

# GRADE EIGHT

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# CHURCH HISTORY



*Jesus' life and mission continue through the Church,  
the community of believers called by God and empowered  
by the Holy Spirit to be the sign of the kingdom of God.*

## OBJECTIVES

- To deepen the young adolescent's knowledge of the history of the Catholic Church.
- To lead the young adolescent to a fuller participation in the life and mission of the Church.

## I. THE JOURNEY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH FROM THE TIME OF JESUS TO AD 100

### *A. The Mission of the Church*

The Church was made manifest to the world on the day of Pentecost by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. [731-32, 737-41, 2623]

Immediately after Pentecost, the apostles traveled throughout Palestine spreading the “Good News” of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection to Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews). [767, 849, 858]

Small groups of Jesus’ followers continued to gather together at their local synagogues. They also began to meet in each other’s homes for prayer and “the breaking of the bread,” (Acts 2:46), the celebration of the Eucharist. [751, 949, 2178, 2624]

The apostles James and John were among the leaders of these groups, as were Paul, Barnabas, Titus, and Timothy. They traveled extensively, gathering followers of Jesus into small communities which were the beginnings of local churches. The early Church consisted of ordinary men and women who were strengthened by God’s Spirit. [777, 797-98, 833, 854, 1229, 1270]

Two great converts of this time were Paul, a Jew, to whom Jesus revealed himself in a dramatic way on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9) and Cornelius, a Gentile, who with his whole family was baptized by Peter (Acts 10:1-48). [639, 659, 761, 1226]

There was a period of dissension and debate between the Jews and the Gentiles who were embracing Christianity. Paul argued that Gentile converts to Christianity were not obliged to follow certain dietary laws and ritual practices (such as circumcision) prescribed by the Law of Moses. Some of the Jewish Christians disagreed. During this period of misunderstanding, Peter had a vision which helped him understand that God made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles who embraced Christianity (Acts 10:9-16). [761, 791, 804]

As a result of this controversy, the first General Council of the Church was called. Influenced by Peter’s speech and the witness of Paul and Barnabas, the Council of Jerusalem in AD 49 decided that:

- The followers of Jesus would not be subject to the ritual practices of the Mosaic Law.
- A Gentile could be baptized without having to observe the ritual practices.

The Council also clarified the belief that God sends the Holy Spirit to Jew and Gentile alike (Acts 15). [781-82, 799-801]

### *B. Struggles and Upheavals of the Church*

St. Stephen was the first martyr because he gave his life for his faith in Jesus (Acts 7:54-60). Before his conversion, Saul, who later became St. Paul, is identified as one of those who approved of the killing of Stephen. [2473, 2506]

Christians were persecuted in numerous ways throughout the first centuries. Nero was one of the many Roman emperors who persecuted the followers of Jesus during the first century. He falsely blamed Christians for the burning of the city of Rome in AD 64. [2472-74, 2476]

### C. Significant Members of the Church

- **Mary, the Mother of Jesus (John 19:26-27 and Acts 1:14):** The mother of Jesus was a central figure at the heart of the early Christian community. From the very beginning she has been considered the Mother of the Church. [495, 501, 726, 2673]
- **St. Mary Magdalene (John 20:17-18):** After the resurrection, the Risen Christ appeared first to Mary Magdalene and commissioned her to tell the “Good News” of his resurrection to the other disciples. [641, 660]
- **St. Peter and the Other Apostles (Acts 2:14-41):** From the time of Pentecost, Peter and the other apostles courageously witnessed to Jesus in word and deed. They proclaimed that Jesus brought salvation to the world through his life, death, and resurrection. [571, 642, 858]
- **St. Paul (Acts 9:1-9):** Initially a persecutor of the early Christian community, Paul was called by the Risen Lord in a vision to be an apostle and an outstanding witness to the “Good News.” His letters, included in the New Testament, are the earliest written testimony to the faith of the early Church. [639, 659, 860]
- **St. Lydia (Acts 16:11-15):** Many women believed the “Good News” and became active members of the early Christian community. Lydia, a devout woman, and a dealer in purple cloth (a valuable commodity in the ancient world), heard about Jesus through the preaching of Paul and was baptized, along with her whole household. She supported the mission of the apostles to proclaim the Gospel and welcomed them into her home. [872, 1226, 1252, 2624]

#### PRAYER EXPERIENCE

- Read Acts 7:55-60.
- Ask the young people to reflect on Stephen’s spirit of forgiveness for his persecutors.
- Ask the young people to pray in their hearts for the grace to forgive someone who has persecuted or hurt them deeply. Lead them in prayer to ask for forgiveness from those they have hurt.
- Conclude the prayer experience by praying aloud the Our Father and the Confiteor:

*I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters,  
that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words,  
in what I have done and in what I have failed to do,  
through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault;  
therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin,  
all the Angels and Saints,  
and you my brothers and sisters,  
to pray for me to the Lord our God.*

## II. THE JOURNEY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CONTINUES FROM AD 100 TO AD 500

### *A. The Mission of the Church*

In the period from AD 100 to AD 500 the Church spread rapidly and her doctrine continued to develop. Through God's grace, evidenced in the faith and life of her members, the Church spread throughout the Roman Empire. The seeds of the Gospel were sown in much of Europe, Northern Africa, and the Middle East. Christianity flourished in these areas. [767-68]

Christians continued to pray together and to celebrate the Eucharist, motivated by their profound love of Jesus. They were also known for their love for and service to others. In fidelity to the Gospel, they reached out to the poor, the homeless and the unwanted. Accounts of the life of the Church in the writings of the early Church Fathers, Doctors of the Church, and historians attest to the great concern of the People of God for one another. They welcomed all races and nations into their midst. [767, 852]

It is important to remember that, while the Church is always guided by the Holy Spirit, it is composed of imperfect human beings who can make mistakes and are capable of sinning. Therefore, conflicts, controversies, corruption, and even wars are found throughout the history of the Church. [386-87, 769-70, 827]

During this era, many heresies arose. Church councils were held especially to correct these false teachings concerning Christian beliefs. [88, 95, 884]

- The Council of Nicaea in AD 325 defined the Christian belief that Jesus is begotten of God, not made by God as other creatures are. Jesus, therefore, is not simply one of God's creatures, but, as God's own Son, shares in the very substance of God, consubstantial with the Father. This is why, when praying the Nicene Creed at Mass, we say Jesus is "consubstantial with the Father." [465]
- The Council of Ephesus in AD 431 declared that Jesus is truly a Divine Person and that his mother is, therefore, the Mother of God. [466, 495]
- The Council of Chalcedon in AD 451 declared that the Son of God is one Divine Person with two natures, one human and one divine. Jesus is, therefore, true God and true man. [467]

