



Messenger Project Newsletter

The Messenger

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A NONPROFIT CORPORATION PROMOTING THE BIBLE THROUGH THE ARTS

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Messenger Notes

Lionel De Leon performed *Witnesses of the Fact* (Acts 2:22) with Huntington Beach's **Community Bible Church** worship team on May 28th. The next tentatively scheduled song is *These Words* (1 Thessalonians 4:1) on June 25th.

Margie Gross from **The Experience Church** in Meridia, Idaho, is planning to stage *The Word* (our original Christian rock opera) next Easter. It will be the first live performance of this rock opera. Lionel is completing the sheet-music for *The Word*, so *Messenger Project* songs will be delayed until fall.

Early Church Fathers

Barnabas (?-?) was an early Christian mentioned in the New Testament. He was born of Jewish parents of the tribe of Levi. His aunt was the mother of John, surnamed Mark (traditionally believed to be the author of the Gospel of Mark). Barnabas is one of the first prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch. He wrote the *Letter of Barnabas*.

Ignatius (?-110) of Antioch was the third Bishop or Patriarch of Antioch, after Saint Peter and Evodius. Peter appointed Ignatius to the see of Antioch. Ignatius called himself Theophorus ("bearer of God") and was most likely a disciple of both Apostles Peter and John. Ignatius was arrested by the Roman authorities and transported to Rome under trying conditions: "From Syria even to Rome I fight with wild beasts, by land and sea, by night and by day, being bound amidst ten leopards, even a company of soldiers, who only grow worse when they are kindly treated."—(Ignatius to the Romans). His fate was to die a martyr in the arena. The Roman authorities hoped to make an example of him and thus discourage Christianity from spreading. Instead, he met with and encouraged Christians who flocked to meet him all along his route, and he wrote seven letters to the churches in the region.

Clement I (?- 101?) was the fourth pope. He may have been a freedman of Titus Flavius Clemens, who was consul with his cousin, the Emperor Domitian. The Shepherd of Hermas mentions a Clement whose office it is to communicate with other churches; this function supports Clement's authorship of the letter to the church at Corinth. Clement of Rome had personally known Peter. He died in Greece in the third year of Trajan's reign, or 100. A 9th century tradition says he was martyred in Crimea in 102, tied to a ship's anchor and thrown overboard to drown, but earlier sources say he died a natural death. Clement authored the *Didache* and the *Shepherd of Hermas*.

Justin Martyr (100-165) was an early Christian apologist. His works represent the earliest surviving Christian apologies of notable size. Most of what is known about the life of Justin Martyr comes from his own writings. He was born at Flavia Neapolis (modern Nablus) in Palestine. The city had been founded by Vespasian in the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Justin suffered martyrdom at Rome under Marcus Aurelius when Rusticus was prefect of the city (between 162 and 168). He calls himself a Samaritan, but his father and grandfather were probably Greek or Roman, and he was brought up a pagan. He owned property, studied philosophy, converted to Christianity, and devoted the rest of his life to teaching what he considered the true philosophy, still wearing his philosopher's gown to indicate that he had attained the truth. He probably traveled widely and ultimately settled in Rome as a Christian teacher. His writings include two *Apologies* and *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*.

Polycarp (?-?) was a Christian bishop of Smyrna (now Izmir in Turkey) in the 2nd century. He died a martyr when he was stabbed and his corpse burned at the stake in Smyrna. He had been a disciple of John, traditionally assumed to be the author of the Gospel of John. Polycarp never quotes from the Gospel of John in his own writings, which may indicate that the John he knew was not the author of that gospel, or that John's gospel was not finished during Polycarp's discipleship with him. Polycarp wrote *Letter to the Philippians*.

Theophilus (?-?) was born a pagan, not far from the Tigris and Euphrates, and was led to embrace Christianity by studying the Holy Scriptures, especially the prophetic books. He made contributions to the departments of Christian literature, polemics, exegetics, and apologetics. Dr. Sanday describes him as "one of the precursors of that group of writers who, from Irenaeus to Cyprian, not only break the obscurity which rests on the earliest history of the Christian church, but alike in the East and in the West carry it to the front in literary eminence, and distance all their heathen contemporaries." Theophilus influenced Irenaeus, Tertullian and Novation but was later forgotten. He wrote three apologetic treatises *To Autolycus*.

Irenaeus (120-203) as bishop of Lugdunum in Gaul, which is now Lyon, France. His writings were formative in the early development of Christian theology. He was a disciple of Polycarp, who himself was a disciple of John the Evangelist. Irenaeus wrote *Adversus Haereses* (*Against Heresies*).

Tatian (120-173) was an early Assyrian Christian writer and theologian of the second century. Little is known beyond what he tells about himself. He enjoyed a good education and became acquainted with Greek culture. He studied the pagan religions. Finally he came to Rome, where he seems to have come in touch with Christianity. According to his own representation, it was primarily his abhorrence of the pagan cults that led him to spend thought on religious problems. He adopted the Christian religion and became the pupil of Justin Martyr. It was the period when Christian philosophers competed with Greek sophists, and like Justin, he opened a Christian school in Rome. Tatian was the first to give the Syriac congregations the Gospel in their own language, the *Diatessaron*. He also wrote *Discourse to the Greeks*.

To fully understand the dynamics and growth of Christianity, it is important to trace it from its roots. I will be continuing this chronological biographic series of early church fathers in our upcoming newsletters as we trace church history via its most influential leaders.