

THE DIVINE ORIGINS
OF THE CHURCH

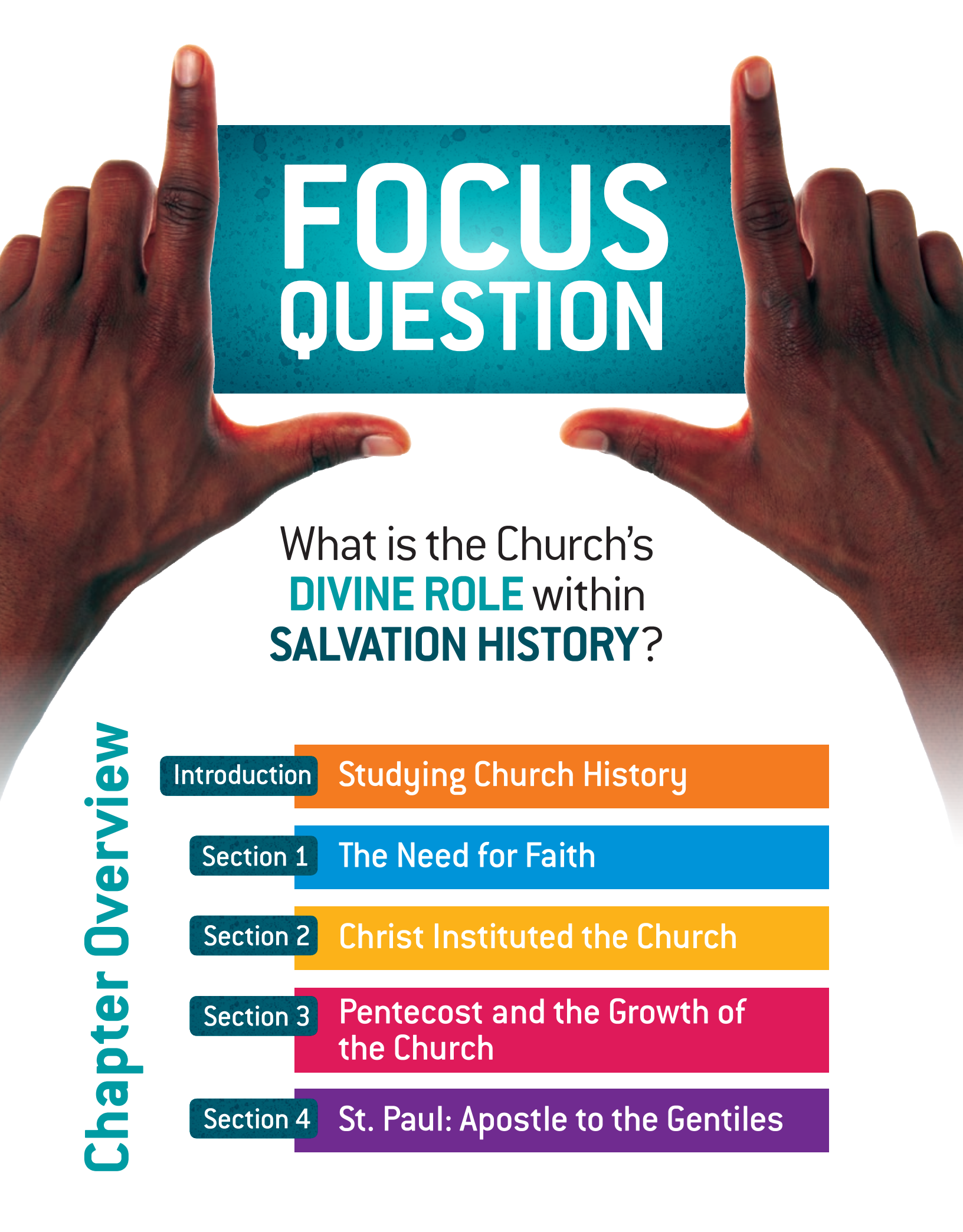
VATICAN DISPLAYS THE RELICS OF ST. PETER FOR THE FIRST TIME



St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican in Rome was built between 1506 and 1626 on the site where tradition held that St. Peter had been entombed. (Peter was martyred in about AD 65 [around the same time as St. Paul, his collaborator in the faith] during the reign of the Roman emperor Nero.) But it was not until the mid-twentieth century that a series of excavations beneath the altar of St. Peter's unearthed human skeletal remains in such a location that archaeologists believed that they could only be those of Peter. Subsequently, a team of scientists determined that the bones were approximately two thousand years old, and genetic testing revealed that they indeed belonged to a Middle Eastern man in his sixties. These observations, along with other factors, pointed to the conclusion that the bones belong to Peter, and they were definitively declared authentic by Pope Paul VI in 1968.

