

Pope St. Linus

(Reigned about A.D. 64 or 67 to 76 or 79).

All the ancient records of the [Roman bishops](#) which have been handed down to us by [St. Irenaeus](#),
[Julius Africanus](#)

,
[St. Hippolytus](#)

,
[Eusebius](#)

, also the Liberian catalogue of 354, place the name of Linus directly after that of the Prince of the

[Apostles](#)

,
[St. Peter](#)

. These records are traced back to a list of the

[Roman bishops](#)

which existed in the time of

[Pope Eleutherus](#)

(about 174-189), when

[Irenaeus](#)

wrote his book "Adversus haereses". As opposed to this testimony, we cannot accept as more reliable

[Tertullian's](#)

assertion, which unquestionably places

[St. Clement](#)

(De praescriptione, xxii) after the

[Apostle Peter](#)

, as was also done later by other Latin scholars (Jerome, "De vir. ill.", xv). The Roman list in

[Irenaeus](#)

has undoubtedly greater claims to historical authority. This author claims that

[Pope](#)

Linus is the Linus mentioned by

[St. Paul](#)

in his II Timothy 4:21. The passage by

[Irenaeus](#)

(Adv. haereses, III, iii, 3) reads:

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After the Holy [Apostles](#) ([Peter](#) and [Paul](#)) had founded and set the [Church](#) in order (in [Rome](#)) they gave over the exercise of the episcopal office to Linus. The same Linus is mentioned by [St. Paul](#) in his Epistle to Timothy. His successor was [Anacletus](#).

We cannot be positive whether this identification of the [pope](#) as being the Linus mentioned in II Timothy 4:21, goes back to an ancient and reliable source, or originated later on account of the similarity of the name.

Linus's term of office, according to the [papal](#) lists handed down to us, lasted only twelve years. The Liberian Catalogue shows that it lasted twelve years, four months, and twelve days. The [dates](#) given in this catalogue, A.D. 56 until A.D. 67, are incorrect. Perhaps it was on account of these [dates](#) that the writers of the fourth century gave their opinion that Linus had held the position of head of the Roman community during the life of the [Apostle](#) ; e.g., [Rufinus](#) in the preface to his translation of the pseudo-Clementine "Recognitiones". But this hypothesis has no historical foundation. It cannot be [doubted](#) that according to the accounts of [Irenaeus](#) concerning the [Roman Church](#) in the second century, Linus was chosen to be head of the community of [Christians](#) in [Rome](#) , after the death of the [Apostle](#) . For this reason his pontificate dates from the year of the death of the [Apostles](#) [Peter](#) and [Paul](#)

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, which, however, is not known for certain.

The "[Liber Pontificalis](#)" asserts that Linus's home was in [Tuscany](#) , and that his [father's](#) name was Herculanius; but we cannot discover the origin of this assertion. According to the same work on the

[popes](#)

, Linus is supposed to have issued a

[decree](#)

"in conformity with the ordinance of

[St. Peter](#)

", that

[women](#)

should have their heads covered in church. Without

[doubt](#)

this

[decree](#)

is

[apocryphal](#)

, and copied by the author of the

["Liber Pontificalis"](#)

from the

[first Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians \(11:5\)](#)

and arbitrarily attributed to the first successor of the

[Apostle](#)

in

[Rome](#)

. The statement made in the same source, that Linus suffered

[martyrdom](#)

, cannot be

[proved](#)

and is improbable. For between

[Nero](#)

and

[Domitian](#)

there is no mention of any

[persecution](#)

of the

[Roman Church](#)

; and

[Irenaeus](#)

(1. c., III, iv, 3) from among the early Roman

[bishops](#)

designates only

[Telesphorus](#)

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as a
[glorious](#)
[martyr](#)

.

