

March 16, 2023

Good Morning!

Men's Club Meeting tonight, Parish Hall 6:30 PM

1. Today's Readings: [Thursday of the Third Week of Lent | USCCB](#)

2. The RE Corner with Jan Heithaus: Pope St. Paul I and Stephen IV. Pope Paul succeeded his brother, Pope Stephen III. He is known for moving the relics of many saints from the catacombs to Roman churches and for his building projects, including the church of Sts. Peter and Paul. During Stephen IV's reign, the Lateran council forbade laymen to be elected popes or to take part in their election for the future. Only cardinals were to be chosen popes (April, 769).

3. Quote of the Day:

~“The fact that we can't save ourselves is something we acknowledge in words, but in fact we find it very hard to accept. We'd all like to be saved by our own efforts...to shine in other people's eyes, even on the spiritual level. Worldly people want to be highly regarded because they have luxurious cars, expensive watches, designer clothes, professional prestige, and go around with beautiful people. As good Christians, we may want to stand out for our virtues, charisms, experience, and sound judgement. Then we consider that we are on the right path. But in fact we're in danger of ending up with exactly the same mindset as the worldly people described above. Very often, without realizing it, we have a worldly outlook on the spiritual life: self-fulfillment, self-affirmation, expansion of the ego, etc. And spiritual pride, we must be aware, is sometimes more destructive than social, worldly pride.”

— Fr. Jacques Philippe

St. Joseph, Pray for Us!

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Popes of the mid 700s, part 2

94. St. Paul I (757-67)

When Pope Stephen II died in April of 757, he left behind what was apparently his right hand man, his brother Paul, a deacon. While Paul was tending to his dying brother, one faction in Rome was meeting at the home of the Archdeacon Theophylact, planning his election to the papacy. However, the majority of the clergy elected the Roman native to the papacy within weeks of Pope Stephen's burial. One of the largest reasons for backing Paul was that he planned to continue Stephen's policies.

Paul was a deacon, trained, as his brother was, at the Lateran. He was employed by the Curia to work with the Lombard kings. He was to handle the restoration of the Roman states and cities which had been seized by those kings. He approved of his brother's policies and planned on continuing them.

Because the Eastern Empire still technically ruled Italy, Paul was required to contact the exarch in Ravenna for all political changes. He sent a letter informing the exarch of his election. But the letter was not written as to a superior. He wrote it with an independent attitude. He also wrote to Pepin the Younger, king of the Franks, to assure him that the alliance forged between Pepin and Stephen would be maintained. Paul was concerned with the danger posed by the Lombard king, Desiderius and wanted Pepin to have his back.

Despite the treaty with Pope Stephen, King Desiderius still held the land claimed by the Duchy of Rome, the areas of Imola, Osimo, Bologna and Ancona. A year later, Spoleto and Benevento was added to the Lombard lands. Desiderius tried to form an alliance with the emperor in Constantinople, Constantine Copronymus. To this end, he met with a Byzantine official to discuss their mutual interests in central Italy. He then went to Rome and compelled Pope Paul to be a silent partner. Paul was obligated to write a letter to Pepin asking him to concede all Lombard claims. Desiderius even offered to return Imola to the papal lands if Paul was able to convince Pepin to return all the Lombard hostages to their homes. The other option the king offered the pope, was war.

Fearful of the Lombard-Byzantine alliance, Paul begged Pepin to give into the wishes of Desiderius and make a treaty. At least, that was what was in the official letter, taken by two Roman legates and a Lombardian guard. What the guard did

not know was that Paul had given his representatives a secret letter, begging Pepin for help in the return of the towns. Pepin was not ready to react.

Between 759 and 760, much of the West was anxious about the Byzantine threat of invasion. Several times Pope Paul asked Pepin for help to no avail. Finally, when it was heard that an armada was on its way to invade, Pepin reacted, pulled Desiderius to his side, agreed to an alliance and gave the Roman duchy back much of its lands.

The basis of the Byzantine threat does not seem to have been political, but, rather, a continuation of the argument about icons and dogma. Paul, Pepin and Desiderius all communicated with both the patriarch and the emperor of the East. And the Easterners sent letters and legates to the West demanding their views of Christianity prevail. In 767, a synod near Paris reinforced and maintained the dogmas of Trinity and image reverence.

Pope Paul was active in building the religious life of Rome. He turned his childhood home into a monastery, built San Silvestro in Capite, added an oratory dedicated to the Blessed Virgin to St. Peter's and built a church dedicated to the Apostles beyond the Roman Forum. When the Lombards destroyed many of the catacombs in 756, Paul transferred the relics of the saints to various churches after he was consecrated the following year.

Paul died June 28, 767 after a reign of just over 10 years. He was buried in St. Peter's Basilica. His feast day is June 28.

Source: catholic365.com

95. Stephen IV (767-72)

Paul I was not dead when trouble began about the election of his successor. Toto of Nepi with a body of Tuscans burst into Rome, and, despite the opposition of the *primicerius* Christopher, forcibly intruded his brother Constantine, a layman, into the chair of Peter (June, 767). In the spring of 768, however, Christopher and his son Sergius contrived to escape from the city, and with the aid of the Lombards deposed the usurper. They were also able to overthrow the monk Philip, whom some of their Lombard allies had clandestinely elected pope. By their efforts Stephen, a Sicilian, the son of Olivus, was at length canonically elected and

consecrated (August 7, 768). He had been a Benedictine monk and had been ordained priest by Pope Zachary. After his consecration the antipopes were treated with the greatest cruelty which, it seems to be generally allowed, Stephen was unable to hinder. To prevent the recurrence of such an election as that of Constantine, the Lateran council forbade laymen to be elected popes or to take part in their election for the future. Only cardinals were to be chosen popes (April, 769). Through Stephen's support the archdeacon Leo was enabled to hold the See of Ravenna against a lay intruder, and in turn through the support of the brothers Charlemagne and Carloman, Kings of the Franks, Stephen was able to recover some territories from the Lombards. But their king, Desiderius, managed to strike two serious blows at Stephen. He brought about a marriage between his daughter and Charlemagne, and in some mysterious manner effected the fall of the pope's chief ministers, Christopher and Sergius. He also allied himself with Paul Afiarta, Stephen's chamberlain, who practiced great cruelties when the pope lay dying. Desiderius also brought about trouble in Istria by trying to cause a schism against the Patriarch of Grado, but Stephen defended the patriarch promising him even armed support if necessary. Stephen is honored as a saint in some Martyrologies.

Source: catholic.com