In 2013 the Vatican decided to put the *relics*, or earthly remains, of St. Peter on public display for the first time. This exposition of Peter's relics was organized to coincide with the conclusion of the Church's liturgical "Year of Faith," which Pope Benedict XVI had opened on October 11, 2012, and which Pope Francis concluded on November 24, 2013.

Pope Francis holds relics of St. Peter the Apostle.



FOCUS QUESTION

What is the Church's
DIVINE ROLE within
SALVATION HISTORY?

Chapter Overview

Introduction Studying Church History

Section 1 The Need for Faith

Section 2 Christ Instituted the Church

Section 3 Pentecost and the Growth of
the Church

Section 4 St. Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles

INTRODUCTION

Studying Church History

MAIN IDEA

The Church is the continuation of the Incarnation in the world. The Church is the intimate connection between Christ and the world.



You've learned the value of studying history from other history courses you have taken in school. Historians look back at evidence and written records from a particular time and attempt to determine what they meant to the people of that period, as well as whether they can explain certain developments such as war, the collapse of an empire, economic prosperity, or the flourishing of the arts. Historians also endeavor to show that understanding past events can help people understand occurrences today as well as what might happen in the future.

This course is a history course. It is the study of the history of the Catholic Church. The Church has a long, traceable history of almost two thousand years that has paralleled the history of the great Roman Empire, the Renaissance, the Age of Exploration of the New World, the era of the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and the accelerating technological advances of the twentieth century through today.

The Church is certainly a human institution made up of a community of people and a hierarchy of structure. Elements of a historical study of the Church are similar to those you would find in other historical studies (e.g., uncovering written records and artifacts such as the remains of St. Peter). But studying the history of the Church is also much different from



NOTE TAKING

Synthesizing Information. After you read the text section, write a sentence that might persuade a friend of what you believe to be the value of studying the history of the Catholic Church. You may use one of the following to sentence starters.

It is important to study the history of the Catholic Church because . . .

For me, the value in studying Church history is . . .



Jesus is present in the lives of the people who make up the Church and especially in the consecrated gifts of bread, shown here in a Eucharistic procession.

studying about any other long-standing human institution, such as a nation or government. When God the Father created the whole universe and then created humans to share in his divine life, he had the Church in mind. She is truly “a plan born in the Father’s heart” (CCC, 759), foreshadowed or “already present in figure at the beginning of the world” (*Lumen Gentium*, 2).

The Church is the place where Jesus Christ, the Son of God, remains present. She is the place where God continues to share his Revelation to the world. This means that although the Church is in historical time, she also transcends history. The Church both takes part in human history and surpasses human comprehension. Through the years and generations, the Church has been and remains the bearer of the divine life even as she takes her place in human history. That’s what makes a course on Church history different from other history courses you take in school.

What Is the Church?

St. Joan of Arc once described the Church this way: “About Jesus Christ and the Church, I simply know they are just one thing, and we shouldn’t complicate the matter.” Most people today—Catholics and non-Catholics alike—understand that there is a connection between Jesus Christ and the Church. But many people also seem to believe that Christian faith and participating in the Church can be separated. It is not uncommon to hear people say things such as:

- “I believe in God, but I have no use for the Church”; or
- “As long as you accept Jesus, the question about whether or not you belong to a church is irrelevant”; or even
- “Don’t commit yourself to any church. Churches get in the way of real faith.”

These perspectives are false. The Christian faith cannot be separated from a relationship with the Church because where the Church is, God is.

