Life of St Clement Maria Hofbauer

St Clement was an amazing Redemptorist, a baker, priest, preacher, member of the Redemptorist Congregation and the city patron of Vienna. St Clement is a saint who inspires courage today. Courage to proclaim the faith, courage to take up new ventures, courage to face tribulations, courage to stand up for the truth and what is right and courage to give all because of a contagious love for Christ and his people. He was the ninth of twelve children of a Bohemian cattle breeder and butcher and a mother of German descent.

Hofbauer decided at the age of 16 to start an apprenticeship as a baker in Znojmo. After completing his apprenticeship, he got a job at the Premonstratensian Monastery of Klosterbruck and attended the convent school there. During this time, he went to live as a hermit in a Hermitage and made also made three pilgrimages to Rome. At the age of 29, he moved to Vienna as a baker. In connection with another pilgrimage to Rome, in 1783, as a hermit, he took the name Clement Maria with the consent of the Bishop of Tivoli, later Pope Pius VII.

On the 29th March 1785 Clement Maria Hofbauer was ordained a priest in Alatri not too far from Rome. Clement was not a brilliant genius or a theologian but in a unique way he links social pastoral care with its proclamation; a going out to the peripheries, to the most abandoned, a truly Redemptorist trait, something that Pope Francis calls for in the Church today. Thaddäus Hübl died of typhus in 1807 and only a year later, the Redemptorists were expelled from Warsaw, because Napoleon suspected them of being sympathisers of the Bourbons.

He becomes a popular confessor, and all sorts of people gathered, especially the young students at the University, the professors, and even many protestants whom he befriended. May people were drawn in large numbers to his church services, and also to meet him in his humble abode. His home became a popular meeting and confessional room for famous and everyday personalities, young people and the poor. Gradually, he brought a new form of Catholicity to the city, namely the awareness that the Catholic is not national, but all-encompassing and above all, full of goodness.

Despite his growing fame, Hofbauer always took time for the poor and provided them personally with bread and soup almost every day. Unfortunately, his thriving mission comes to an end as he is discovered to being a Redemptorist, something that was forbidden by the Emperor at the time, no Religious or Religious order could be established in the Kingdom. He was then arrested and imprisoned.

Today the remains of St. Clement are in the same church of Maria am Gestade. Hofbauer was beatified on 29th January 1888 by Pope Leo XIII. And then finally canonised by Pius X on 20th May 1909. He was named patron saint of Vienna by Pope St. Pius X in 1914.