
PRESENTER'S GUIDE

The History of the Church



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Apostle Peter by Mengs.

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

PRESENTER'S GUIDE

How to Use This Presenter's Guide

Guidelines

Read these guidelines before you start to plan what you will do in each session:

Congratulations! You have been entrusted to help others grow in their love of God by growing in their knowledge of the Catholic Faith. Whether the participants in your sessions will be high-school students attending religious education classes, adults who want to learn more, or inquiring non-Catholics who want to learn about the Faith, we have made this *Presenter's Guide* to help every participant better comprehend the material in the book.

We have also designed the *Presenter's Guide* to aid you in your presentation, covering one chapter per session. We encourage you to tailor the activities and questions to your participants, taking into account their knowledge level, what they hope to get out of these sessions, and the amount of time you have to meet. For example, you might choose to forego the Opening Activity altogether if your participants have not yet read the material, or you might choose to omit some of the Focus Questions if you are pressed for time.

As the presenter, your tendency might be to schedule more activities and questions than can be completed in the amount of time that a session lasts. **Start out with less**, and have a few questions or activities in mind if there is time at the end of a session. You should have no problem, for example, introducing a discussion topic from an earlier section after having presented the whole chapter.

There is at least one exercise in each chapter, be it a Guided Exercise or Closing Activity, that is focused on helping each participant make a personal connection to the material. It is recommended that you identify this one and make time to cover that activity with the participants during the session.

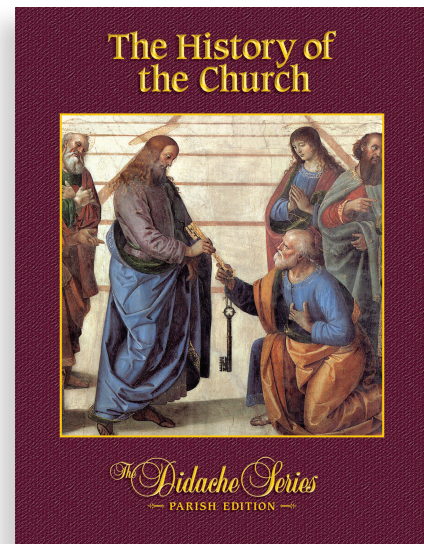
It is a good idea to open and close each session with a prayer. You might choose to use the same prayer to open and close each session, especially a popular

prayer such as the *Lord's Prayer*, the *Hail Mary*, or the *Glory Be*. If you prefer, each session has a suggested Opening Prayer that is related to the chapter.

BEFORE THE FIRST SESSION

Overview of Chapter 1

Be sure that you and each of the participants have a copy of this book:



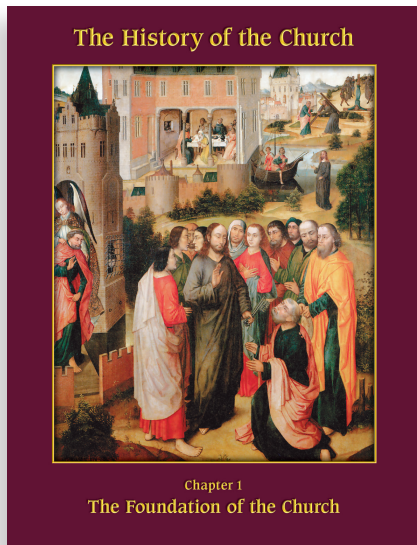
The History of the Church, Parish Edition

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Available from MTF at www.theologicalforum.org

At the time of registration, give each participant a summary of Chapter 1 and have him or her read Chapter 1 before the first session.

You might want your registrar to reproduce and distribute page 84 in this guide to the participants.



Chapter 1: THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH

Key Idea

This is reprinted from the textbook for your reference:

- The Church reflects God's original plan to draw people into communion with himself so as to share in his divine life. He prepared his Chosen People and called them together to unite as one. In the fullness of time, he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem sinful humanity. Christ established his Church to continually call everyone to redemption and union with God. He entrusted the Church, headed by the successors of St. Peter and the Apostles, with his message of salvation to be taught to all generations.

