

Church History

Rationale: Our understanding of God and our identity as Church develops through history. The history of the Church is a reflection of the active and continuing presence of God. Through an appreciation of the Catholic Christian story and mission, adolescents are called to become involved in the Christian community.

Goals: Students will connect the faith story of the Church with their own faith story and those of significant people in Church history.

Students will understand and appreciate the courage and faith of Catholics throughout the ages, as well as the role these people played in shaping the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Objectives: To see the Church as a human institution, a community of believers and the body of Christ.

To recognize the basic divisions, major events and key personalities in the history of the Catholic Church.

To understand the role of the American Catholic Church in the formation and continued growth of the United States.

To examine the changes affected by Vatican II and reflect on their significance in the history of the Church.

Church History

For sample lesson plans created by the Departments of Lifelong Faith Formation and Youth & Young Adult Ministry visit www.officeoflifelongfaithformation.org (go to "Curriculum" then "Adolescent Catechesis").

Outline	Activities	Critical Reflection
I. Jesus as Founder of the Church		
A. Life and mission of Jesus, the man	Create a stained glass window for a cathedral depicting your favorite gospel scene.	Why should we want to know the history of our Catholic/Christian heritage?
B. Death and resurrection		
C. Growing recognition of Jesus as God and Savior	Research these early martyrs. Explain how they died, when the Church celebrates their feast days, etc.: St. Barbara, St. Agnes, St. Cecilia, St. Lawrence, St. Lucy, St. Sebastian.	
D. Jesus' instructions to disciples at end of Gospels		
* Jesus, disciples, Mary		
II. Apostolic Age 33-100		
A. Acts of the Apostles		
1. transformation of disciples, Pentecost	Come up with ten realistic ways the youth of your parish can build Christian Community. For each point you mention, discuss what barriers young people must surmount in order to be effective.	Why is Pentecost considered the birthday of the Church?
2. life in very early church, communities, worship		

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Outline

3. break with Judaism
4. Gentiles
5. Council of Jerusalem
6. destruction of Jerusalem/
Temple

B. Letters of Paul

1. discipleship theme
2. Christian community
3. evangelization: spread/
growth of Christianity
4. theology of Paul/Paul's
message

C. Age of Martyrs

1. Roman Empire
2. spread of Christianity

* Paul, Peter, James, Stephen, Lydia

Activities

Critical Reflection

How did the early church's response to its challenges shape Christianity for all time?

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Outline

III. Age of the Fathers 100-400

A. Organization: Bishops, Priests, Deacons

B. Heresy/heretics

1. Gnosticism
2. Montanism
3. Arians

C. Theologians, apologists, teachers: Fathers of the Church

D. Councils and creed: Development of doctrine

1. Nicea
2. Constantinople
3. Ephesus
4. Chalcedon

E. Edict of Milan: Christianity legalized

Activities

Read Jn 17, Eph 2:19-22, Phil 2:1-5. Make a list of some things necessary for Christian unity.

Write a personal creed about your beliefs in God and the Church.

Critical Reflection

Create a timeline for each period of the Church that parallels world history.

Select one belief from the Catholic tradition which you find difficult to accept and explain why you feel this way.

* Augustine, Constantine, Basil, Perpetua, Anthony of Egypt

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Outline

Activities

Critical Reflection

IV. Dark Ages 400-800

A. Fall of the Roman Empire

1. Barbarian invasions
2. collapse of civilization, government, education

Choose one significant Catholic belief. Design a stained glass window depicting that belief.

B. Rise of Feudal system - order and Protection

C. Monasticism

1. people flee to the church in time of chaos
2. monks preserve learning/ education
3. evangelization of northern Europe

Visit a monastery in your area. Arrange to attend a liturgy or part of the Liturgy of the Hours.

Select a verse from the Gospels that is meaningful to you. Reproduce it on parchment paper using markers, etc. Compare this with the monks' role in copying scripture.

(visit www.stjohnsbible.org to learn about a modern reproduction of the Bible)

Why are men and women drawn to monastic life? What are some challenges to living this lifestyle?

D. Rise of Islam and Subsequent Conquest

Islam is one of three Western religions. How does it differ from Christianity and Judaism? What do these religions share in common?

* Gregory the Great, Benedict, Patrick, Boniface

Research the life of Thomas Merton. What strikes you most about his life?

