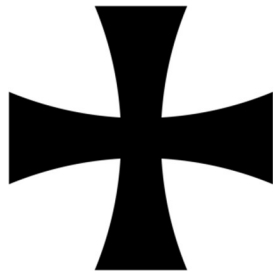


A Short History of the Catholic Church



History of the Church

Understanding Human History

History is not random. It is the story of God working in our world through his Church and his people. History has a beginning (Creation) and an end (the 2nd coming), but the one central event in all of history is the **Incarnation**.

The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ

Eph. 1:22-23 And he put all things beneath his feet and gave him as head over all things to the **church**, which is his **body**, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

Eph 3:4-10 When you read this you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and partakers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel . . . the plan of the mystery hidden from ages past in God who created all things, so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the principalities and authorities in the heavens.

1Cor. 12:12-13 As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are **one body**, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.

The Purpose of the Church

Christ founded the Church for one purpose and that is to continue his saving work. The Church shows us how to worship and preserves the “deposit of faith” delivered by Jesus and the Apostles. Evangelization and catechesis (teaching) are the primary actions of the Church.

Church History

- 33 A.D. – Christ establishes his church
 - Founded on Peter, “you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church.” (***Mt 16:18***)
 - Peter and Paul martyred in Rome under Emperor Nero around 64 A.D.
 - The Church is not a human institution, but divinely established and empowered by the Holy Spirit (***Acts 2:1ff***)
- 50 A.D. – First New Testament document written (1 Thessalonians)
- 70 A.D. – The Temple in Jerusalem is destroyed by the Romans under Emperor Vespasian
 - No more sacrifices could be offered by the Jewish priests
- 64 A.D. to 311 A.D. – The Church is persecuted by Roman Emperors Nero, Decius, Valerian, Diocletian, Galerius.
 - Most of the first 29 popes (successors of Peter, the Bishop of Rome) were martyred.
- Circa 95 A.D. – Last books of the NT written.

- 110 A.D. – First recording of the Church being called “Catholic” – Ignatius of Antioch (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans, Ch. 8*)

Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the **Catholic Church**.¹

- C. 150 A.D The Gnostics: Gnosticism is the heresy that claimed the Apostles were not given all revelation from Christ, but that certain individuals had divine secret knowledge (gnosis) not available to the Apostles. First major gnostic was Valentinus (AD 100- 180)
 - The material world was bad and the spiritual world is good.
 - Salvation is through a secret knowledge (gnosis)
- C. 200 A.D. – Priest Sabellius (heresy of Sabellianism) teaches that the Father, Son & Holy Spirit are just different “modes” of the same person, not individual persons. Also called **Modalism**.
- 292 A.D. – Emperor Diocletian divides the Roman Empire into East and West.
- 303 A.D. – The great persecution under Diocletian begins. Lasts until 306 A.D. in the West and 313 A.D. in the East.
- 313 A.D. – Christianity become legal – end of persecutions by Emperor Constantine with the Edict of Milan.
- 325 A.D. – First Church council – **Council of Nicaea**
 - Gathering of Catholic Bishops from around the world, about 318 in all, to deal with the Arian heresy. Arius, a priest, claimed Jesus was not of the same substance as the Father, that he was created. It also established the Nicene Creed.
- 381 A.D. – First Ecumenical **Council of Constantinople**
 - Condemns Apollinaris. *Apollinarianism* teaches that Christ had a human body and a divine mind, but not a human mind or spirit. It also expands the 3rd stanza of the creed defining the divinity of the Holy Spirit and thus completes what we call the Nicene Creed.
- 382 A.D. – **Synod of Rome** confirmed the NT Canon as 27 books and OT 46 books. The same 27 books we have today.
- 383 A.D. – Pope St. Damasus I commissions St. Jerome to take original manuscripts in Hebrew (OT) and Greek (NT) and translate them into Latin.
 - This translation is called the Latin Vulgate and it becomes the official translation of the Catholic Church.
- 387 A.D. – Baptism of Augustine by Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan.

¹ Ignatius of Antioch, [“The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans.”](#) in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 90–212.

