

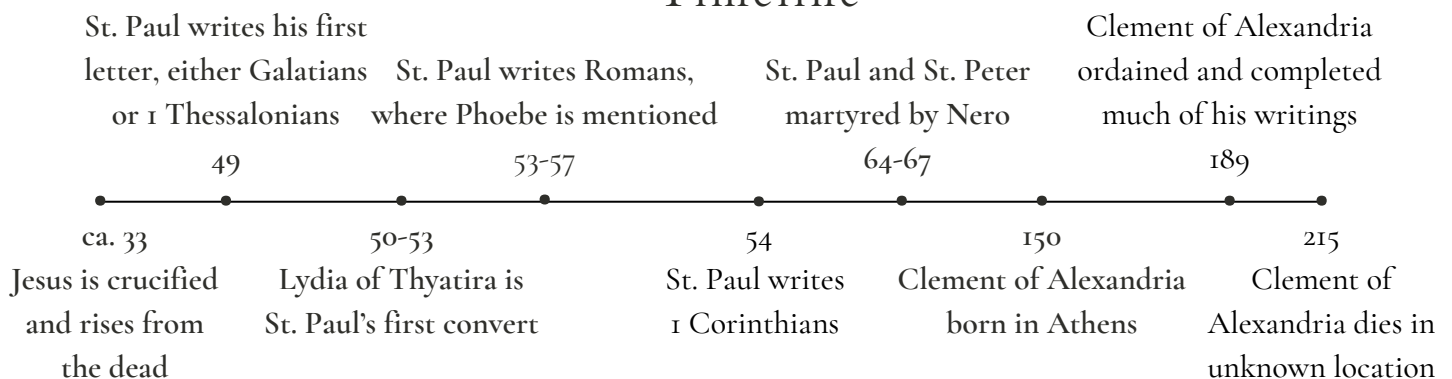


History

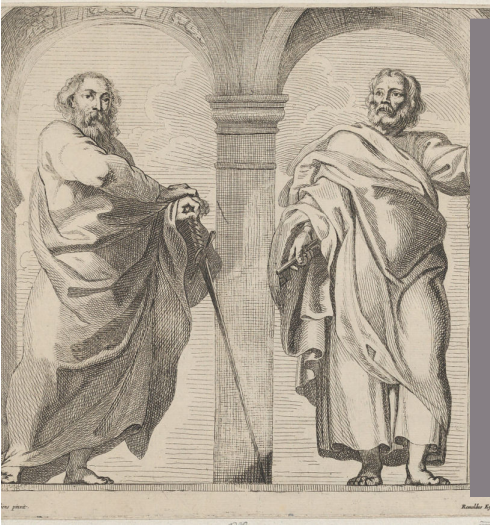
Anyone who has read the New Testament knows how integral women were to Jesus’ ministry and the days of the early Church. From Scripture we find that women were some of the last disciples at the cross and the first at the empty tomb. Biblical and extra-biblical sources tell us that after Jesus’ resurrection, women held some leadership roles in the churches that sprang up around the Roman Empire. Priscilla, Chloe, Dorcas, Lydia, Phoebe, Apphia, Nympha, and the mother of John Mark are just a few mentioned who were of great service to the growth of the Church during the beginning stages of Christianity. It is in Paul’s letters that we especially find information about these women: he tells us how they

risked their lives to save him, worked as prominent church members, and served for Christ’s sake. By the second century, Clement of Alexandria wrote that it was typical for apostles to have women accompany them on their missionary journeys, as they could be “fellowministers” and evangelize to the housewives and women whom they would meet. This was, in part, to ensure that no scandal would occur when teaching about the gospel would occur in women’s quarters. Similarly, the current office of deaconess is inspired by this story as well as the other aforementioned women, demonstrating the need for women to perform acts of service within and on behalf of the Church.

Timeline



Leading Characters

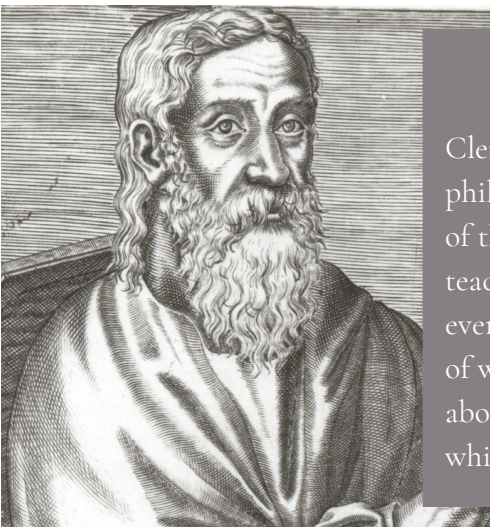


SS. PETER & PAUL

Saints Peter and Paul were the pillars of the Church and the “apostles of the nations” due to their missionary work. Peter joined Jesus’ ministry after being a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee. According to tradition, he was crucified in Rome under Nero. Paul of Tarsus was a convert to Christianity after his previous life of persecuting Christians. He eventually wrote thirteen epistles that are part of the New Testament. Paul is said to have also died in Rome on the same day as Peter. Together these men built much of what we know about the early Church.

DORCAS, LYDIA, & PHOEBE

These women all lived during the first century and were evangelized by Ss. Peter and Paul. Dorcas was known for her acts of charity and clothing needy widows in her church in Joppa. Lydia was a merchant of expensive fabric and, after her conversion, opened her house up to Paul, Luke, and other missionaries to be their headquarters. Phoebe was a deaconess within the church at Cenchreae and mentioned in Romans when Paul asked the church there to bring her into their fold.



CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

Clement of Alexandria was a second-century theologian and philosopher, a convert to Christianity and the intellectual leader of the Alexandrian Christian community. During his time teaching, Clement wrote many works that described certain events of the early Church. This included his summary of the role of women in the growth of Christianity. Much of what we know about him comes from Eusebius and his *Ecclesiastical History*, which tells us about his writings and biographical information.

Sources

Catherine Kroeger. "The Neglected History of Women in the Early Church." Christian History Institute.

Eusebius of Caesarea. *Church History*. ca. 341 AD.
https://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0265-0339,_Eusebius_Caesariensis,_Church_History,_EN.pdf

IMAGES:

The Holy Myrr-Bearing Women at the Tomb of the Risen Christ, Annibale Carracci, Italy, ca. 17th century.

Saints Peter and Paul in a vestibule, Rombout Eynhoudts, Belgium, ca. 1630–80.

Clement of Alexandria. Andre Thevet. France. 1584.