Vocabulary List

These are reprinted from the textbook for your reference:

- **Communion**—From the Latin for “mutual participation” or “oneness together,” a bond of union between God the Father and God the Son, and/or with other faithful Christians in the Church. (p. 3)
- **Messiah**—Hebrew for “anointed.” This is used in reference to Christ because he accomplished perfectly the divine mission of priest, prophet, and king, signified by his being anointed as Christ. (p. 3)

- **Redeemer**—From a word that literally means “being bought back,” a title given to Jesus Christ, who through his sacrificial Death on the Cross set us free from the slavery of sin, thus redeeming or “buying us back” from the power of Satan. (p. 4)
- **Apostles**—From the Greek for “one sent forth.” It refers primarily to the Twelve chosen by Christ during the course of his public ministry to be his closest followers. (p. 6)
- **New Covenant**—The new “dispensation” or order, established by God in Jesus Christ, to succeed and perfect the Old Covenant. (p. 8)
- **Sermon on the Mount**—One of Christ's first and most famous proclamations of the Gospel. The Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer are among some of the teachings given in the Sermon on the Mount. (p. 8)
- **Last Supper**—The Passover meal that Christ and his disciples celebrated before his arrest. Christ instituted the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Holy Orders at the Last Supper. (p. 9)
- **Apostolic Succession**—The handing on of ecclesiastical authority from the Apostles to their successors, the bishops, through the laying on of hands. (p. 14)
- **Laying on of hands**—The ritual act, going back to the Old Testament, whereby men were consecrated for sacred duties. From the New Testament onward, it has been the action used to ordain men to the priesthood. (p. 14)

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SESSION

Opening Prayer

Begin the session with an opening prayer such as the following:

*O my God,
relying on your almighty power
and infinite mercy and promises,
I hope to obtain pardon for my sins,
the help of your grace,
and life everlasting,
through the merits of Jesus Christ,
my Lord and Redeemer. Amen.*

(Act of Hope)

Overview of the Chapter

If you did not have the registrar distribute the summary to the participants, read the summary (p. 84 in this guide) to them.

Opening Activity

Have the participants complete the Opening Activity (p. 2).

Key Idea

Have a participant read aloud the Key Idea (p. 2).

INTRODUCTION; THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

(pp. 2-3)

Vocabulary

Have a participant read aloud the definitions of the vocabulary words on page 3.

Review

Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.

Focus Questions

Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:

1. **How is the Church prefigured in creation?** In creating man, God desired that all of humanity would share in his divine life and exist in communion with him. The Church is this communion, the gathering of God's people—those who respond to the divine invitation—into one body so that they may receive salvation.
2. **How did God prepare his Chosen People for his Church?** A long history of suffering and oppression served to mold a people who looked in expectation for the promised Redeemer.
3. **What kind of Messiah were many of the Jews expecting?** They expected the Messiah to free Israel from the Roman occupation.

4. **Although he was born in poverty and simplicity, did anyone recognize the significance of Christ? Explain.** Yes. The wise men came from afar to worship the infant Jesus. When Joseph and Mary brought the child Jesus to the Temple to be consecrated to God, the prophet Simeon recognized him as the Messiah.

JESUS CHRIST, THE REDEEMER

(p. 4)

Vocabulary

Have a participant read aloud the definition of the vocabulary word on page 4.

Review

Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.

Additional Activities

If there is time, have the participants complete the Guided Exercise (p. 4).

CHRIST CALLS HIS TWELVE APOSTLES

(pp. 4-6)

Vocabulary

Have a participant read aloud the definition of the vocabulary word on page 6.

Review

Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.

Focus Questions

Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:

5. **What is an Apostle?** Christ called forth twelve of his disciples to be his Apostles, whom he appointed "to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons" (Mk 3:14-15). The word "apostle" comes from a Greek word meaning "one who is sent."