### *B. Struggles and Upheavals of the Church*

Persecutions continued throughout this era, because Christians would not worship false gods or obey unjust laws. Many Christians were martyred or sent into exile during the reign of the Emperor Diocletian. [309, 769, 2113]

The first emperor to become a Christian was Constantine. After his conversion, he issued the Edict of Milan in AD 313. This edict ended the persecution of the Church in the Roman Empire and recognized the right of Christians to worship in accordance with their faith. As a result of this new freedom, Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire. [2104, 2108]

### *C. Significant Members of the Church*

*(Throughout the study of this unit, the catechist/teacher is encouraged to consult the liturgical calendar for feast days of saints of significance for the parish, school, or culture.)*

- **St. Ignatius of Antioch (1<sup>st</sup> century):** The third bishop of Antioch, Ignatius was martyred around AD 110. While a prisoner on his way to Rome to be martyred, he wrote letters to some early Christian communities expressing his profound love for Jesus and urging them to be Jesus' faithful followers. [2473-74]

- **St. Perpetua and St. Felicity, Martyrs (2<sup>nd</sup> century):** Perpetua and Felicity were courageous women who suffered martyrdom in AD 202 during a persecution in Carthage, North Africa. In Eucharistic Prayer I of the Mass, the Church recalls their heroism. [2471, 2473]
- **St. Helena (250-330):** The mother of Constantine the Great, Helena was born about the middle of the third century. Of humble beginnings, she married a Roman general who divorced her. When her son, Constantine, became emperor, Helena was named empress. She converted to Christianity and performed many acts of charity. On a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Helena discovered the True Cross.
- **St. Monica (331-387):** Monica, a devout Christian from North Africa, prayed for over thirty years for the conversion of her son, Augustine. She is a model of a prayerful woman and a virtuous mother. [2232, 2683]
- **St. Jerome (347-420):** Jerome is best known for his delight in studying Holy Scripture and for translating the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin. His translation was in use until modern times. He died in Bethlehem in AD 420. [133]
- **St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430):** Augustine, although he had a prestigious career and worldly success, led an unsettled and restless life, searching for the truth. After his conversion, he became an outstanding teacher, bishop and defender of the faith. He is one of the most influential theologians in the Western Church. [30, 32, 300, 385]
- **St. Patrick (5<sup>th</sup> century):** A man of great prayer and penance, Patrick is famous for his missionary activity among the Irish during the fifth century. In the United States, many churches, including the Cathedral of St. Patrick in the Archdiocese of New York, are named in his honor. [1428, 1430, 2683, 2745]

## PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Invite the young people to name places around the world where the Church today continues to suffer suppression by hostile governments, terrorism, and other forms of persecution. When considering these realities, help the young people to see how the events of the present day are an important reason for each one of them to pray for those suffering for their faith in Jesus Christ, recognizing this may include us or members of our own families.

Lead the group in the following prayer from the *Mass for Persecuted Christians*:

*Father, in your mysterious providence,  
 your Church must share in the sufferings of Christ your Son.  
 Give the spirit of patience and love  
 to those who are persecuted for their faith in you  
 that they may always be true and faithful witnesses  
 to your promise of eternal life.  
 We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
 one God, forever and ever. Amen.*

### III. THE JOURNEY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CONTINUES FROM AD 500 TO AD 1000 (THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES)

#### *A. The Mission of the Church*

During the Early Middle Ages, the Church continued to spread the Gospel and, in doing so, it also preserved Western Civilization. Human beings were created to live in an organized society based on law and order and the Church did much to ensure that. [849, 1879-80]

This period is known for the barbarian invasions which were destroying the Roman Empire and disrupting the life of the Church. Some people refer to this time as the “Dark Ages.” Nevertheless, the Church remained a light in the midst of upheaval. [1884, 1897-98, 1910]

It was a period of extensive missionary activity. In the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great sent many missionaries to bring the light of faith to the barbarian tribes. Missionaries from the British Isles (England, Ireland and Wales) traveled to continental Europe to restore Christianity in those places which had been invaded by barbarians. [849, 927]

From the sixth through the eleventh centuries, monasteries for women (nuns) and men (monks) were essential to the preservation of Christianity and Western civilization. They were centers of learning and offered hospitality for travelers, the poor, and the sick. [914, 916, 1932]

By the end of this period, the Church and State had become so closely allied that the Church lost some of its independence and autonomy. As a result, the witness of Christianity was somewhat compromised. [770, 2245]

#### *B. Struggles and Upheavals of the Church*

Nuns and monks courageously left their monasteries in order to spread the Gospel. These missionaries lived in situations of great hardship and suffering in order to preach and teach the Gospel among the barbarian tribes. As a result of their efforts, Christianity came to be firmly rooted in Europe. [618, 852, 2472]

In the early centuries of Christianity, Syria, Egypt, and North Africa had given the Church some of its greatest leaders (e.g., Clement of Alexandria; Tertullian). In the decades following the death of Muhammad in AD 632 however, Muslims from Arabia conquered all these areas, and within a few centuries, Christians had become a minority in these lands. [769, 798, 841]

In the early eighth century, Spain was also taken over by the followers of Muhammad, and the Christian populations of France and Constantinople were threatened by Muslim conquest as well. Nevertheless, the Church continued to grow in Europe. [769, 794, 841]

#### *C. Significant Members of the Church*

- **St. Brigid (451-525):** The pioneer of Irish monastic life for women, Brigid founded a monastery for nuns in Kildare, Ireland, in the late fifth century. She traveled widely in Ireland to evangelize the people and was known for her charity and generosity to the poor. [916, 2443-44]
- **St. Benedict and St. Scholastica (480-543):** Called the “Father of Western Monasticism,” Benedict founded the famous monastery of Monte Cassino in Italy about AD 530. The rule of life which he wrote is still

followed today by many communities of women and men religious. Scholastica was the twin sister of St. Benedict and founded a monastery of nuns near Monte Cassino. [347, 915-16, 925-26, 2834]

