as to forget that "we are members one of another?" Remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, how He said, "Woe to that man [by whom offenses come]! It were better for him that he had never been born, than that he should cast a stumbling-block before one of my elect. Yea, it were better for him that a millstone should be hung about [his neck], and he should be sunk in the depths of the sea, than that he should cast a stumbling-block before one of my little ones."

1st Letter of Clement to the Corinthians



Group discussion – How is this relevant for us today?

St. Ignatius of Antioch

Apostle of John, installed as bishop of Antioch (one of the most important Christian communities at the time) by St. Peter and St. Paul

Bishop for 40 years

Condemned under the persecution of Trajan

His writings were from his journey to Rome and martyrdom

The Seven Letters of St. Ignatius

Three main concerns:

Martyrdom – becoming a ‘real’ disciple,
suffering with Christ

“I undergo all these things that I may suffer together with Him”

Smyrneans, Ch. 4

“Only request in my behalf both inward and outward strength,... that I may not merely be called a Christian, but really be found to be one. For if I be truly found [a Christian], I may also be called one, and be then deemed faithful, when I shall no longer appear to the world.”

Romans, Ch. 3

The Seven Letters of St. Ignatius

Three main concerns:

Unity – specifically, submitting to the authority of bishops and presbyters

“Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.”

Smyrneans, Ch. 8

The Seven Letters of St. Ignatius

Three main concerns:

- Heresies

“There is one Physician who is possessed both of flesh and spirit; both made and not made; God existing in flesh; true life in death; both of Mary and of God; first passible and then impassible – even Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ephesians, Ch. 7

“For if we still live according to the Jewish law, we acknowledge that we have not received grace. For the divinest prophets lived according to Christ Jesus.”

Magnesians, Ch. 8

The Seven Letter of St. Ignatius



Themes we recognize

- Unity
- The Eucharist as the True Body of Christ
- Church hierarchy and structure
- Longing for martyrdom, imitating Christ

St. Polycarp



- Polycarp is a direct apostolic successor. Ordained to the office by St. John the Apostle bishop of Smyrna and teacher of Irenaeus
- He lived during the most formative era of the church
- Faithful and fearless leader when faced with dangerous errors

His encounter with Marcion the Gnostic: Do you know me?
Polycarp replied: “I know you, you first born of Satan!”

St. Polycarp



- Spiritually faithful, wise Christian leader who had seen and heard the Lord. He was frequently sought to settle disputes or correct false teachings.
- Polycarp is also the only possible successor to have a writing perhaps directed to him in the Bible.
- His teachings include great exhortation on good moral life: whatever state of life
- Died heroic martyrdom

Questions?



Next Week...

St. Justin Martyr

St. Irenaeus of Lyons

St. Cyprian of Carthage

St. Clement of Alexandria

St. Helena