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Outline

Activities

Critical Reflection

V. Middle Ages 800–1400

A. Holy Roman Empire:

Christendom

1. wealthy, powerful bishops;
poor, uneducated peasants
2. church/state intertwined;
power struggles; corruption
3. war plagued society and the
struggle for unity
4. Papal states, church
centralized in Rome

Research the life of Francis of Assisi, Clare of Assisi, Thomas Aquinas, or Catherine of Siena. How did they witness to the Christian faith during the Middle Ages?

Find a copy of St. Francis' "Canticle of the Sun." Write your own version.

What tension characterized the Church of the Middle Ages?

B. Golden Age of Faith

1. simple faith of the people
2. Age of Devotions
3. Age of Scholars
4. Universities/Cathedrals

C. First Schism: split of East and West; Crusades

Visit an Eastern Orthodox or Byzantine Rite Church. Report on how its liturgy differs from our own.

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Outline

D. **The Inquisition**

E. **Black Death**

F. **Second Schism – papal crisis**

G. **Reform of monastic life**

1. new religious orders
2. Franciscans
3. Dominicans

H. **Hundred Years War**

I. **Gutenberg and the printing press**

J. **Columbus discovers the New World**

* Charlemagne, Francis, Dominic, Thomas Aquinas, Pope Gregory VII

Activities

Find out where the Franciscan priests, brothers, and religious women minister in your area. In what kinds of works are they involved?

Critical Reflection

Can the Crusades be justified in the view of Jesus' teaching? Where in the world does this "crusader" mentality still exist?

What is a "charism?" discuss the particular charism of the Franciscan and Dominican orders.

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Outline

VI. Rebirth, Rebellion and Reform 1400-1700

A. Renaissance

1. rediscovery of ancient wisdom, art
2. humanism
3. intellectualism
4. individualism

B. Protestant Reformation

1. Lutheranism
2. Calvinism
3. English church
4. Anabaptism
5. Radical Protestantism

C. Counter/Catholic Reformation

1. Council of Trent: renewal
2. new Religious communities:
Jesuits, Christian Brothers

Activities

Take an online tour of one of the many areas of the Vatican at:
www.stpetersbasilica.org

Visit an art gallery. Pay particular attention to paintings from the Renaissance period. How is the spirit of the Renaissance reflected in these works?

Prepare a report on a typical day: e.g. in a medieval monastery, in a Renaissance university, or on a Crusade.

Summarize some of the reforms sought by Luther and other Protestant reformers. Where do these issues stand today in the Catholic Church?

Watch the movie "A Man for All Seasons."

Critical Reflection

Catherine of Siena believed all Christians, especially lay people, had a responsibility to leadership in the Church. What can you do to make the Church a better institution?

Joan of Arc would have escaped martyrdom if she denounced her actions and her belief in God. Is there anything for which you would have the courage to put your life on the line.

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Outline

3. Religious Wars/ persecution

D. Missionary Church

1. discovery and conquest of the New World: Americas, Far East, Africa
2. evangelization and treatment of Native cultures
3. Jesuits, Franciscans

Activities

Talk to a Protestant friend. Discuss and report on five similarities and five differences between your faith and theirs.

Research Native American religion. Represent your findings artistically using various media.

Critical Reflection

How much can a person disagree with the Church and still be a good Catholic?

How are you a missionary for Christ and the Church?

VII. Age of Revolution

A. Political Revolution: freedom and democracy

1. American
2. French

* Catherine of Siena, Charles Borromeo, Teresa of Avila, Thomas More, Ignatius, Francis Xavier, Matteo Ricci, Joan of Arc, Bartolome de Las Casas

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Outline

B. Industrial Revolution

1. water power, steam power
2. mechanization,
 manufacturing
3. growth of cities

C. Scientific Revolution

1. beginning of modern
 mathematics, chemistry,
 physics, biology
2. the Enlightenment

D. Challenge of Secularism: Science replaces theology

1. Deism
2. Church and State

E. First Vatican Council

1. defined infallibility
2. condemned popular
 secularist error

Activities

Simulate a Church council to discuss current issues facing the Church.

Critical Reflection

What is the source of authority for the Christian? How does a Christian know what is right and how to live?

What should be the role of religion in relationship to science?

