



IIIV Pope.

Roman Martyrology: He was a Grecian by birth, and the seventh bishop of Rome. Towards the end of the year 128, he succeeded Saint Sixtus I sat eleven years, and saw the havoc which the persecution of Adrian made in the church.

Etymology: Form of the Greek meaning "bringing fulfillment" or "bearing fruit".

SHORT BIOGRAPHY

He was of Greek ancestry and born in Terranova da Sibari, Calabria, Italy. Pope Telesphorus reigned as bishop of Rome for ten years, from c. 126 to his death c. 137, when he was martyred in the persecution of Hadrian about the year 138 A.D.

Telesphorus was the seventh successor to Peter. The story that he was an anchorite is doubtful, as is the legend that he instituted Lent. His martyrdom, however, is documented.

Liber Pontificalis attributes the tradition of Christmas midnight masses, the celebration of Easter on Sundays, the keeping of a seven-week Lent before Easter, and the singing of the Gloria to his pontificate. However, except for celebrating Easter on Sunday, many Catholic scholars doubt that such attributions are accurate. A fragment of a letter surviving from the late 2nd century testifies that Telesphorus was one of the Roman bishops who always celebrated Easter on Sunday, rather than on other days of the week according to the calculation of the Jewish Passover. Unlike Victor, however, Telesphorus remained in communion with those communities that did not follow this custom.

The tradition that he was martyred under Hadrian is too well attested, to be discredited. Irenaeus singles him out as the first Roman bishop so honored. "He ended his life by an illustrious martyrdom," says Eusebius; which is also confirmed by Saint Irenæus.