- **St. Augustine of Canterbury (6<sup>th</sup> century):** Augustine of Canterbury and thirty monks were sent to England by Pope Gregory the Great in AD 596 to evangelize the Anglo-Saxons. He succeeded in persuading the king and many of his subjects to embrace Christianity, and he built England's first cathedral. He is called the "Apostle of England."
- **St. Dymphna (7<sup>th</sup> century):** Dymphna was born in northern Ireland during the 7th century. Her mother was a Christian while her father was a pagan king. Dymphna's mother died when she was 14 and this greatly distressed her father. Dymphna then dedicated herself to God and took a vow of celibacy. Her father was determined to marry her himself and, after repeatedly refusing his demands for marriage, Dymphna was beheaded around AD 620. Because her father was mentally ill, Dymphna is the patron saint of those suffering from mental illness.
- **St. Boniface (675-754):** Boniface is known as the "Apostle of Germany" because of his great missionary activity in that area. During his thirty-two years as a bishop, many conversions took place, churches were founded and dioceses were established. He was martyred with fifty-three others in AD 754. [831, 849-51, 2473]
- **Charles the Great (742-814):** Also known as Charlemagne, he ruled much of Western Europe from AD 768 to AD 814. Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne emperor of the Romans in AD 800 and, at the time of his death, his empire encompassed much of Western Europe, thus ensuring the survival of Christianity in the West.
- **St. Cyril (826-869) and St. Methodius (815-885):** Cyril and his brother, Methodius, sons of a Greek family, brought the gospel to the Slavic peoples. They developed an alphabet for the Slavic languages which is still used today, and translated the Gospels into Slavonic. Cyril died in AD 869 and Methodius in AD 885. [831, 849-50, 854, 831]

### PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Remind the young people that God always calls individuals to help him meet the needs of his people. Ask them to reflect on the following questions:

- What needs do you see in the world today? In your community? In your family?
- Do you know someone who is helping to meet any of these needs?
- How might God be asking you to respond to some of these needs?

Conclude with this prayer from the Mass for Holy Church:

*O God, in the covenant of your Christ you never cease to gather to yourself from all nations a people growing together in unity through the Spirit; grant, we pray, that your Church, faithful to the mission entrusted to her, may continually go forward with the human family and always be the leaven and the soul of human society, to renew it in Christ and transform it into the family of God.*

## **IV. THE JOURNEY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CONTINUES FROM AD 1000 TO AD 1500 (THE HIGH AND LATE MIDDLE AGES)**

### ***A. The Mission of the Church***

At the beginning of this period, a reform movement arose in the Church. There was a revival of monastic life. Church leaders launched a campaign to assert the independence of the Church from secular society. The most famous leader of this reform movement was Pope St. Gregory VII. [2245-46]

During this period, there were rapid changes in society. Towns and cities grew steadily. To meet the educational needs of townspeople, cathedral schools were established in the eleventh century. A great interest in learning among Christians led to the founding of the first universities (such as those at Bologna, Italy; Paris, France; Oxford, England) in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. [30, 36-38, 50, 166]

Technical advances in architecture and engineering made possible the construction of the great Gothic cathedrals which still stand today. [1180, 1198, 2501]

Many holy men and women responded to these changes in society. Two new religious orders, the Dominicans and the Franciscans, were founded in the early thirteenth century to spread the Gospel in the growing cities. [927, 944]

The Black Death struck in Europe three times during the fourteenth century and, in some places, as much as one-third of the population died. The clergy were in particular danger due to their heroic efforts ministering to the sick and dying. [1503, 1509]

### ***B. Struggles and Upheavals of the Church***

The Schism of 1054, often called the Eastern Schism, occurred because of cultural, political, and theological differences between Christians of the Eastern and Western Churches. The differences included, but were not limited to, disagreements concerning the place of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity and the Bishop of Rome's claim to universal jurisdiction. As a result of long years of disagreement, the Christians of the Eastern and Western world were estranged from each other. [247, 817-19, 822, 838]

The intermingling of Church and State affairs also caused bitter struggles, examples of which include the Investiture Controversy and the conflict between Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury and King Henry II of England. [2245]

Starting in 1095, Christians embarked on several military campaigns to retake the Holy Land from the Muslims. These campaigns were called the Crusades. Although many who fought in the Crusades did so out of a sincere desire to achieve a good end (for example, the safety of pilgrims who wished to visit the holy places in Jerusalem), these wars also caused much bloodshed and were unsuccessful in achieving their aim. [853]

Lack of education and widespread ignorance contributed to the growth of superstition and corruption. To combat superstition and heresy, the Church established a permanent Church court called the Inquisition. In a number of places, however, the attempts of the Inquisition to reform heretical ideas and practices led to severe and unjust sentences. [160, 853]



### ***C. Significant Members of the Church***

- **St. Dominic (1170-1221):** A renowned priest and preacher, Dominic established an order of men who traveled throughout Europe to preach and teach. This was very different from the cloistered orders in which the men lived in seclusion, away from the outside world. He also founded an order of women to pray for the apostolic work of the Dominican preachers. [425, 799, 1562, 1589]
- **St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226):** Francis was a nobleman, poet, and mystic, who greatly loved God’s creation, and gave up a life of wealth in order to follow Christ. He eventually founded the Franciscan order, which brought men together to spread the Gospel and follow a simple lifestyle. He also founded the Brothers and Sisters of Penance (the Third Order) in 1221. A third order may be described as a middle state between cloistered life and the outside world. For those who were married or had other ties to the world and, therefore, were not in a position to enter a religious order, entering a third order enabled individuals to follow in the saint’s footsteps. [293, 2014, 2443-45, 2745]
- **St. Clare (1194-1253):** Clare was a close friend of Francis of Assisi. Under his direction, she founded an order of cloistered nuns who are known as the Poor Clares. The lives of these holy women are characterized by fasting and prayer for the world. [1434, 2565, 2687]
- **St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274):** Thomas, a Dominican priest, was one of the greatest philosophers and theologians the world has ever known. Through his use of Scripture, Church tradition, and reason, he provided the Church with a systematic understanding of the Catholic faith (*Summa Theologica*) that still helps us today. [34, 43, 50, 94]
- **St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380):** A Dominican lay woman who lived in the fourteenth century, Catherine was a counselor of popes. Centuries later she was named a “Doctor of the Church” because of her profound spiritual writings. [313, 356, 951, 1937]
- **St. Frances of Rome (1384-1440):** A wife and mother, Frances was a courageous woman noted for her great charity to the poor and sick in Rome during the fifteenth century, which was a particularly difficult period in Rome’s history. [953, 1409, 2447-48]

## PRAYER EXPERIENCE

In every age, God calls men and women to serve him, some in a religious vocation. Invite the young people to reflect upon the call to serve as members of a religious community, dedicating all aspects of their lives to his service.

Lead the students in the following prayer from the Mass for Vocations:

*Father, You call all who believe in you to grow perfect in love by following in the footsteps of Christ, your Son.*

*May those whom you have chosen to serve you as a religious provide by their way of life a convincing sign of your kingdom for the Church and the whole world.*

*We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.*

If possible, consider inviting a religious sister, a religious brother, or a priest who belongs to a religious order to speak with the young people about their vocation and call to religious life.

## V. THE JOURNEY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CONTINUES FROM AD 1500 TO AD 1800

### A. *The Mission of the Church*

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were a time of renewal of the faith in the midst of religious controversies and wars.