The Catholic Church is rooted in faith in God, who became incarnate in history in the Divine Person of Jesus of Nazareth. In Jesus, people were able to touch, listen to, and speak to God directly. In Jesus, people came to know God's healing and forgiveness in an immediate way. In Jesus, God's offer of salvation and fullness of life became a tangible reality. Following Jesus' **Paschal Mystery**, salvation and fullness of life became accessible to all people through the Church. Jesus breathed his Spirit into the Church so that the Church could be his Body on earth. From this time on, "the mission of Christ and the Spirit becomes the mission of the Church" (CCC, 730).

The Church is indeed in history, but she also transcends history. Only "with the eyes of faith" can you see both the visible reality and spiritual reality of the Church (see CCC, 770). If the Church is both the visible reality and spiritual reality of God's life on earth, then it is obvious that people cannot separate their response to God's call from their relationship to the Church.

The very word *church* reveals the connection between answering God's call and being part of a community: the Greek word used in the New Testament is *ekklesia*, meaning "those called out of." *Ekklesia* was commonly used to refer to a legislative assembly; when it was used in Scripture, it referred to the community called out of the world by God to live and act in a way that was different from others. But God does not call you to the Church as an isolated individual. The meeting place is not a private dinner with God. Rather, God's call resounds through all creation, summoning those who hear to gather in an assembly and to act together on behalf and in the name of God. God's call is a call to be united with Christ, to be part of his body. In other words, God's call to faith is a call to be Church. Only in faith can you recognize the Church's place in history along with its role in bearing God to the world.

Paschal Mystery The redemptive Passion, Death, Resurrection, and glorious Ascension of Jesus Christ, through which Jesus not only liberated humans from sin but also gave them new life.



Baptism is the sacrament that incorporates a person into the Church. It is usually celebrated at Mass with the community present.

SECTION ASSESSMENT



NOTE TAKING

Use the sentence you constructed as part of the Note Taking assignment to help you answer the following questions.

1. What is the difference between studying Church history and studying the history of any other human institution?
2. What one question do you have about the Church that you would like this course to answer?



COMPREHENSION

3. Fill in the blank: The Church is historical in time, but it also _____ history.
4. How did St. Joan of Arc describe the Church?
5. How does the meaning of the Greek term for Church—*ekklésia*—relate to the dual nature of the Church as a human and divine institution?



VOCABULARY

6. What does the *Paschal Mystery* refer to?



APPLICATION

7. How do you imagine your study of Church history will help you to grow closer to Jesus Christ?

SECTION 1

The Need for Faith

MAIN IDEA

When you respond to God’s gift of faith, you are then able to experience the fullness of faith present in the Church. Your faith is deepened and fortified by the faith of the Church.



In order for you to accept your role in the Body of Christ, the Church, you need **faith**. In his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater (Mother of the Redeemer)*, Pope John Paul II wrote that faith is “contact with the mystery of God” (17). Faith is a free gift from God, and without God’s help you could not believe. But faith is also an authentically human act. It is your response to God’s gift, a surrendering of yourself to God. When you believe in God, or surrender yourself to the mystery of God that has been revealed to you, your faith is deepened. Before you can act as a member of the Body of Christ, the Church, God must touch you with the gift of faith and you must respond. Only then will you

experience the fullness of unity with Christ, the “head of the body, the church” (Col 1:18).

Each member of the Church needs to believe in Christ if he or she is going to act on behalf of Christ in the world. To believe in Christ means to abandon yourself to him, to be shaped by him, and to let go of the things that prevent you from listening to and following him. You cannot act as a part of the Body of Christ unless you have a faith that connects you to Christ.



NOTE TAKING

Sketching to Remember. Draw sketches to represent some of the lessons on faith presented in this section. For example:

- Faith is a gift from God.



- Faith is a human act.
- Your faith is united to the faith of the Church.
- The Church preserves faith in formal structures.
- The Church is a model of faith.

faith Both a gift from God that can only exist with God’s preceding grace and an act of a person’s intellect, an assenting to the divine truth by command of the will that has been moved by that grace. Though only possible by grace and the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, faith is truly a human action. “Trusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed are contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason” [CCC, 154].

No one acting alone can be the Body of Christ. Each person is only a single member of that body. A true disciple of Christ must join with others. Hence, statements such as “As long as you accept Jesus, the question about whether or not you belong to a church is irrelevant” are not accurate. Your faith must be communal as well as personal. You must believe in Christ not only as an individual but also as a part of groups—with your family, with your friends, with your parish, and with the Church at large. In other words, you cannot really answer God’s call unless you participate in Christ’s Church.