6. What is the significance in the number of Apostles? The Chosen People traced their ancestry to the twelve sons of Jacob (also named Israel), and so were divided into the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Christ told his Twelve Apostles they would sit in judgment over the Twelve Tribes. Christ was fulfilling this prophecy of a restored Israel in his Church.

7. Respond to this statement: In selecting his Apostles, Christ chose only the best, brightest, and most impressive men he could find. Although the Apostles were ordinary men—among them fishermen and a tax collector—they would become the leaders of his Church whom he would send forth to preach the Good News of salvation to all nations.

8. Why did Christ take care to explain the deeper meaning of his teachings to his Apostles? Christ was equipping these twelve men to provide the foundation for his Church on earth.

Additional Activities

If there is time, have the participants participate in the Discussion (p. 6).

ST. PETER, THE “ROCK” OF THE CHURCH

(p. 7)

Review

Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.

Focus Questions

Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:

9. What did it mean when Christ gave St. Peter the “keys of the kingdom of Heaven”? Not only did Christ select his Apostles to lead and govern his Church, he also appointed St. Peter to have particular authority. The “keys of the kingdom of heaven” are a sign of his special authority to govern the Church in the name of Christ.

10. What does St. Peter’s status as the “rock” of the Church signify? St. Peter’s status as the “rock” signifies his leadership of the Church.

TEACHINGS, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

(pp. 8-9)

Vocabulary

Have a participant read aloud the definitions of the vocabulary words on page 8.

Review

Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.

Focus Questions

Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:

11. In what passage of Scripture do we find a clear summary of the teachings of Christ? The most succinct and direct collection of Christ’s teachings is given at the Sermon on the Mount.

12. How is the Kingdom spoken of by Christ different from other kingdoms? He preached of the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, as a mysterious reality in which all people would live according to his New Law.

THE APOSTOLIC MISSION

(pp. 9-10)

Vocabulary

Have a participant read aloud the definition of the vocabulary word on page 9.

Review

Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.

Focus Questions

Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:

13. What special powers and authority did Christ give to his Apostles? He gave them the ability to heal the sick; the ability to cast out demons; and the power to administer the Sacraments, efficacious signs that confer grace to the faithful.

14. What is the fundamental mission of the Church as given by Christ? The fundamental mission of the Church is to teach all people as Christ taught and to lead them to salvation through the Sacraments.

AWAITING THE PROMISE

(p. 10)

Review

Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.

Focus Questions

Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:

15. Name some ways in which Christ fulfills his promise to be “with you always.” Christ’s mission of the Church will last until the end of the world, and it will enjoy the presence and assistance of Christ himself, above all in the Eucharist, the gift of his Real Presence through his Body and Blood.

16. What did the Apostles do after Christ’s Ascension? Why? The Eleven Apostles followed Christ’s instructions and returned to Jerusalem, to the Upper Room where they had celebrated the Last Supper.

17. What happened to Judas, one of the original Apostles? Judas killed himself out of despair for betraying Christ.

18. Who was St. Matthias? Because the Apostles had numbered twelve before Judas killed himself, the Apostles chose St. Matthias to be the twelfth Apostle.

THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH

(p. 11)

Review

Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.

Focus Questions

Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:

19. What happened at Pentecost? The Apostles were gathered in the Upper Room along with Christ’s Mother when suddenly the sound of a strong wind

filled the house and what seemed like tongues of fire came to rest upon each of them. “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4).

20. What great change came over the Apostles that day? Immediately after the Holy Spirit’s descent, the Apostles began to preach the crucified and risen Christ with great power and authority. Because they were given the gift of tongues, everyone in the vast crowds could hear the Apostles in his or her own language.

21. To what did the new community of disciples devote themselves? They “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:41-42).

22. What does Christ’s gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church guarantee? This gift guarantees that the Church will always remain faithful to the truth that Christ taught without error.