- Some of these controversies led large numbers of Christians to protest against, and ultimately separate themselves from, the Catholic Church (Church of Rome). This widespread movement is called the Protestant Reformation. Christians who did not separate from the Church of Rome at that time became known as Roman Catholics.
- During the same period, a broad reform movement arose in the Catholic Church.
- The Council of Trent (1545-63), which addressed the Catholic Church's need for reform, sought to clarify Catholic teaching and strengthen discipline within the Church.
- Following the Council of Trent, Catholic leaders succeeded in reestablishing Catholicism in some parts of Europe that had become Protestant. This development is called the Counter-Reformation. [817-819, 834, 838, 884, 891, 1428]

In the eighteenth century the Enlightenment presented new challenges to the Church, and a gradual process of responding to the ideas of the Enlightenment was begun. The Age of Enlightenment may be defined as the intellectual and philosophical movement that emphasized the scientific method and reductionism as well as doctrines of individual liberty, the seeking of truth through unaided human reason, and the questioning of revealed truth.

Explorers and missionaries, especially from Spain and Portugal, brought Catholic Christianity to South and Central America, the Far East, and what is today the United States of America and Canada.

*N.B. Missionaries of that time had an understanding of mission different from ours today, in that they identified Christianity with their culture and, therefore, frequently imposed their culture on the native peoples whom they came to evangelize. While such methods may rightly be criticized, the zeal and genuine accomplishments of these missionaries in bringing the gospel to others are, nonetheless, to be commended. [853-54, 856, 905, 927]*

## ***B. Struggles and Upheavals of the Church***

These centuries were marked by painful disagreements among Christians in Europe, which resulted in the separation of many people from the Church of Rome, and the rise of many different Protestant denominations, for example, Lutherans, Calvinists and Baptists. Religious fanaticism among both Protestants and Catholics resulted in hatred, persecution and religious wars in some parts of Europe. [855, 817-819]

The search for religious freedom compelled many to leave Europe and travel to America. However, even in the New World some people were still persecuted for their faith. [160, 164]

## ***C. Significant Members of the Church***

- **St. Angela Merici (1474-1540):** Angela Merici founded a group of lay women in Italy who dedicated their lives to educating poor girls. These lay women later became a worldwide order known as the Ursuline nuns. [369, 917, 2447]
- **St. Thomas More (1478-1535):** Husband, father and English statesman, Thomas More was appointed Chancellor by King Henry VIII. Because Thomas refused to cooperate with Henry's attack on the sanctity of marriage and the teaching authority of the Pope, he was martyred in 1535. [313, 2467, 2473]
- **Bartolomé de las Casas (1484-1566):** A Dominican priest and later a bishop, Bartolomé de Las Casas worked in Latin America in order to bring the Gospel to the Indians. He struggled to promote their civil rights and to have slavery prohibited. [853, 1586, 2414]
- **St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556):** A young Basque soldier of noble birth, Ignatius was wounded in battle. While recovering, he read about the life of Christ and of the saints, experienced a conversion, and dedicated himself to the service of the Lord. In 1534 he founded the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), a religious community of men noted for their missionary and educational work. His Spiritual Exercises are a great contribution to the Church's tradition of prayer. [827, 1490, 2684]
- **St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582):** A sixteenth century Spanish nun and mystic, Teresa of Avila was known for her courage, her prayer and her profound love of God. She reformed Carmelite religious life and wrote books on the spiritual life which still guide us today. She was proclaimed a "Doctor of the Church" by Pope Paul VI in 1970. [227, 1011, 1821, 2014, 2704, 2709]
- **St. Paul Miki (1562-1597):** Paul Miki was born in Japan and became a Jesuit in 1586. During a terrible persecution in that country he was martyred in 1597 – with twenty-five other religious and lay people – by being crucified. From his cross, Paul invited onlookers to accept Christianity, said he was joyfully giving his life for Christ, and forgave his executioners. [852, 1011, 2473, 2844]
- **St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622):** Francis de Sales became bishop of Geneva, a strong Protestant city, in 1602. Important in the reform movement within the Catholic Church, he was loved for his gentleness and pastoral concern. Through his writings, he taught spirituality, especially for the laity, stressing that the call to holiness is addressed to everyone. [855, 901, 2013]

- **St. Peter Claver (1580-1654):** Peter Claver was a Spanish Jesuit missionary who vowed to be forever a “slave” to his black brothers and sisters. He served in Colombia, South America, in the seventeenth century and is revered for his work among the black peoples. He died in 1654. [852, 2015, 2414]
- **St. Rose of Lima (1586-1617):** The patron saint of the Philippines, Latin America, and florists, Saint Rose of Lima was born in Peru to poor Spanish colonists. Often depicted wearing a crown of roses, she was so named due to her extreme physical beauty as a baby. Rose took a vow of chastity and went to great lengths to make her face look less beautiful. She embroidered things for sale to help her impoverished family and the poor. Mystic and visionary, she was the first social worker in the Americas, although she suffered from many afflictions. Miraculous events were attributed to her following her death. Saint Rose of Lima was canonized by Pope Clement X in 1671 and was the first person born in the Western Hemisphere to be recognized as a saint.
- **St. Isaac Jogues (1607-1646):** Isaac Jogues was a Jesuit priest, missionary, and martyr who traveled and worked among the Iroquois, Huron, and other Native populations in North America. He was captured by the Iroquois and, as a prisoner, suffered physical torment, while comforting, baptizing, and hearing confessions of the other prisoners. Isaac Jogues escaped his imprisonment and went to New Amsterdam where he was the first Catholic priest to visit Manhattan Island. He traveled back to France but was soon eager to return to the missions. He returned to Iroquois territory in the spring of 1646 and was martyred later that year by the Mohawk at their village of Ossernenon, south of the Mohawk River.
- **St. Marguerite Bourgeoys (1620-1700):** A French woman who is considered one of the founders of French Canada, Marguerite Bourgeoys opened the first school of Montreal in 1658 for French and Indian children. She also established the first religious community of non-cloistered sisters in North America, the Congregation of Notre Dame. [5, 799, 851, 927]
- **St. Kateri Tekakwitha (1656-1680):** Born near what is now the town of Auriesville, New York, Kateri was the daughter of a Mohawk chief and a captive Algonquin mother, but was orphaned at the age of four. She was baptized by a Jesuit missionary at age twenty and moved to a Christian colony of Iroquois in Canada, where her faith, gentleness, kindness and devotion to Christ crucified impressed everyone. She died of disease at age 24. Her last words were, “Jesus! Mary! I love you!” [854, 1717, 1816, 1832]

## PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Read Matthew 28:19-20 aloud. Ask the young people what this means to them.