Your Faith and the Church

Your personal faith is deepened and fortified by the Church’s faith. The Church’s faith also makes it possible for you to do what God calls you to do: to know and love him more fully and to live not in isolation but as a member of the one Body of Christ. This community of faith exists wherever two or more people gather to share their faith, pray, or support and encourage one another out of love rooted in love for God. For this reason the Church needs to maintain *formal structures* that help preserve essential truths. These formal

structures include creeds, doctrines, and rituals. The formal aspects of Catholicism have ensured that the faith revealed by Jesus Christ has survived even when members of the Church have sinned.

The formal structures help you maintain your identity as an individual believer and help the Church maintain her identity as a model of faith. The formal structures make the communal relationships with God among Catholics visible and tangible. The task of defining and interpreting these formal structures is carried out by the Church’s **Magisterium**. The Magisterium comprises the bishops in communion with the pope, who is the successor of St. Peter. Unless you commit yourself to the formal structures of the faith of the Church, you may find you are cobbling together an individualistic and perhaps narcissistic type of faith that is not in your best interest either now or for eternity. If you reject the formal structures of the Church’s

Magisterium The bishops, in communion with the pope (the successor of St. Peter), who are the living and teaching office of the Church. The Magisterium authentically interprets the Word of God in the forms of both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.



Goals for Discipleship

When Jesus chose his twelve disciples, who later became the Twelve Apostles, he also set the conditions of discipleship. Read Matthew 10:1–42, and then write ten goals you have for living your life as a disciple of Christ.

faith, you will probably end up selecting those parts of faith that demand the least of you and that are most in keeping with the secular culture in which you live.

The Church's catholicity depends in part on the continuity of her teaching with that of the past. The **Deposit of Faith** of the Church contains God's Revelation—all that Catholics believe is divinely revealed. The Deposit of Faith is transmitted in two ways: through Sacred Tradition and through Sacred Scripture. A great gift of being a member of the Catholic Church is that you are able to build your faith on the

understanding of generations that came before you, secure in the knowledge that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, ensures that the Church never loses what the Father revealed through Jesus, his Son.

Deposit of Faith "The heritage of faith contained in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, handed down in the Church from the time of the Apostles, from which the Magisterium draws all that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed" (CCC, Glossary).

SECTION ASSESSMENT



NOTE TAKING

Use the sketches you created to help you answer the following questions.

1. What does it mean to say that without God's help you could not believe?
2. How is personal faith fortified by the Church's faith?
3. What is the risk of not committing yourself to the formal structures of faith found in the Church?



COMPREHENSION

4. How is the Deposit of Faith transmitted?



VOCABULARY

5. Define *Magisterium*.



APPLICATION

6. How can remaining open to deepening your faith help to make this course more productive?

SECTION 2

Christ Instituted the Church

MAIN IDEA

The Church was foreshadowed from the world's beginning, remotely prepared for through a series of covenants, and instituted by Christ through his words and actions as part of his public ministry.



The call to be an active participant in the Church highlights God's invitation to you to enter into dialogue with him. In the Church, you are invited to relate to the Father as his son or daughter. The call to participate in the Church is an incredible gift and an incredible trust. The Church is the summation of all of God's gifts to the world throughout history. Despite human weakness and failings, God has never abandoned the human race. Despite the many times that people have violated God's trust, God has offered humanity the most precious gift of the Church. In order to better understand this, it is helpful to consider some of the other ways that God has invited and trusted humanity throughout the course of salvation history.

Tracing Salvation History

At the beginning of human history, God invited man and woman to be cocreators with him by giving Adam and Eve, in the name of all humanity, dominion over the earth (see Genesis 1:28). God has invited all people throughout history to use their own talents and efforts to perfect and complete the work of creation. Even after sin entered the world, God never took away from humanity the role of cocreator or caretaker of the world.

Later, God invited a particular people to do more than care for the earth. As part of his remote preparation for the founding of the Church, God called the Israelites (the Chosen People, later known as the Jews)



NOTE TAKING

Timeline of Key Events. Create a timeline that highlights key events in the formation of the Church from the beginning of time to the birth of Jesus.

