

***Second Sunday of Ordinary Time***  
***Second Sunday after Epiphany***  
***January 18, 2026***  
***Year of the Church in History***

*“So then, my brethren, let us contend, knowing that the contest is nigh at hand, and that, while many resort to the corruptible contests, yet not all are crowned, but only they that have toiled hard and contended bravely. Let us then contend that we all may be crowned.” (Ancient Homily referred to as Saint Clement of Rome, Second Epistle to the Corinthians, circa A.D. 120–140)*

This weekend, I would like our reflection to center upon the Second Epistle of Saint Clement of Rome to the Corinthians. Beginning with the historical background, this address is, an educated assumption, not from Pope Saint Clement. Although it has been attributed to him, it is according to ancient church historians, regarded as an ancient homily given to Christians at Corinth. The name of the presbyter who authored this homily is unknown, but the message he delivered and the beliefs he conveyed are still pertinent for us today.

*“Seeing then that He bestowed so great mercy on us; first of all, that we, who are living, do not sacrifice to these dead gods, neither worship them, but through Him have known the Father of truth.” (paragraph #3)*

For you and I to fully comprehend this line from paragraph #3, we need to examine the time in which these ancient Christians were living. In approximately A.D. 64, the Great Fire occurred within the city of Rome. Christians, who were already mistrusted due to their not offering sacrifices to the Roman gods, were blamed. Emperor Nero would begin a limited persecution in Rome. His persecution would seek out those who were viewed as followers of *The Way*, which was an early title given to Christians. Christians were tortured and martyred in various brutal ways in the Roman amphitheaters and circuses. The most famous of these amphitheaters that one may still tour today is the Coliseum. Due to the amount of blood spilled by our ancestors, a phrase was coined by Tertullian (circa A.D. 200): “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” I would ask that you keep this in mind as we proceed further because these persecutions, limited and sporadic, would continue until they reached A.D. 303 with the Great Persecution by Emperor Diocletian.

*“Neither let us desire to please one another only, but also those men that are without, by our righteousness, that the Name be not blasphemed by reason of us.” (paragraph #13)*

A beautiful thought has been offered in this one sentence. This thought, first spoken of by both Jesus and Saint Paul, seeks to remind Christians that we are representatives of God and each other. As Christianity developed in later years, this thought would be directed toward priests. A priest acts in the person of Jesus when he offers the Sacraments, especially when he recites the words of Consecration (**This is My Body, This is My Blood**) during the Sacrifice of the Mass. The presbyter was attempting to remind his Christian flock that all are ambassadors of God and all will be judged by God as to their actions in His Name. Prior to this line, he had reminded his listeners that not all would gain entry into Heaven. He had quoted Jesus’ famous line: “*Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter*

*into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 7:21). This is still a point we must consider.*

*“Neither suffer ye this again to trouble your mind, that we see the unrighteous possessing wealth, and the servants of God straitened. . . No righteous man hath reaped fruit quickly, but waiteth for it.” (paragraph #20)*

These two lines were taken from the last paragraph of this ancient homily. We are reminded of one important point: Christianity is not a religion of ease and prosperity; rather it is a religion of suffering founded upon the Suffering.” My family, the first Christians were men and women no different from ourselves. They were husbands and fathers, wives and mothers. They were children. They had normal jobs. They had, for the most part, the same hopes and dreams we hold onto in our time. Yet, they knew by professing belief in Jesus, they could lose everything including their lives. These are Christians whose lives we must compare our lives with, for how can we assume to sit in their company in Heaven IF we choose a Christianity which rewards itself on earth? I ask honestly, have we made Christianity and the attainment of Heaven too easy, barely an inconvenience, thus diminishing the sacrifices of those who proceeded us? If we have, then shame on us.