Tell the group that Jesus sent the first disciples to spread his message and, by virtue of our baptism, he sends each of us to continue his mission today. Ask the young people to consider how Jesus is challenging each of them to spread his message.

Lead the young people in the following prayer for missions and missionaries from the Mass for the Spread of the Gospel:

*God our Father, you will all people to be saved  
and come to the knowledge of your truth.  
Send workers into your great harvest  
that the Gospel may be preached to every creature  
and your people, gathered together by the word of life  
and strengthened by the power of the sacraments,  
may advance in the way of salvation and love.  
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, forever and ever. Amen.*

## VI. THE JOURNEY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CONTINUED FROM AD 1800 THROUGH THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

### A. The Mission of the Church

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the expansion of the Church throughout the world. In Africa and Asia in particular, the Church grew through the efforts of missionaries. In the United States of America, the Church increased through the influx of Catholic immigrants. Dioceses, parishes, and the Catholic School system in the United States steadily expanded to meet the religious and educational needs of these immigrants. [166, 905, 927]

The First Vatican Council (1869-1870) addressed several issues, among them materialism, inspiration of Scripture, and papal infallibility.

Clergy, religious, and laity developed and fostered the social mission of the Church throughout the world, by supporting the rights of labor, minorities, and all who are oppressed in any way. [2419, 2421, 2460-63]

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) was called by Pope St. John XXIII to reform and renew the Church. In a series of authoritative documents, it proclaimed the teaching of the Church for the present day. The Council called for the renewal of the liturgy, a greater participation of the laity in the Church, ecumenism, the study of Sacred Scripture by scholars and laity, and the universal recognition of the right for religious freedom. For the first time in history, a Church council addressed itself not only to the Church but to the whole of humanity. [160, 820-23, 863, 884, 905, 910, 1204-05, 2108]

The Catholic Church is now, more than ever before, a global Church, with all the fervor and zeal of young communities being added to the gifts of an older, well-established Christian civilization. The visible presence of delegates from Third World nations at the Second Vatican Council as well as the diversity reflected in the present College of Cardinals has underlined this new reality. [782, 791, 2820]

Awareness of global, economic, social and ecological issues has likewise brought a new dimension to the Church's moral teaching. [1882-83, 1906-09, 1911, 2831-32]

The ecumenical movement of the twentieth century has been a great force for reconciliation among Christian communities. Catholics continue to work with others toward Christian unity through cooperation and dialogue. Interreligious dialogue between the Catholic Church and other major world religions has also increased our mutual understanding and respect. [817-22, 839-45, 855, 870]

Two of the Popes of the latter half of the twentieth century, Pope Saint Paul VI and Pope Saint John Paul II, were the first to travel extensively as popes. In the twenty-first century, Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis have continued to travel and show their solidarity with Catholics around the world, encouraging them in their faith. Throughout their travels, all of these popes have continually challenged unjust structures and called on all people to work for world peace. [2304, 2307, 2420, 2438, 2442]

## ***B. Struggles and Upheavals of the Church***

During the modern age, the Church continued to suffer in many parts of the world due to secularism, prejudice, injustice, and persecution. [1928, 1931]

The Church, while suffering persecution in the face of Nazism, Communism, and Radical Islam, has nevertheless survived. It has sometimes even flourished as an underground Church in places such as Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Hungary, China, and Vietnam. [2242, 2244]

The Church in every age has had to face many problems; she is sustained by Christ's victory over sin and his promise to be with her for all time. Today the People of God, as they strive to live the Gospel message, are challenged by relativism, materialism, lack of respect for life and human dignity, and the erosion of religious values. [1930, 1939, 2373, 2424-25]

The continued presence of wars throughout the world, the horror of genocide, the rise of terrorism, and the grave threat posed by nuclear weapons have impelled the Church to intensify her work for peace. [2304, 2307, 2313-15, 2317]

## ***C. Significant Members of the Church***

- **Martyr Saints of China (died between 1648-1930):** The Martyr Saints of China, or Augustine Zhao Rong and his 119 companions, are known as 87 Chinese Catholics and 33 Western missionaries who, from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century to 1930, were martyred because of their ministry and in some cases because of their refusal to denounce their faith in Christ Jesus. Many died in the Boxer Rebellion, in which 30,000 Chinese converts to Christianity along with missionaries and other foreigners were killed by revolutionaries. Anna Wang, a 14-year-old girl, was among the Chinese converts who refused to renounce Christianity and she spent the hours before her death in prayer and encouraged others to remain faithful. The Martyr Saints of China were canonized on October 1, 2000 by Pope St. John Paul II.
- **Venerable Pierre Toussaint (1766-1853):** A former slave, Pierre Toussaint was brought to New York City in 1787 and there he was apprenticed to one of New York's leading hairdressers. He earned a good living as a

hairdresser and eventually gained his freedom, later becoming a noted philanthropist to the poor of the city. Together with his wife, Juliette, Pierre Toussaint performed many charitable works. He contributed funds and helped raise money to build Old Saint Patrick's Cathedral on Mulberry Street. Pierre Toussaint is the first layperson to be buried in the crypt below the main altar of Saint Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue.