Beginning of time

Birth of Jesus

to enter into a mutually binding **covenant** relationship with him. God willingly bound himself forever to this group of people and gave them a pivotal role in his plan for the world. Although the Israelites broke the covenant over and over again, God never gave up on them or abandoned them. In fact, God trusted them as people of faith from which his own Son, Jesus, would be born.

When the time was right, God himself became a member of that Chosen People. Jesus, the Son of God, was born as a helpless baby completely dependent upon the love, support, and care of the people around him. God the Father entrusted his own Son, his very self, to human beings. What is more, in the Divine Person of Jesus, God chose to bind the divine nature with human nature so that the two became one.

“The world was created for the sake of the Church” (quoted in CCC, 760). This phrase was used by Christians of the first centuries to express their understanding of the role of the Church in God’s plan for the world. The Church is the culmination of **salvation history**. From the creation of the world, God has intended for human beings to share in divine life. In the Church this sharing finally becomes a reality.

It is Jesus who instituted the Church. “The Lord Jesus inaugurated his Church by preaching the Good News, that is, the coming of the Reign of God,

promised over the ages in the scriptures” (*Lumen Gentium*, 5, quoted in CCC, 763). Through the Incarnation of Jesus, the **Kingdom of God** broke into human history. The barrier between the divine and the human, which had been in place since Adam and Eve caused the fall of humanity, was shattered. The Kingdom of God, the realm in which God’s will is done, was opened to humanity. Through Jesus’ Death and Resurrection, earthly life was permanently linked to God’s Kingdom; but no one on earth will fully experience the Kingdom until Jesus’ **second coming**. The Church is the focal point of the Kingdom’s presence on earth. The Church is also the place where people are most acutely aware of the fact that the fullness of the Kingdom is still to come.

Jesus had a relatively short public ministry, spanning about three years. During this time he undertook actions that were oriented to the Kingdom of God, such as performing miracles (healings, exorcisms, nature miracles, and raising the dead), giving moral teachings, praying, and preaching the Good News of his offer of salvation and redemption.

Jesus established the basic structure for the Church when he chose twelve disciples, who would later be known as **Apostles**. Because of human limitations, some followers were bound to know Jesus and his message more intimately than others. Jesus specifically

covenant The partnership between God and humanity that God has established out of his love. The New Covenant is offered through Christ; the blood that Christ shed on the Cross is a sign of the New Covenant.

salvation history The story of God’s action in human history. Salvation history refers to the events through which God makes humanity aware of and brings humanity into the Kingdom of God. It began with the creation of the world and will end with the second coming of Christ.

Kingdom of God The reign or rule of God. The Kingdom of God began with the coming of Jesus. It will exist in perfect form at the end of time.

second coming The final judgment of all humanity when Christ returns to earth. It is also known by its Greek name, *Parousia*, which means “arrival.”

Apostles Jesus’ twelve specially chosen and commissioned disciples, as well as other figures such as St. Paul; they earned this designation when they were sent forth to evangelize. The word *apostle* originates from the Greek for “to send forth.”

selected some with whom he would share the most of his ministry, and he made it clear that this selection came with responsibilities. Jesus gave the Apostles authority to teach and baptize in his name. He also made it clear that this authority was to be used not to gain power but to serve others and to help them grow spiritually. For all of these reasons, it can be clearly stated that Jesus himself instituted the Church.

Given the power from Jesus to act in his name, the Apostles passed on to their successors their knowledge of Jesus, their authority from him, and their commitment to service in his name. In this way, the

hierarchical structure of the Church was permanently established. This is what Jesus intended. When Jesus commissioned the Apostles, he promised that he would be with them to the end of time (see Matthew 28:20). He would guide their teaching and whom they baptized. Since the Apostles themselves did not live until “the end of the age,” the Church understands this promise to mean that Jesus will guide those who succeed the Apostles to the end of time. Bishops, in union with the pope and with priests as their coworkers, have the responsibility of carrying on this role, a role that is directly guided by Jesus.

SECTION ASSESSMENT



NOTE TAKING

Use the timeline you created to help you answer the following questions.

1. “From the creation of the world, God has intended for human beings to share in the divine life.” How does this statement point to the beginning of the Church?
2. Explain the role of the Israelites in the Church’s history.
3. What does it mean to say that “Christ instituted the Church”?



