

Baptism of the Lord
January 11, 2026
Year of the Church in History

“Wherefore are there strifes and wraths and factions and divisions and war among you? Have we not one God and one Christ and one Spirit of grace that was shed upon us? And is there not one calling in Christ? Wherefore do we tear and rend asunder the members of Christ, and stir up factions against our own body, and reach such a pitch of folly, as to forget that we are members of another?”
(Saint Clement of Rome, Epistle to the Corinthians, circa 95-96AD)

As I mentioned last weekend, I would like to slowly reflect upon the Epistle to the Corinthians written by Saint Clement of Rome. I would like to proceed by offering a section of the Epistle and take a moment to understand what statement he was making and why he was making these statements. Today, we shall focus on three things his Epistle reveals.

“It is shameful, dearly beloved, yes, utterly shameful and unworthy of your conduct in Christ, that it should be reported that the very steadfast and ancient Church of the Corinthians, for the sake of one or two persons, maketh sedition against its presbyters.”
(paragraph #47)

As we reflect upon paragraph #47, the first thing worth noting is the word “*reported*.” We must ask ourselves why was it reported to Saint Clement? Could a local bishop have not written to address this issue? We can therefore assume something which is important concerning our Catholic Faith. It would have been the local Bishop who would have reported this issue to Saint Clement and, in his role as successor of Saint Peter and Bishop of Rome, it is Saint Clement who is viewed as the authority on matters regarding the Christian Church. We are not reading an Epistle to the Corinthians from Bishop Bruce of Bay Minette. The Bishop of Rome, the successor of Saint Peter, is understood to be the head of the Christian Church. Even to our day, this is still the case. The Holy Father is the head of the Bishops and speaks with authority concerning statements on our Catholic Faith and Morals.

“Therefore let us also make intercession for them that are in any transgression, that forbearance and humility may be given them, to the end that they may yield not unto us, but unto the will of God.” (paragraph #56)

At first glance, one may be tempted to read this sentence from paragraph #56 and continue on to the next paragraph without reflecting upon the word “*intercession*.” It may not seem important, but this sentence affirms something we have become so accustomed to doing—praying for others. Furthermore, Saint Clement is not only encouraging the Church of Corinth to pray for those who are spreading division. His words were meant for the members of the Church. He is asking all Christians to pray for those who are acting in this way. The hope is they will return to the love and service of God which had first been preached to them.

“Ye therefore that laid the foundation of the sedition, submit yourselves unto the presbyters and receive chastisement unto repentance, bending the knees of your heart. Learn to submit yourselves, laying aside the arrogant and proud stubbornness of your

tongue. For it is better for you to be found little in the flock of Christ and to have your name on God's roll, than to be had in exceeding honour and yet be cast out from the hope of Him." (paragraph #57)

Concerning this final selection from Saint Clement of Rome, I pose this question for your consideration: Why was he so concerned about those who are causing division in the Church? I pose this answer for your reflection. In separating themselves from the presbyters, the Church, what are those individuals truly separating themselves from? They are separating themselves from the Sacrifice of the Mass, the Eucharist.

My family, this is the most important aspect of this Epistle. Those who have separated themselves from the Christian Church no longer receive the Body and Blood of Jesus. We know that Saint Clement and the Christians in Rome understood the persecution associated with being a Christian. The history of the Catholic Church in Rome drips with the blood of the martyrs. The Eucharist was so very important, so vital to the Church, men and women chose to die because they believed it was truly the Body and Blood of Jesus. Saint Clement expresses in his Epistle, the heart of every Bishop and priest who desire their own flock to be close to Jesus. Each in his own way, tries to heal the divisions which have caused members of the Church to be separated from Jesus. The most important of all causes of separation is Sin. Through words or letters, but more so by action, these ministers, one in mind and heart, enter a confessional to heal any separation caused by sin which denies a child of God intimacy with Him. As Saint Clement of Rome encouraged the Corinthians, so now let us pray for all members of Christ's Body, that they may return to Him in humility and receive Him once again in the Eucharist.