- **St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (1774-1821):** Elizabeth Seton was a New Yorker, a married woman and a mother. After she was widowed, she became a Roman Catholic. Following that, she professed vows as a religious sister and founded the Sisters of Charity in 1809, and in 1817 established the first orphanage in New York City. She helped to develop the Catholic school system in the United States of America and is the first American-born person to be canonized. [5, 1814, 1915]
- **St. John Henry Newman (1801-1890):** Cardinal Newman was an Anglican priest in England who, despite personal and professional opposition, was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1845. His writings have done much to give people a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith. The establishment of Newman Centers (Catholic ministry centers) throughout the world for Catholic students attending secular universities was inspired by the writings of Cardinal John Henry Newman. [157, 1723, 1778, 2144]
- **St. Anthony Mary Claret (1807-1870):** The “spiritual father of Cuba” was a missionary, religious founder, social reformer, and archbishop. He was a Spaniard whose work took him to the Caribbean, Canary Islands, and Europe. Ordained at 28, he was prevented by ill health from entering religious life as a Carthusian or a Jesuit. Despite this, he became one of Spain's most popular preachers. He was present at the First Vatican Council and was a staunch defender of the doctrine of papal infallibility. Anthony spent 10 years giving popular missions and retreats, always placing great emphasis on the Eucharist and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. An interest in publishing led Anthony to found the Religious Publishing House, a major Catholic publishing venture in Spain. Beginning with five priests, he also founded a religious institute of missionaries. Known today as the Claretians, they are active as missionaries in over 65 countries on five continents.
- **Pope Leo XIII (1810-1903):** A pope of the late nineteenth century, Leo XIII is best known for his commitment to the rights of working men and women. His encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) is still considered one of the classic statements on the subject of justice for workers. [1926, 2427-28, 2434-35]
- **St. John Neumann (1811-1860):** A Catholic priest from Bohemia, John Neumann immigrated to the United States in 1836 and was ordained that same year at Old St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. He received permission to join the Redemptorist order in 1840. In 1852 he became the fourth Bishop of Philadelphia and during his tenure he founded the first Catholic diocesan school system in the United States. He is the first United States bishop to be canonized.
- **St. Dominic Savio (1842-1857):** Born into a peasant family at Riva, Italy, young Dominic joined Saint John Bosco as a student at the Oratory in Turin at the age of 12. Saint John Bosco was impressed with Dominic's desire to be a priest and to help in his work with neglected boys. A peacemaker and an organizer, young Dominic founded a group he called the *Company of the Immaculate Conception* which, in addition to being devotional, aided Saint John Bosco with the boys and with manual work. As a youth, Dominic spent hours rapt in prayer and he called his raptures, “my distractions.” Even in play, he said that at times, “It seems heaven is opening just above me. I am afraid I may say or do something that will make the other boys laugh.” Dominic would say, “I can't do big things. But I want all I do, even the smallest thing, to be for the greater glory of God.” Dominic's health was always frail and, after receiving the last sacraments, he died on March 9, 1857. Due to his youth, some thought Dominic was too young to be considered a saint. Pope Saint Pius X declared that just the opposite was true and supported the cause for Dominic's sainthood, leading to his eventual canonization in 1954.

- **St. Frances Xavier Cabrini (1850-1917):** Born in Italy in 1850, Frances Cabrini founded the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a religious community of women who work in schools and hospitals. Mother Cabrini was the first naturalized American citizen to be declared a saint. [5, 1509, 1932, 2447]
- **Servant Of God Mother Mary Alphonsa (1851-1926):** Born in Lenox, Massachusetts, Rose Hawthorne was the daughter of the writer Nathaniel Hawthorne and his wife, Sophia. She was married while still young and, along with her husband, converted to Roman Catholicism. After her husband's death, Rose sought greater purpose in life. After spending time with the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent dePaul and training as a nurse to serve cancer patients, she joined the Third Order Dominicans. On December 8, 1900, with approval of Archbishop Michael A. Corrigan of New York, she founded a religious order which would become known as the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne. The establishment of St. Rose's Free Home for Incurable Cancer in Cherry Street in New York City housed fifteen poor women with cancer. The community eventually went on to establish seven nursing facilities in six different states. Today, Rosary Hill Home in Hawthorne, New York cares for the poor who are suffering from incurable cancer.
- **St. Katherine Drexel (1858-1955):** An heiress and philanthropist from Philadelphia, Katherine Drexel, a Sister of the Blessed Sacrament, turned away from wealth and social standing to found a missionary community serving African-Americans and Native Americans. She used her inheritance for the benefit of Native Americans, financing the printing of 500 copies of a catechism that would be used by Navajo children. Her legacy is marked by selfless service for the victims of injustice and her belief in quality education for all. She died at the age of 96 at her order's motherhouse near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- **St. Charles Lwanga (1860-1886):** Charles Lwanga was a young Christian page in the service of a pagan emperor. He protected the other pages from the emperor, who demanded that they participate in homosexual activity. Charles was martyred with twenty-one other Ugandans during the persecutions of 1886. [2357, 2472-73]
- **St. Josephine Margaret Bakhita (Ca. 1869-1947):** Born around 1869 in the Darfur region of Sudan, Josephine grew up happy and relatively prosperous. Historians believe that sometime in February 1877 Josephine was kidnapped by Arab slave traders and for the next 12 years she would be bought, sold and given away over a dozen times. As a slave, her experiences varied from fair treatment to cruel and she eventually arrived in Italy and was placed in the custody of the Canossian Sisters in Venice. While she was with the sisters, Josephine came to learn about God; she was deeply moved by her time with the sisters and discerned a call to follow Christ. Josephine's mistress could not persuade her to leave the convent and Italian authorities eventually intervened on Josephine's behalf. It was determined in the courts that since slavery had been outlawed in Sudan before Josephine was born, she could not lawfully be made a slave. Josephine was declared free and chose to remain with the Canossian Sisters. She was received into the Catholic Church on January 9, 1890 and took the name Josephine Margaret Fortunata (the Latin translation of her Arabic name, Bakhita). She received the sacraments of initiation from the Cardinal Patriarch of Venice, who would later become Pope Pius X. For the next 42 years of her life, she worked as a cook and a doorkeeper at the convent. She also traveled and visited other convents telling her story to other sisters and preparing them for work in Africa. When speaking of her enslavement, she often professed she would thank her kidnappers, for had she not been kidnapped, she might never have come to know Jesus Christ and entered His Church. In her later years, despite suffering physical pain and having to use a wheelchair, she always remained cheerful. On the evening of February 8, 1947, Josephine spoke her last words, "Our Lady, Our Lady!" In 1958 the process of canonization began for Josephine under Pope Saint John XXIII and in 1978 Pope Saint John Paul II declared her venerable. While the news of her beatification in 1992 was censored in Sudan, within the year, Pope Saint John Paul II visited that country and publicly honored her. She was canonized on October 1, 2000 and is recognized as the patron saint of Sudan.