- 393 A.D. and 397 A.D. (respectively) – **Synod of Hippo and Carthage** re-affirm the 27 books of the NT and 46 of the OT.
 - Pope Innocent I officially pronounces the canon of scripture as the 27 book in the NT and 46 in the OT.
- 431 A.D. – Ecumenical **Council of Ephesus**, led by St. Cyril of Alexandria.
 - Confirmed the Nicene Creed, defined Christ as the incarnate Word of God and proclaims Mary as “Theotokos” or “God-bearer.” It condemned Nestorius (*Nestorianism*) that taught that Mary was the “Christotokos” or “Christ-bearer.” The council met at the Church of Mary in Ephesus.
- 451 A.D. – Ecumenical **Council of Chalcedon** called by Emperor Marcian.
 - Set aside the 449 A.D. 2nd council of Ephesus, called the “Robber Council,” where Eutyches proclaimed the doctrine of the one nature of Jesus. It condemned Eutyches and the Monophysites. *Monophysitism* taught that Jesus had only one nature, a divine one. It denied the human nature of Jesus.
- 476 A.D. – The Roman Empire splits up between East and West. Last Western Roman Emperor deposed and the Middle Ages begins in the West; The Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantine) lasts until A.D. 1453.



- 400's A.D. – Christianization of the barbaric tribes of Europe.
 - Conversion of Ireland through St. Patrick. Goths, Vandals, Lombards and Burgundians converted chiefly by Theophilus, bishop of Crimea.
 - The barbaric leaders were not intimidated by these Christian men, because these men had renounced wealth, power and sex, so they weren't there to take the barbarian's land, power or women.
- 529 A.D. – 2nd **Council of Orange**
 - Condemns Pelagius as a heretic. *Pelagianism* stated that man's faith was an act of free will unassisted by previous internal grace. The Council defined that faith, though a free act, resulted even in its beginnings from the grace of God, enlightening the human mind and enabling belief. It also explicitly denied double predestination, stating, "We do not believe that any are foreordained to evil by the power of God, but even state with utter abhorrence that if there are those who want to believe so evil a thing, they are anathema."
- 589 A.D. – The “filioque” (means “and the son”) begins to be inserted into the Nicene Creed throughout Spain following the 1st local Council of Toledo. It was not used by Rome until the early 11th century.

- 622 A.D. – The start of the Islamic religion.
 - Mohammed claimed the Archangel Gabriel called him to be a prophet of God
 - Conquers by “the sword” – convert to Islam or die.
- 680 A.D. – **3rd Ecumenical Council of Constantinople**
 - Condemned the *Monothelism*. The Monothelites believed that Jesus had two natures (human and divine), but only a divine will. It affirms Jesus had a human will as well as divine will.
- 726 A.D. – Byzantine Emperor, Leo III, launches *Iconoclasm* that began a 120 year controversy. Iconoclasts believe that there should be no veneration of “graven images” as the OT condemned.
- 756 A.D. – Central Italy given to Pope Stephen II by Pepin the Short, king of the Franks. It is commonly called “the Donation of Pepin.” This led to the formation of the Papal States.
- 787 A.D. – **2nd Ecumenical Council of Nicaea**
 - Vindicates the veneration of images.
- 867 A.D. – Photius, patriarch of Constantinople, denounces the Latin addition of the *filioque* to the creed, thus the beginning Photian Schism.
- **1054 A.D.** – Mutual excommunication between the Patriarch of Constantinople, Michael I, and Pope Leo IX, leads to the **Great Schism** between the Catholic (West) and Orthodox (East). Subsequent “ecumenical” councils have no Eastern Orthodox participants.
 - Birth of the “Orthodox” Churches – Russian, Greek, Constantinople, Alexandria, etc. (about 14 in all)
 - The two Churches had been estranged since the split between the East and West Roman empire in 476 A.D. This and many other factors contributed to the split between the Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Roman) Church.
 - The Orthodox Churches have valid ordinations (Holy Orders) and sacraments.

The Crusades

- 1095 to 1270 A.D. – The Crusades, 8 in all – from 1095 to 1270 A.D.
 - Initial reason was to protect pilgrims on trips to the Holy Land from Islamic attacks.
 - Then they were launched to retake Christian lands conquered by Islamic armies.
 - The crusades prevented Europe from becoming an Islamic nation.
- The Printing Press was invented by Gutenberg (a Catholic) – 1455 A.D.
 - The first book ever printed was the Catholic Bible (Latin Vulgate)
- The Protestant Revolution – 1517 A.D.

- Begun by Martin Luther, a Catholic monk. He was rightfully disgusted with the corruption in the Church at the time (e.g. selling of indulgences). Broke away from the Church instead of reforming it from within.
- John Calvin starts his own “religion” or theology called Calvinism – 1534 A.D.
- Many more protestant denominations followed . . .
- Council of Trent – 1545 to 1563 A.D.
 - Addressed the protestant doctrines of salvation, the sacraments . . . and the canon (list of books) of the Bible.