

100 -165). This suggests that the Christians themselves had difficulty attributing the name to themselves. In Paul's letters, the earliest Christian texts beginning with Galatians (about 48 AD), the disciples of Jesus did not describe themselves as Christians. Paul talks about the Church (Ekklesia), but Ekklesia in Greek meant simply 'Assembly'. Paul considered himself Jewish. For him there were only two religions, Judaism and the others who were pagan worshippers of idols. Paul believed he was preaching the true Judaism, now revealed by Jesus.

All this points to 'Christian' being first used by the Romans, one that the followers of Jesus were very slow to attribute to themselves. Further, the word 'Christian' is fundamentally a Latin construct, transliterated in the New Testament from Latin to Greek. This suggests that it was first used not by the ordinary people, nor by the those locally in power at Antioch, whose language was Greek, but rather by the Roman authorities there. The Romans at Antioch felt the need to distinguish from the Jews this group requiring special attention and treatment. Also, 'Christian' was not a word used to designate followers of a God but of the leader of a political movement. The Romans regarded Jesus as political and his disciples as a political danger.

-Stephen. S

Entrance antiphon: See, I have God for my help. The Lord sustains my soul. I will sacrifice to you with willing heart, and praise your name, O Lord, for it is good.

First Reading: Wisdom 12: 13, 16-19

Responsorial Psalm: 85. Response: O Lord, you are good and forgiving.

Second Reading: Romans 8: 26-27

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our mind, so that we can see what hope his call holds for us. Alleluia!

Gospel: Matthew: 13: 24-43

Memorial Acclamation: Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

Communion Antiphon: The Lord, the gracious, the merciful, has made a memorial of his wonders; he gives food to those who fear him.



Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle A, 2023 Weekly Reflection: Christians and Romans: (1) The Origin of the term "Christian": Calling ourselves 'Christian' seems so natural that we may

rarely stop to ask when, by whom and in what circumstances the term first appeared. What follows in this and the following articles emerged from my watching a 2009 documentary on Arté TV, entitled "Apocalypse". As the title suggests, its main focus is the Revelation of St John, but in Episode 2 it deals with the origin of the word 'Christian' and the allegation that Christians were responsible for the Great Fire of Rome. The term 'Christian' is completely absent in Roman texts of the 1st Century. The Romans' perspective then was that there was a small group of Jews who were followers of a criminal crucified during the reign of Tiberius (14-37 AD) for proclaiming Himself King of the Jews. The first Roman texts which mention the word 'Christian' date from the beginning of the 2nd Century, in the works of Tacitus (55-120) and Suetonius (70-128) who wrote histories of the first century. Relying on Suetonius it appears that it was in about the 50s AD that Rome first began to distinguish between Jews and Christians, though it may be that Romans considered Christians to be merely particularly troublesome Jews.

'Christians'. – *christiano* in Greek - means 'the people of Christ', the companions of the Messiah'. The word is used by St Luke in chapter 11 of the Acts of the Apostles. Acts was written probably about 80-90 AD. In this chapter Luke recalls events from about 35-38 AD when he says: "...in Antioch the disciples were for the first time called Christians." According to Luke it was at Antioch that was first formed a community of Jews and non-Jews, a community distinct from the synagogue. But who was initially behind this designation "Christian"? Was it the Christians who bestowed it on themselves or one that was imposed on them and which stuck? The arguments against it being the people themselves seem to be convincing. St. Luke never uses it again in Acts or in his Gospel (about 80-110 AD). In surviving Christian texts it resurfaces only in the second century beginning with Justin the Martyr (c