

those who had abandoned the faith under Roman persecution. “Novationists” held that they could never be received back into the Church, while Pope Cornelius (251-253 A.D) decided that, after proper penance, they should be. Bishop Cyprian of Carthage supported this but became involved with Pope Stephen in a consequential dispute. Cyprian condemned Stephen’s ruling that those baptised by Novationists, or other heretics, did not need re-baptism, since any baptism performed in the name of the Trinity was valid (still the accepted teaching). Stephen wrote to the churches in Asia Minor threatening to cut off communion with those who followed Cyprian. In doing so, Stephen relied on his succession to Peter as rock of the Church. Though Cyprian did not accept Stephen’s claimed authority he avoided open attacks on the authority of Rome. Stephen died shortly after in 257 A.D., followed by Cyprian’s martyrdom in 258 A.D – thus defusing the confrontation. By this date, as Duffy states: *“Rome remained a fundamental symbol of the unity of the episcopate, with whom an absolute breach was unthinkable”*. So the scene was set for the later, permanent primacy of the Bishop of Rome as Pope and leader of the Roman Catholic Church as direct successor of St Peter. (1) Professor Eamon Duffy (1997) (2) 130 A.D. – 202 A.D; Bishop of Lyon  
**-Stephen. S**

**Entrance Antiphon: Save us, O Lord our God! And gather us from the nations, to give thanks to your holy name, and make it our glory to praise you.**

**First Reading: Deuteronomy 18 15-20**

**Responsorial Psalm: 24 Response: O that today you would listen to his voice! Harden not your hearts.**

**Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 7:32-35**

**Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! Blessed are you, Father Lord of heaven and earth, for revealing the mysteries of the kingdom to mere children. Alleluia!**

**Gospel: Mark 1:21-28**

**Memorial Acclamation: We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.**

**Communion Antiphon: Let your face shine on your servant. Save me in your merciful love. O Lord, let me never be put to shame, for I call on you.**



## **Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B, 2024 Weekly Reflection: The Emergence of the Papacy (2)**

Based on Professor Duffy’s book *“Saints & Sinners – A History of the Popes”* (1), I explained in the first

article that, although New Testament passages imply that Peter’s authority continued in the early Christian community after his death, nevertheless there was no Bishop of Rome well into the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D., despite bishops having begun to emerge and speak authoritatively in other Christian centres from towards the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

In A.D. 140 one Marcion arrived in Rome preaching that there were two Gods, the “angry” Old Testament God and Jesus Christ. He taught that much scripture had to be rejected. This heresy, and others, led to Rome, in about 150 A.D., accepting the need for Church rule by a single bishop and tighter organisation. The Roman church, conscious of the tradition that SS. Peter & Paul were martyred in Rome under Nero, began to reflect more on its apostolic pedigree. In about the mid-150s a succession list of Roman bishops after Peter’s death was compiled, drawing on the names of leading presbyters which still remain in the Roman Canon of the Mass - Linus, Cletus and Clement. As Duffy writes: *“The list is certainly a good deal tidier than the actual transition to rule by a single bishop can have been”*. About the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century, shrines were constructed in Rome to St Peter and St Paul. All this led to a general belief in the precedence of Rome in the church. St Irenaeus (2) wrote: *“it is necessary that.... the faithful everywhere, should resort to this Church [of Rome], on account of its pre-eminent authority in which the apostolic tradition has been preserved continuously”*. By the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century Rome was an accepted point of reference for Christians throughout the Mediterranean. Yet allegiance to Rome was by no means unqualified. There were other seats of apostolic authority (e.g. Corinth and Ephesus); other bishops used the title ‘pope’, which only became confined to the Bishop of Rome from the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Duffy summarises the position thus: *“Christ had indeed founded the Church on Peter, but all the Apostles and all bishops shared fully in the one indivisible apostolic power”*. An incident involving Pope Stephen (254-257 A.D.) is illustrative. A dispute had arisen involving