COMPREHENSION

4. How did Christ inaugurate the Church?
5. When will the Kingdom of God be fully experienced by people on earth?



VOCABULARY

6. Explain the duration of *salvation history*.
7. Define *Apostles*.



CRITICAL THINKING

8. What does it mean to say that “the world was created for the sake of the Church”?

SECTION 3

Pentecost and the Growth of the Church

MAIN IDEA

The Church was revealed by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and, with the gifts bestowed on her by Christ, faithfully carried out his command to share the Good News with all people in all ages.



Even the union of human nature and divine nature in the Divine Person of Jesus Christ was not the final gift of God to humanity, nor was it God's final effort to unite humanity in partnership with God. Even after becoming human—even after living, suffering, and dying as a human for the sake of humanity—God still had more to offer. The depth and breadth of God's love for humanity and trust in humanity is revealed beyond Christ's Death—and even beyond his Resurrection—in the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church.

Following his Resurrection, Jesus returned to the Father, but his **Ascension** did not mark the end of

God's tangible involvement in history. The day of **Pentecost**, less than two weeks later, marked the beginning of a new era in God's relationship with humanity. On that Pentecost, the Father and the Son gave the Holy Spirit to the Church so that the Church could continue the work of Christ in proclaiming and establishing the Kingdom of God.

The word *Pentecost* is a Greek term that means “fiftieth day”; it marks a Jewish harvest feast that occurs fifty days after Passover. Jesus' disciples were among those gathered in Jerusalem for this feast ten days after Jesus' Ascension. The Acts of the Apostles records the details of this first Christian Pentecost:

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly



NOTE TAKING

Sequencing. Put the following terms and concepts in correct sequential order, and write a sentence for each explaining what it had to do with the spread of the Church.

- Gentile converts
- Pentecost
- Jewish Christians
- Ascension
- apostolic succession

Ascension The event that “marks the definitive entrance of Jesus' humanity into God's heavenly domain” (CCC, 665). It is from heaven that Christ will come again.

Pentecost From the Greek for “fiftieth day,” a Jewish harvest feast occurring fifty days after Passover; the first Pentecost for Christians was when the Holy Spirit appeared to the Apostles in the form of wind and fire fifty days after Jesus' Resurrection.

there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. (Acts 2:1–4)

The images of fire and wind are symbolic of the presence of the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit inspired the disciples to speak in various languages, they finally began to understand their role as Apostles: to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ out into the world.

It is worthwhile to note that the disciples were not originally seen as convincing leaders within their community. Prior to Pentecost, they were not persuasive public speakers. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit gave them the courage and resourcefulness to be able to evangelize without fear or reservation. In fact, Peter, who had formerly been so afraid that he denied Jesus three times leading up to his Crucifixion (see Matthew 26:69–75), now had such fortitude that he went among the Jews gathered for the festival and preached boldly, baptizing around three thousand people in the process (see Acts 2:14–41). Because of this significant feat of evangelization, Pentecost is often considered the “birthday of the Church.” Before Pentecost, the spreading of the Gospel was carried out by one person: Jesus Christ. However, following Pentecost, evangelization became a collective activity undertaken by an organized group—the Apostles.

The Church Shares the Essential Christian Message

Acts of the Apostles shows just how closely Jesus and his Church are connected. Acts was probably written by the same author as the Gospel of Luke, which provides a rather detailed sequence of Jesus’ life and

ministry, beginning with the infancy narratives. Acts presents the earliest Christians as at first believing that Jesus would return during their lifetimes and then beginning to realize that this might not be so. One thing this realization led to was a need for the Church to record the essentials of Christ’s message in written form—that is, in the Gospels and epistles (letters) that would eventually make up the New Testament.

The heart of the Good News preached by the Apostles centered on the love of the Father poured out for the world in the gift of his Son. Core Gospel teachings that remain essential for you and all Catholics today include the following:

Jesus frees you from your sins.

You must have unwavering trust in God.

Your heart must undergo a constant conversion to the Lord’s will.

You should celebrate that you are a son or daughter of the Father.

You must serve and minister to your neighbors.

You should evangelize and work for the Kingdom of God.

