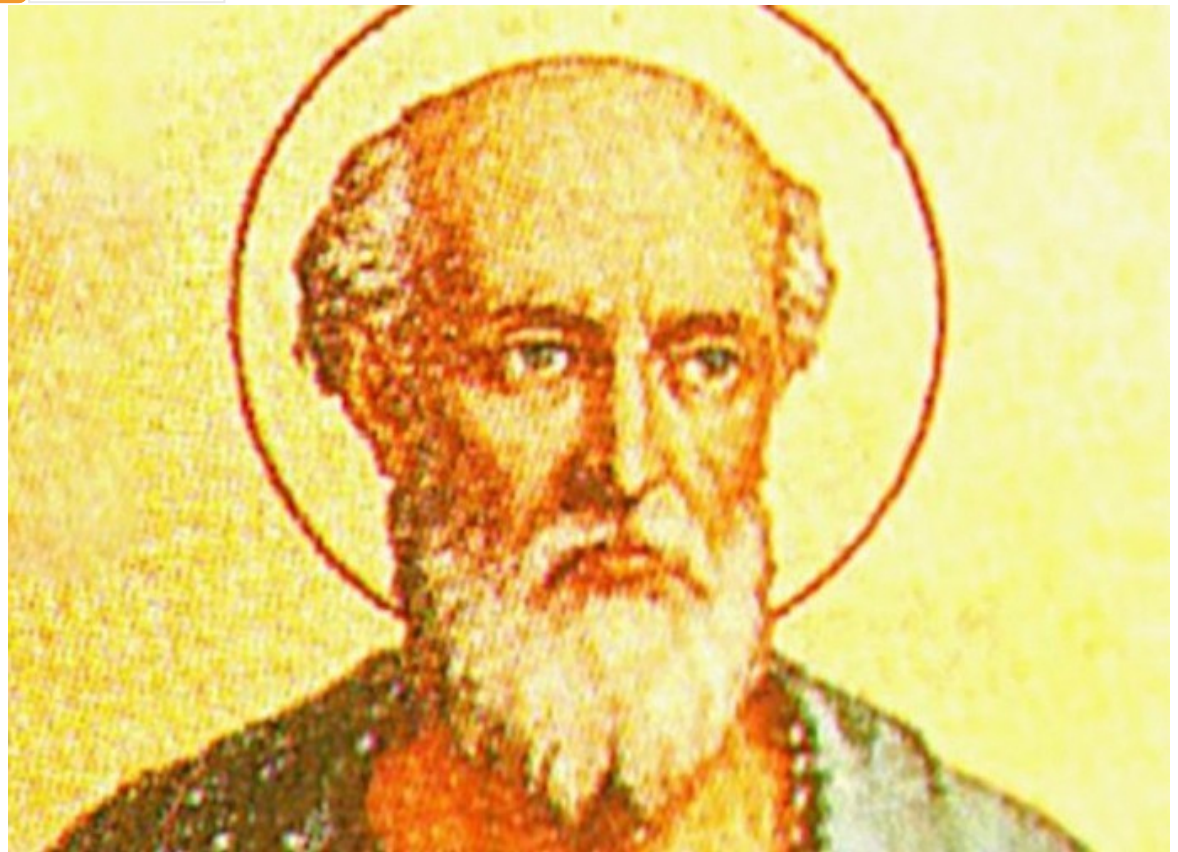


Saint Evaristus

SAINT OF THE DAY

27_10_2021



Little information has reached us on St Evaristus (†108), the fourth successor of St Peter. What is known is contained mainly in the writings of **St Irenaeus of Lyons** (c. 130-202), in *the Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 265-340), and in the *Liber Pontificalis*, a collection of short biographies of pontiffs, which was probably originally written before the siege of Rome in 546.

Eusebius reports that “Clement died in the third year of the emperor in question

[Trajan, *ed*] and transmitted the sacred ministry to Evaristus". His predecessor Clement (†100), whom the Church venerates as a martyr, is identified by tradition with the collaborator of whom St Paul writes in the Letter to the Philippians (Phil 4:3). It is also known that he was exiled by the Emperor Trajan in Crimea: this is why St Clement is considered the first pontiff to have forcibly renounced the Petrine ministry and Eusebius informs us that he "passed it on" to Evaristus, evidently already distinguished for his holiness among the primitive community of Christians.

According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, Evaristus was from a Hellenic family, his father originally from Bethlehem. The document also mentions that the saint ordained seven deacons, first attributed the *tituli* to the priests, and suffered martyrdom. In the revision of the Roman Martyrology (2001-2004) this latter information is not reported, because it is in doubt, and today it simply reads: "In Rome, St Evaristus, Pope, who ruled the Church of Rome fourth after Blessed Peter, under Emperor Trajan".

What is certain is that St. Evaristus lived during a period of persecution of Christians, as is attested by the correspondence between Pliny the Younger and Trajan. And as Tertullian recalled in these terms: "Yet we found that it was forbidden to seek us. Because Pliny the Younger, who governed a province, after having condemned and dismissed some Christians, impressed by their number and no longer knowing how to behave, told the Emperor Trajan that he had found nothing criminal in them except the refusal of pagan worship. [...] At which Trajan told him to no longer seek out the tribe of Christians, but to punish them if they were caught as such".