Imagine when and where the next Church council might convene. Describe the issues that the council may be called upon to address. What makes these issues significant?

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Outline

3. consolidated church authority: bishops in union with pope.

* Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac, Julie Billiart, Francis de Sales, Charles Lwanga and Companions, Therese of Lisieux

VIII. A New Age

A. Imperialism

1. every corner of the world explored and colonized
2. flood of new ideas, new materials, new information
3. middle class replaces old nobility class
4. slavery, disease, oppression
5. missions

Activities

Write a letter to God telling God your three greatest fears regarding the future of the Catholic Church. Explain why you are concerned about each point.

Critical Reflection

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Outline

- B. Liberalism and Nationalism**

- C. Separation of Church and State**

- D. Spiritual Renewal**
 - 1. growth of religious orders,
new religious orders
 - 2. hospitals, schools,
orphanages, etc.
 - 3. devotions (Sacred Heart,
Mary, rosary)

- E. Leo XIII-Rerum Novarum,
role of the Laity**

Activities

Critical Reflection

* Leo XIII

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Outline	Activities	Critical Reflection
IX. Age of Wars		
A. World War I	Prepare a brief presentation on the life of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement.	Why were issues of social justice brought into the public's awareness during the Depression?
B. Depression: Social Justice		
C. Catholic Worker Movement		
D. World War II	Research and report on the life of one of the Catholic heroes of World War II: Maxmilian Kolbe or Edith Stein.	
1. Catholic Church revival 2. Christian democracy		
E. Fascism; Communism	Create a brief skit about a person who significantly affected the history of the Church. Present the skit to the class.	
* Edith Stein, Maxmilian Kolbe		How do you see your role in the Church of the future?
X. Modern		
A. Growth of the laity		Read Jn 17, Eph 2:19-22, Phil 2:105. What are some things necessary for Christian unity?
B. Liturgical renewal		

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C. Vatican Council II

1. scripture scholarship
2. sacraments and liturgy
3. laity
4. ecumenism

D. Third World/Liberation Theology

* Archbishop Romero, Pope John XXIII, Mother Teresa, Dorothy Day

XI. American Church

A. Spanish, French conquerors bring Catholic missionaries

1. Franciscans Jesuits
2. Jesuits

B. Puritans and Quakers in America

1. religious persecution

Activities

List a number of reforms Luther proposed that have been put into effect since Vatican II.

Interview an adult who can tell you what the Church was like before Vatican II. Ask them how they felt about the changes then and now.

View the film "Mission." In small groups discuss the impact the movie had on you.

Critical Reflection

From what you know, what would the Church be like today if Vatican II had not taken place?

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Outline

Activities

Critical Reflection

**C. Maryland and Pennsylvania;
English influence**

1. religious freedom granted
2. beginnings of Catholic Education

What are you doing for the mission of the Church that no one else can do?

D. American Revolution

Describe the challenges the Catholic Church faced in getting established in North America.

E. Expansion

F. Immigration

1. Catholic schools, hospitals, orphanages
2. Irish, Polish, Italian, German
3. Anti-Catholic bigotry

Develop a time line illustrating the major events in the history of your Diocese.

How has American culture - rugged individualism, influenced the Catholic notion of community?

G. Civil War & issues of Slavery

1. labor issues (and Rerum Novarum)

Go to the Diocesan web site. (www.buffalodiocese.org) Does the Diocese have a mission statement? What is it? What kinds of ministry and service are available in the diocese?

Should the official Church speak out more forcefully on current social and scientific issues?

Outline

2. Americanism
 3. 1908-America no longer a
“foreign Mission”
 4. prejudice and politics
 5. influence of Vatican II
 6. modern American
Catholicism
- * North American Martyrs, Kateri
Tekakwitha, John Carroll, Katherine
Drexel, Elizabeth Seton, John
Neumann

Activities

Visit St. Joseph’s Cathedral. Report on its history and architecture. Take pictures to share with the class.

Research an American Saint. Show how their lives impacted the American Catholic Church.

Teach about Father Baker. Visit the Our Lady of Victory Basilica in person or at www.ourladyofvictory.org.

Critical Reflection

Some people say that American’s are “cafeteria Catholics.” What does this mean? Why is this attitude not a true form of Catholicism?