The Apostles understood that the Church herself is the Body of Christ on earth and each member of the Church is a member of that Body. Now, as then, it is primarily through the Church that God chooses to be made known, present, and tangible. It is primarily through the Church that God communicates truth and grace.



"At the Last Supper, . . . our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood" (CCC, 1323).

The Structure of the Early Church

The Apostles eventually realized that they might not see Jesus' return during their lifetimes. This meant that, for the spiritual well-being of successive generations, they had to consider how the Church would function into the future. Thus, they began to make various practical resolutions regarding such matters as the definition of roles within the Church, ways to resolve conflicts that could arise, and how to determine the authenticity and inspired nature of the Gospel.

Regarding the approval of Scripture, over time a universally accepted *canon*, or list of approved

apostolic succession The handing on of the teaching, preaching, and office of the Apostles to their successors, the bishops, through the laying on of hands.

Scripture, was developed. Furthermore, around AD 150 the Church compiled the basic outline of the Apostles' Creed as a summary of the beliefs that any person seeking Baptism must affirm. Also, this was the period when the understanding of **apostolic succession** developed. To counteract false witnesses who claimed the authority to teach, the Church taught that her authority was given by Christ to his Apostles. Through this position of authority, the Apostles passed on through apostolic succession authority to bishops whom they ordained through the laying on of hands. Apostolic succession maintains the office, teaching, and mission of the Apostles as entrusted to them by Christ (see CCC, 857–862). Apostolic succession requires that no bishop teach anything that is contrary to what has been handed down to him by his predecessors. Apostolic succession protects the Church against the influx of ideas that are antithetical to Christianity.

It is important to note that during the earliest days of the Church, Jesus' followers did not view themselves as being of a different faith from the other Jews to whom they were evangelizing. Their efforts at sharing the Christian Gospel with their Jewish neighbors led them to defend Christ and his message based on their foundation in the Mosaic Law and Jewish traditions. As such, Jesus' followers did not refer to themselves in any distinctive way, such as using the term *Christian* extensively. In fact the term *Christian* appears only three times in the New Testament, in Acts 26:28, 1 Corinthians 9:5, and 1 Peter 4:16.

Since many early Christians were also practicing Jews, the structure of the early Church reflected Jewish worship. For example, these first Jewish Christians made pilgrimages to the Temple in Jerusalem, attended services at their local synagogue, shared meals in their neighbors' homes, and followed the Mosaic Law. Jesus' followers, however, had a practice that distinguished them from other Jews: when they broke bread during meals, this was in keeping with Jesus' command to them at the Last Supper to "do this in memory of me" (Lk 22:19b).

The early Christians' celebration of the Eucharist, which recognized their shared belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, allowed them to remain unified. Also, the Apostles shared everything in common: money, possessions, food, and other belongings, all of which they shared with the needy as well. These community living practices, too, would be foundational for the Church, and they remain in practice today, especially through the Church's large mission of social outreach to the poor. Likewise, there were men and women in the early Church who set out to follow Christ more closely by practicing the **evangelical counsels**. These Christians would be the forerunners of hermits and the founders and members of religious communities that arose in later centuries and whose practices also remain part of the Church to this day.

evangelical counsels Vows of personal poverty, chastity (understood as lifelong celibacy), and obedience to a bishop or superior of a religious community.



Sharing the Story of Your Faith

All Catholics are called to witness to their faith and to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others. Prepare a ten-minute talk explaining how you came to the faith and something about the current stage of your faith journey. Your talk may include the following:

- your family's history as Catholics
- your reception of the sacraments
- a time you became aware of Christ's presence in your life
- how you plan to share the Lord with others in the future

If you have yet to experience any of the faith milestones listed above, plan a similar talk based on the experience and model of a Catholic you know. Include in your talk some life lessons you have learned from that person.

Plan to share your talk with your classmates, either live or as a recorded presentation.

HOLY SPIRIT

The

Forms

the

CHURCH

The title is set against a background of a church dome silhouette in shades of orange and yellow. The word 'The' is in a small, orange, cursive font inside the 'O' of 'HOLY'. 'Forms' is in a large, orange, cursive font. 'the' is in a small, orange, cursive font inside the 'C' of 'CHURCH'. 'HOLY' and 'CHURCH' are in a large, blue, sans-serif font.