Finally this book asserts that Linus after his death, was [buried](#) in the [Vatican](#) beside [St. Peter](#)

We do not
[know](#)

whether the author had any decisive
[reason](#)

for this assertion. As
[St. Peter](#)

was certainly
[buried](#)

at the foot of the
[Vatican](#)

Hill, it is quite possible that the earliest
[bishops](#)

of the
[Roman Church](#)

also were
[interred](#)

there. There was nothing in the
[liturgical](#)

tradition of the fourth-century
[Roman Church](#)

to
[prove](#)

this, because it was only at the end of the second century that any special
[feast](#)

of
[martyrs](#)

was instituted and consequently Linus does not appear in the fourth-century lists of the
[feasts](#)

of the Roman
[saints](#)

. According to Torrigio ("Le sacre grotte Vaticane", Viterbo, 1618, 53) when the present
[confession](#)

was constructed in St. Peter's (1615), sarcophagi were found, and among them was one which bore the word Linus. The explanation given by Severano of this discovery ("Memorie delle sette chiese di Roma", Rome, 1630, 120) is that probably these sarcophagi contained the remains of the first Roman
[bishops](#)

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, and that the one bearing that inscription was Linus's [burial](#) place. This assertion was repeated later on by different writers. But from a [manuscript](#) of Torrigio's we see that on the sarcophagus in question there were other letters beside the word Linus, so that they rather belonged to some other name (such as Aquilinus, Anullinus). The place of the discovery of the [tomb](#) is a [proof](#) that it could not be the [tomb](#) of Linus ([De Rossi](#), "Inscriptiones christianae urbis Romae", II, 23-7).

The [feast](#) of St. Linus is now celebrated on 23 September. This is also the [date](#) given in the ["Liber Pontificalis"](#). An [epistle](#) on the [martyrdom](#) of the [Apostles St. Peter](#) and [Paul](#) was at a later period attributed to St. Linus, and supposedly was sent by him to the [Eastern Churches](#). It is [apocryphal](#) and of later [date](#) than the history of the [martyrdom](#) of the two [Apostles](#), by some attributed to Marcellus, which is also [apocryphal](#) ("Acta Apostolorum apocrypha", ed. [Lipsius](#) and Bonnet, I, ed; Leipzig, 1891, XIV sqq., 1 sqq.).

Nero

Nero, the last Roman emperor (reigned 54-68) of the Julian-Claudian line, was the son of Domitius Ahenobarbus and Julia Agrippina, niece of Emperor Claudius. After the violent death of his first wife, Valeria Messalina, Emperor Claudius [married](#) Julia, [adopted](#) her son Nero and gave him in [marriage](#)

his own daughter, Octavia. Nero's mother had a mind to commit any crime to put him on the throne, and to prepare him for this station she had L. Annaeus Seneca appointed his tutor, and caused the freedman Afranius Burrus, a rough but experienced soldier, to be made commander of the Praetorian guard. These men were the advisers and chief supporters of Nero on his becoming emperor, after the sudden death of Claudius.

Nero was born in Antium on 15 December, A.D. 37, and was seventeen years old when he became emperor. He believed himself to be a great singer and poet. All the better dispositions of his nature had been stifled by his sensuality and [moral](#) perversity. Agrippina had expected to be a partner of her son in the government, but owing to her autocratic character, this lasted only a short time. The first years of Nero's reign, under the direction of Burrus and Seneca, the real holders of power, were auspicious in every way. A series of regulations either abrogated or lessened the hardships of direct taxation, the arbitrariness of legislation and provincial administration, so that [Rome](#) and the empire were delighted, and the first five years of Nero's government were accounted the [happiest](#) of all time, regarded by [Trajan](#) as the best of the imperial era.

Under Claudius, the [Armenians](#) and Parthians had revolted, and the proconsul had been unable to uphold the prestige of the Roman arms. Seneca advised Nero to assert his [rights](#) over [Armenia](#), and Domitius Corbulo was recalled from [Germany](#)

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and

[Britain](#)

to go with fresh troops to Cappadocia and Galatia, where he stormed the two

[Armenian](#)

capitals, Artaxata and Tigranocerta in A.D. 59 and made his headquarters in the city of

[Nisibis](#)

. King Tivdates was dethroned, and Tigranes, Nero's favourite, made vassal in his stead. But the position of Tigranes was insecure, and Vologeses, King of the Parthians, who had previously retired from

[Armenia](#)

and given hostages to the Romans, rekindled the

[war](#)

, defeated the new proconsul Patus, and forced him to capitulate. Corbulo again took command and recognized Tivdates as king on condition that he should lay down his crown before the image of Nero, and acknowledge his lordship over

[Armenia](#)

as granted by Nero; this so flattered the emperor that, ascending the rostrum in the Forum Romanum, he himself placed the crown on the head of Tivdates.