- **St. Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897):** Moved by her love for Jesus, Thérèse became a Carmelite nun when she was fifteen years old. She strove to do all the small tasks of life to the best of her ability, seeing them as expressions of her love for Jesus and for the others with whom she lived. In her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, she teaches “her little way” – how to seek holiness of life in the ordinary and how to persevere in prayer even when it is difficult. Thérèse was a missionary in spirit because she prayed daily and fervently for people who did not yet know Jesus that they might be saved by His divine love. Pope Pius XI declared St. Thérèse, “Patroness of the Missions,” recognizing that some missionaries go out to evangelize in places where the Gospel has not yet taken root while others, like Thérèse, save souls by their faithful prayer for them at home. [201, 258, 826, 2710, 2742]
- **Pope St. John XXIII (1881-1963):** Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, one of fourteen children born to poor parents in Sotto il Monte, Italy, would eventually become one of the most influential popes in recent history. He was ordained a priest in 1904 and served the Church in many ways throughout the early part of the 20th century and after the Second World War. He became a cardinal in 1953 and upon the death of Pius XII in 1958 was elected pope. Shortly after his election, Pope John XXIII called for an ecumenical council which would come to be known as Vatican II. He was canonized a saint by Pope Francis on April 27, 2014.
- **St. Pio of Pietrelcina [Padre Pio] (1887-1968):** Francesco Forgione was born into an Italian farming family devoted to their Catholic faith. From a young age he had a strong personal relationship with the Lord and wanted to be a priest. When he joined the Capuchin Franciscan Friars, he was given the name Padre Pio. He suffered much throughout his life – physically as well as spiritually – and he always offered his sufferings to the Lord for the sake of saving sinners. His physical difficulties never prevented him from continuing his ministry of compassion for the sick and the suffering. He was a profound mystic – a person of deep prayer who experienced the presence of God. One day in 1918, as Padre Pio was making his thanksgiving after Mass, he had a vision of Jesus. When the vision ended, he had the “stigmata” – the wounds of Christ Crucified – in his own hands, feet, and side. Padre Pio used his extraordinary spiritual gifts to express Jesus’ compassion. Thousands of people flocked to him to receive the Sacrament of Penance. All day long, 10 hours a day, he would hear their confessions. The people often said that he knew details of their lives that they never told him, and that he understood their souls.
- **Blessed Miguel Agustín Pro (1891-1927):** “¡Viva Cristo Rey!” – Long live Christ the King! – were the last words Pro uttered before he was executed for being a Catholic priest and serving his flock. Born into a prosperous, devout family in Guadalupe de Zacatecas, Mexico, Miguel entered the Jesuits in 1911. Three years later, because of religious persecution in Mexico, he fled to Spain. After he was ordained in Belgium in 1925, Father Pro immediately returned to Mexico where he served a Church forced to go underground. He clandestinely celebrated the Eucharist and ministered the sacraments to small groups of Catholics. He and his brother, Roberto, were arrested on false charges of attempting to assassinate Mexico’s president. While Roberto was spared, Miguel was sentenced to face a firing squad and was executed on November 23, 1927. His funeral became a public demonstration of faith. Miguel Pro was beatified in 1988.
- **St. Maximilian Kolbe (1894-1901):** Maximilian Kolbe was a Polish Catholic priest who fulfilled the Gospel message by laying down his life for another. During the Second World War, he was imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp. He volunteered to die in the place of another prisoner, who, when chosen to die, had sighed, “My poor wife, my poor children!” [609, 1826, 2002]
- **Venerable Fulton J. Sheen (1895-1979):** Archbishop Fulton Sheen was known for his preaching and especially his work on television and radio. The host of the television program *Life is Worth Living* from 1952 to 1957, Archbishop Sheen’s legacy endures as these episodes continue to be rebroadcast. In 1952 he won an Emmy Award for his efforts, accepting the award by saying, “I feel it is time I pay tribute to my four writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.”

- **Pope St. Paul VI (1897-1978):** Pope St. Paul VI continued the Second Vatican Council that was started by his predecessor, Pope St. John XXIII. His chief concern was that in the 20th century the Catholic Church should continue to be a faithful witness to the teachings of the Church, recognizing their relevance in the present time. Upon conclusion of the Council, Paul VI moved to interpret and implement the mandates outlined in the documents of the Council. He was canonized by Pope Francis on October 14, 2018.
- **Servant of God Dorothy Day (1897-1980):** A convert to Catholicism (she was, in fact, an agnostic), Dorothy Day experienced a period of searching for the meaning of life. After the birth of her daughter, she began a period of spiritual awakening which led her to the Catholic faith; Dorothy was baptized on December 29, 1927 at Our Lady Help of Christians Church on Staten Island. She was a lay woman who, by her example, encouraged many to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Founder of the Catholic Worker movement, she labored most of her life in New York City and died there in 1980. [544, 1929-31, 2306, 2446]
- **St. Teresa of Los Andes (1900-1920):** As a young girl growing up in the early 1900's in Santiago, Chile, Juana Fernandez read an autobiography the French-born saint, Thérèse, popularly known as the Little Flower. This experience deepened her desire to serve God and clarified the path she would follow and at 19 Juana became a Carmelite nun, taking the name of Teresa. The convent offered the simple lifestyle Teresa desired and the joy of living in a community of women completely devoted to God. She focused her days on prayer and sacrifice. "I am God's," she wrote in her diary. "He created me and is my beginning and my end." Toward the end of her short life, Teresa began an apostolate of letter-writing, sharing her thoughts on the spiritual life with many people. At age 20 she contracted typhus and quickly took her final vows. She died a short time later, during Holy Week. Known as the "Flower of the Andes," Teresa remains popular with the estimated 100,000 pilgrims who visit her shrine in Los Andes each year. Canonized in 1993 by Pope John Paul II, she is Chile's first saint.
- **St. Maria Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938):** Born into a poor, religious family in Poland, at an early age Faustina felt called to a religious life. She was so poor that she was not admitted to the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy until she saved enough money to pay for her religious habit. It was during a period of recuperation from illness that Faustina was visited by Jesus, the "King of Divine Mercy." She kept a diary, which was a record of her conversations with Jesus. Beginning in July of 1937 and throughout the 20th century, the image of and devotion to Divine Mercy has spread throughout the world.
- **St. Teresa of Calcutta [Kolkata] (1910-1997):** A native of Albania, Mother Teresa founded the Missionaries of Charity in 1950. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 for her charitable work. She was vocal in her opposition to abortion and was admired by many and honored around the world for her care of the dying. The Missionaries of Charity, with several thousand sisters and a presence in many countries, manages homes for people dying of HIV/AIDS, soup kitchens, orphanages, and schools.
- **Thomas Merton (1915-1968):** Having been previously baptized in the Church of England, Thomas Merton was received into the Catholic Church on November 16, 1938 at Corpus Christi Church in Manhattan. He was a Trappist monk and gifted writer who wrote extensively about the spiritual life, monasticism, and the need for world peace. He was also committed to dialogue with Eastern religions on the subject of mysticism. His autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, tells his conversion story. [843, 925-26, 2304, 2687]
- **St. Oscar Romero (1917-1980):** Oscar Romero, Archbishop and martyr, was assassinated in 1980 while celebrating Mass because of his stand on human rights and his work to promote justice and peace in his country, El Salvador. [1907-09, 1912, 2473]
- **Pope St. John Paul II (1920-2005):** Karol Josef Wojtyla was born in Wadowice, Poland. His early life was very hard. His mother died when he was 9 and his older brother when he was 12. When he was 19 the

Nazis invaded Poland and he and his father had to go into hiding. He became a Catholic priest during the years when the Communists were taking control of Poland. Later, as Pope, he was instrumental in ending the Communist rule in Eastern Europe. Pope John Paul II was the longest-serving pope in modern history – from 1978 to 2005. During his pontificate, he travelled extensively throughout the world, presenting the Church’s teachings in many countries with their vastly different religious traditions and cultures. He had a special love for youth and they for him and in 1985, he began the World Youth Day movement. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which provides the basic content for all Catholic education, was published under his direction. His teachings on the Theology of the Body provide the Catholic context for teaching human sexuality. In 1983 he promulgated the *New Code of Canon Law*. Just three years after he became pope, John Paul II was shot in St. Peter’s Square by a Turkish political extremist. After his recovery, he visited his would-be assassin in prison and forgave him.