The presence of the Holy Spirit gives life to the Church, builds up the Church, and sanctifies the Church. The Holy Spirit forms the Church, which is the very Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit uses the Church to draw you to Christ, to reveal the good things Christ has done for you, and to make present the Paschal Mystery of his love in your life. This is done most clearly in the Holy Eucharist, in which you share in God's own life.

The Holy Spirit showers many gifts on the Church that help Catholics live like Jesus Christ. These gifts build up the Church. They include:

- *Gifts that make the Church holy.* These seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are those that the prophet Isaiah said would identify the Holy Spirit (see Isaiah 11:2–3). They are: wisdom, understanding, counsel (right judgment), strength (fortitude or courage), knowledge, piety (reverence), and fear of the Lord.
- *Gifts that serve the Church.* St. Paul lists other gifts that are meant to build up the Body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:4–11. Each of these special gifts is known as a **charism**. They include wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracle working, prophecy, discernment, speaking in tongues, and interpreting tongues.

charism A special gift or grace of the Holy Spirit that directly or indirectly builds up the Church, helps a person live a Christian life, or serves the common good.

- *Gifts that result in spiritual fruit.* Also, St. Paul named some fruits of the Holy Spirit that result from the Holy Spirit living in you. These are the first fruits of your eternal glory and are love (charity), joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (see Galatians 5:22–23).

All of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are related to one another. When these gifts are present in the Church, they show that the Church is one with Jesus, the true vine described in John 15:1. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of love, God’s great gift to the Church through Christ:

“God is Love” and love is his first gift, containing all others. “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” (CCC, 733, quoting 1 John 4:8, 16; Romans 5:5)

Of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, love is the greatest of all (see 1 Corinthians 13:1–13). God’s love is given to you freely. It cannot be earned. It is a pure gift. God does not give love to you because you are good; you are good because God loves you and lives in you.

Assignments

- Read and summarize paragraph 4 of *Lumen Gentium* (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*) on the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church.
- Think about a Catholic you know who exemplifies in a powerful way one of the charisms of the Holy Spirit. Write a three-paragraph profile of this person and how he or she uses this charism for the benefit of others.

The Christian Faith’s Appeal to Gentiles

People with Jewish ancestry were not the only followers of Christ; *Gentiles* (non-Jews) were also attracted to the Christian Gospel. By the first century AD, many Jews lived outside of the region of Palestine and therefore had many interactions with Gentiles. Many of these Gentiles had already acquired a great respect for the moral teachings of Judaism but understood they were generally not allowed to convert to the Jewish faith. Also, many Gentiles were attracted to *monotheism*, the belief in one God held by both Jews and Christians. This attraction was due, in part, to their opposition to the oppressive Roman government, which required belief in many state-sponsored gods. And the newness of the Christian faith, along with Jesus’ words of welcome to the poor and oppressed—to all people—appealed to many Gentiles. The main attraction to the Gentiles was that God had come to earth and revealed himself as a historical person. This was the main scandal and claim in a time when there was so much diversity of views about God.

The Church had several decisions to make about whether or not to admit Gentiles to this Jewish-rooted faith. Foremost among those eventually reaching out to the Gentiles was St. Paul, a Pharisaic Jewish convert to Christianity who became known as the “Apostle to the Gentiles.” The next section provides details about his missionary efforts.

SECTION ASSESSMENT



NOTE TAKING

Use the notes you kept of the sequencing of major events in the early Church to help you complete the following item.

1. Write a paragraph that explains the history of the early years of the Church and the spread of Christianity and uses the following terms: Gentile converts, Pentecost, Jewish Christians, Ascension, apostolic succession.



COMPREHENSION

2. What caused Jesus' disciples to be more bold and unafraid to share the Good News after Pentecost?
3. What are some of the things the Apostles did when they realized Jesus might not return in their lifetimes?
4. What was a significant distinction between the religious practice of early Jewish Christians and traditional Jewish practice?



VOCABULARY

5. Explain the importance of *apostolic succession* in the Church.



APPLICATION

6. Choose one of the essential teachings of the Apostles (see “The Church Shares the Essential Christian Message” in this section), and write a practical way you are following this teaching in your own life.