At the same time a dangerous [war](#) broke out in [Britain](#). Strong camps and forts had been built there in the first years of Nero's reign, and the proconsul, Suetonius Paulinus, had undertaken here, as had Corbulo in the past, to extend the frontiers of the Roman conquests. With the native population complaining of excessive taxation, conscription, the

[avarice](#)

of Roman officials, came suddenly the summons of the heroic Queen of the Iceni, Boadicea, bidding her tribes to free themselves from Roman tyranny (A.D. 61). The procurator, Decianus Catus, had driven this noble

[woman](#)

to despair by his odious and cruel

[greed](#)

; and when this oppression and the shame of her own and her daughter's violation became known to her people and the neighbouring tribes, their

[wrath](#)

and hopes for revenge alone beset them. The Roman camps were destroyed, the troops surprised and slain, and more than 70,000 colonists paid the penalty of their oppression by the loss of home and life.

[London](#)

was burned to the ground, and the proconsul, Suetonius Paulinus, came but slowly to the help of the remaining colonists from his incursion upon the island of Mona. On his arrival was fought the battle of Deva (Dee), in which

[Britain](#)

succumbed to Roman discipline, and was again subjugated with the aid of fresh troops from

[Germany](#)

.

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After the death of Claudius, Agrippina had caused to be poisoned her old enemy Narcissus, the protector of Britannicus, and Junius Silanus, because of his Julian kinship. Pallas, the powerful finance minister, and her most valiant adherent, was deprived of his office, and her personal influence in the government constantly lessened. That she might regain her power, she courted the neglected Octavia, and sought to make the impotent Britannicus a rival of her son; this induced Nero to order the [murder](#) of Britannicus, who was poisoned at a banquet amidst his own [family](#) and friends, Burrus and Seneca both consenting to the crime. When Nero had [seduced](#) Poppaea Sabina, the wife of his friend Salvius Otho, she resented playing the role of [concubine](#) and aspired to that of empress. This brought about a crisis between son and mother, for with all her [vices](#) Agrippina had never lacked a certain external dignity, and had expressed in her conduct the sentiment of imperial power. Now when through [hatred](#) of Poppaea she undertook to protect the interests of Octavia, to whom indeed Nero owed his throne, the son determined to rid himself of his mother. He invited her to a pleasure party at Baiae, and the ship which was to convey her out to sea was so constructed as to sink at a given order. This attempt having miscarried, he ordered that she should be clubbed to death in her country house, by his freemen (A.D. 59). The report was then spread abroad that Agrippina had sought the life of her son, and Seneca so dishonoured his pen as to write to the senate a brief condemning the mother. One man alone of all the Senate had the [courage](#) to leave his seat when this letter was read, Thrasea Paetus the [philosopher](#). Burrus dying in A.D. 62, left Seneca no longer able to withstand the influence of Poppaea and of Sophonius Tigellinus, prefect of the Praetorian guards. He retired into private life, and new crimes were conceived and effected.