- **St. Gianna Beretta Molla (1922-1962):** While pregnant with her fourth child, Gianna Molla, a medical doctor, refused medical treatment, knowing that doing so could result in her own death, which later occurred in 1962. Her medical career was marked by adherence to the teachings of the Catholic Church. She dedicated herself to charitable work and was involved in the work of both Catholic Action and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

### PRAYER EXPERIENCE

- Read Matthew 25:35-36 to the group.
- Ask them to reflect on Jesus’ questions and think about the times they encountered someone who was hungry or thirsty. What did they do? How did they welcome the stranger?
- What did they do to meet the needs of one who needed adequate clothing? How did they help one who is ill or injured? For those who are suffering, how can we let them know we care?
- Lead the students in the following prayer from the Mass for Refugees and Exiles:

*Lord, no one is a stranger to you and no one is ever far from your loving care.  
In your kindness, watch over refugees and exiles,  
those separated from their loved ones,  
young people who are lost,  
and those who have left or run away from home.  
Bring them back safely to the place where they long to be  
and help us always to show your kindness to strangers and to those in need.  
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.*

## VII. CHALLENGES OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

As the Catholic Church continues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the faithful continue to seek a relationship with Jesus Christ in the face of continued persecution, secularism and indifference. Realities such as the increasing presence of technology in everyday life, the investigation of cases of sex abuse in the Church and society, the attempts of followers of radical Islam to terrorize Christians, and the acceptance of assisted suicide have, at

times, presented obstacles to effective evangelization and catechesis. Regardless of one's state in life, whether ordained, lay or religious, through daily life one is bound to share the Good News in word and deed for the building up of God's kingdom on earth.

### ***A. The Papacy at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century***

Following the death of Pope St. John Paul II on April 2, 2005, a papal conclave was convened during which Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger was elected pope. During his papacy, Benedict XVI advocated a return to fundamental Christian values to counter the increase in secularism that was taking place throughout the world.

Encyclicals written by Pope Benedict XVI include:

- *Caritas in veritate* (Charity in Truth): June 29, 2009
- *Spe Salvi* (Saved by Hope): November 30, 2007
- *Deus Caritas Est* (On Christian Love – God is Love): December 25, 2005

On February 11, 2013, Pope Benedict announced his resignation that would become effective later that same month on February 28. He would be the first pope to resign since Gregory XII in 1415, and the first to resign of his own volition since Celestine V in 1294.

The conclave that followed Pope Benedict XVI's resignation resulted in the election of Jorge Mario Cardinal Bergoglio, who would become Pope Francis. The papacy of Francis was marked by a number of firsts. He was the first pontiff to hail from the Americas and the first South American pope. He was also the first Jesuit pope and the first to choose the name Francis.

From the beginning of his papacy on March 13, 2013, Pope Francis maintained that the Catholic Church should be more open and welcoming. Noted for his humility and emphasis on God's mercy, Pope Francis broke from tradition when he chose to reside in the Domus Sanctae Marthae guesthouse rather than the papal apartments of the Apostolic palace, the traditional living quarters of previous popes. Pope Francis has traveled extensively and has exhibited a deep commitment to interfaith dialogue.

The first encyclical of Pope Francis was issued on June 29, 2013. *Lumen fidei* (The Light of Faith), issued in conjunction with the Year of Faith proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI (October 2012 to November 2013), was the first encyclical in the history of the Church that was written by two popes.

The Jubilee of Mercy was formally declared through Pope Francis' papal bull, *Misericordiae vultus* (The Face of Mercy), issued on April 11, 2015. Beginning on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception on December 8, 2015, the Jubilee of Mercy concluded on November 20, 2016, the Feast of Christ the King. During the Jubilee the faithful were reminded of the importance of mercy and that the Church is more open to all people.

Papal documents that reflect the Holy Father's vision for the Catholic Church as well as the whole world include:

- *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel): Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World (November 24, 2013).
- *Laudato si'* (Praise be to You!): Pope Francis' first encyclical concerning care for the planet (June 18, 2015).
- *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love): Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on love in the family (March 19, 2016).

- *Gaudete et exsultate* (Rejoice and Be Glad): Apostolic Exhortation on the call to holiness in today's world (March 19, 2018).
- *Christus vivit* (Christ is Alive): Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People and to the entire People of God (March 25, 2019).
- *Querida Amazonia* (Beloved Amazon): Post-Synodal Exhortation to the People of God and to All Persons of Good Will (February 2, 2020).
- *Fratelli Tutti* (All Brothers): Encyclical letter on fraternity and social friendship (October 3, 2020).

## **B. Significant Members of the Church**

- **21 Coptic Martyrs:** On February 15, 2015, a video was shared that showed 21 men in orange jumpsuits being forced to the ground in Libya and then beheaded by ISIS-affiliated militants. These men were killed because they were Christians. Reaction throughout the world was swift and condemning. Pope Francis called the killings “barbaric.” He said further that, “The flood of our Christian brothers is testimony that cries out. Be they Catholic, Orthodox, Lutherans, it doesn’t matter. They’re Christian.”

### **PRAYER EXPERIENCE**

Read Romans 10:13-15 to the group. Give them some time to reflect upon the questions that are being asked. Encourage those who wish to share their thoughts.

Conclude by praying the *Prayer for the New Evangelization* (USCCB):

*Heavenly Father, pour forth your Holy Spirit to inspire me with these words from Holy Scripture.  
 Stir in my soul the desire to renew my faith  
 and deepen my relationship with your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ  
 so that I might truly believe in and live the Good News.  
 Open my heart to hear the Gospel  
 and grant me the confidence to proclaim the Good News to others.  
 Pour out your Spirit, so that I might be strengthened to go forth  
 and witness to the Gospel in my everyday life through my words and actions.  
 In moments of hesitation, remind me:  
 If not me, then who will proclaim the Gospel?  
 If not now, then when will the Gospel be proclaimed?  
 If not the truth of the Gospel, then what shall I proclaim?  
 God, our Father, I pray that through the Holy Spirit  
 I might hear the call of the New Evangelization to deepen my faith,  
 grow in confidence to proclaim the Gospel  
 and boldly witness to the saving grace of your Son, Jesus Christ,  
 who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
 one God, forever and ever. Amen!*