Sulla and Plautus, great-nephews of [Augustus](#), being in exile, were beheaded by Nero's command, and his [marriage](#) with Octavia being annulled, she was banished to Campania. The populace resented deeply the maltreatment of Octavia, and the tumults which occurred in consequence served only to increase the fear and [hatred](#) of Poppaea. Octavia was sent to the island of Pandataria, and there beheaded. Poppaea now assumed the title of Augusta, her image was stamped upon the coin of the Roman State, and her opponents were [murdered](#) by dagger or poison. Nero with his mates rioted by night through the city, attacking men, assaulting

[women](#)

, and filled the vacant positions at the imperial Court from the dregs of the city. In the civic administration extravagance was unbounded, in the court luxury unbridled. Financial deficits grew over night; the

[fortunes](#)

of those who had been condemned at

[law](#)

, of freedmen, of all pretenders by birth, filled the depleted exchequer, and the coin was deliberately debased. All efforts to stem these disasters were vain, and the general misery had reached its highest, when in A.D. 64 occurred the terrible conflagration which burnt entirely three, and partly seven, of the fourteen districts into which

[Rome](#)

was divided. The older authors, Tacitus and Suetonius, say clearly, and the testimony of all later

[heathen](#)

and

[Christian](#)

writers concurs with them, that Nero himself gave the order to set the capital on fire, and that the people at large believed this report. Nero was in Antium when he heard that

[Rome](#)

was in flames, he hastened thither, and is said to have ascended the tower of Maecenas, and looking upon the sea of flame in which

[Rome](#)

lay engulfed, to have sung on his lyre the song of the ruin of Ilium.

In place of the old city with its narrow and crooked streets, Nero planned a new residential city, to be called Neronia. For six days the fire ravaged the closely built quarters, and many thousands perished in the flames; countless great works of art were lost in the ruins. Informers,

[bribed](#)

for the purpose, declared that the

[Christians](#)

had set

[Rome](#)

on fire. Their

[doctrine](#)

of the nothingness of earthly joys in comparison with the

[delights](#)

of

[immortal](#)

[souls](#)

in

[heaven](#)

was an enduring reproof to the dissolute emperor. There began a fierce

[persecution](#)

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throughout the empire, and through
[robbery](#)
and confiscation the
[Christians](#)
were forced to pay in great part for the building of the new
[Rome](#)
. In this
[persecution](#)
Saints
[Peter](#)
and
[Paul](#)
were
[martyred](#)
in
[Rome](#)
in A.D. 67.

Broad streets and plazas were planned by the imperial architects; houses of stone arose where before stood those of lime and wood; the *Domus aurea*, enclosed in wonderful gardens and parks, in extent greater than a whole former town-quarter astonished men by its splendour and beauty. In order to compass the colossal expenditures for these vast undertakings, the
[temples](#)
were stripped of their works of art, of their gold and silver votive offerings, and
[justly](#)
or
[unjustly](#)
the
[fortunes](#)
of the great
[families](#)
confiscated. The universal discontent thus aroused resulted in the conspiracy of Calpurnius Piso. The plot was discovered, and the conspirators and their
[families](#)
and friends condemned to
[death](#)
. Amongst the most noted of them were Seneca, Lucan, Petronius, and the
[Stoic](#)
Thrasea Paetus, of whom Tacitus said that he was
[virtue](#)
incarnate, and one of the few whose
[courage](#)
and
[justice](#)

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had never been concealed in presence of the murderous Caesar. Poppaea too, who had been brutally kicked by her husband, died, with her

[unborn child](#)

soon after. Finally the emperor started on a pleasure tour through lower

[Italy](#)

and

[Greece](#)

; as actor, singer, and harp player he gained the scorn of the world; he heaped upon his triumphal chariots the victor-crowns of the great Grecian games, and so dishonoured the dignity of Rome that Tacitus through respect for the mighty ancestors of the Caesar would not once mention his name.

Outbreaks in the provinces and in [Rome](#) itself now presaged the approaching overthrow of the Neronian tyranny. Julius Vindex, Proconsul of Gallia Lugdunensis, with the intent of giving

[Gaul](#)

an independent and worthy government, raised the banner of revolt, and sought an alliance with the Proconsuls of

[Spain](#)

and the Rhine Provinces. Sulpicius Galba, Proconsul of Hispania Tarraconensis, who was ready for the change, agreed to the plans presented to him, declared his fealty to Nero ended, and was proclaimed emperor by his own army. L. Verginius Rufus, Proconsul of Upper

[Germany](#)

, was offered the principate by his troops, and let them against the usurper Vindex. In a battle at Vesontio (

[Besan](#)