CONVERSION AND JOURNEYS OF ST. PAUL

(pp. 11-12)

Review

Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.

Focus Questions

Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:

23. Who was St. Paul before his conversion experience? For what was he known? St. Paul was known as Saul, a pious, well-educated Jew and one of the chief persecutors of Christians at the time.

24. What was remarkable about the timing of St. Paul’s conversion experience? Saul was en route to Damascus to arrest Christians there.

25. Why is St. Paul considered an Apostle? He became one of Christianity’s greatest evangelizers, traveling and spreading the Gospel throughout the Roman world, far beyond the borders of Palestine, founding some of the earliest and most prominent early Christian communities along the way.

26. Why do we call him the “Apostle to the Gentiles”? St. Paul’s travels brought him into touch with Gentiles (non-Jews) in every corner of Asia Minor, into Arabia, across Macedonia and Greece, and finally to Rome. Some scholars believe he may have traveled even as far west as Spain.

THE COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM

(p. 13)

Review

Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.

Focus Questions

Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:

27. Describe the controversy that was resolved at the Council of Jerusalem AD 49. There was debate in the early Church over whether Gentiles first had to become Jews and observe the Law of Moses before they could be baptized as Christians.

28. How was this council significant in terms of establishing the teaching authority of the Church? The Council of Jerusalem was the first of many doctrinal councils in the Church’s long history.

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION AND THE OFFICE OF BISHOP; CONCLUSION

(pp. 13-16)

Vocabulary

Have a participant read aloud the definitions of the vocabulary words on page 14.

Review

Allow some time for the participants to read or review this section.

NOTES

Focus Questions

Ask the participants to reply to these Focus Questions:

29. How did most of the Twelve Apostles die? According to tradition, all the Apostles except St. John died as martyrs for the Faith.

30. How did the offices of priest and bishop develop? As the number of Christian communities grew, the Apostles began to appoint successors to serve and teach the local churches they had established. The offices of bishop, priest (presbyter), and deacon were well defined by the end of the first century with bishops consecrated to oversee and govern the local church and priests, in communion with the bishop, serving the smaller communities attached to the local church.

31. What is the “laying on of hands”? It is the sacramental sign by which the Apostles handed down their authority to the first bishops, who appointed others, and so on through the present day.

32. What is Apostolic Succession? It is the direct, unbroken line of laying on of hands by which the bishops of the Catholic Church today can rightly say they receive their authority from the Apostles and, ultimately, from Christ.

33. Who is the successor to St. Peter today? As of this writing, the Church recognizes Pope Francis as the 265th successor to St. Peter.

34. What are the four marks of the Church, and what do they mean? The Church is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. The Church is One because there is one God, one Faith, and one Church instituted by Christ; Holy because she is identified with Christ, who is perfectly Holy, and offers the pathway to holiness through her teachings and Sacraments; Catholic, or “universal,” because everyone is called to be joined to the Church and to seek holiness, ultimately in hope of eternal salvation; and Apostolic, because she is founded on the Apostles and governed to this day by their successors, headed by the Pope, successor to St. Peter.

Additional Activities

If there is time, have the participants complete the Guided Exercise (p. 15).

CLOSING ACTIVITIES

Closing Activities

Have the participants complete the Closure or Alternative Assessment (p. 16).

Ask the participants to answer the Discussion Questions (p. 16; answers below). These can be given as a quiz or used to lead a class discussion.

Discussion Questions (p. 16)

- 1. How is the Church prefigured in creation?** In creating man, God desired that all of humanity would share in his divine life and exist in communion with him. The Church is this communion, the gathering of God's people—those who respond to the divine invitation—into one body so that they may receive salvation.
- 2. How did God prepare his Chosen People for his Church?** A long history of suffering and oppression served to mold a people who looked in expectation for the promised Redeemer.
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- 6. How is the kingdom spoken of by Christ different from other kingdoms?** He preached of the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, as a mysterious reality in which all people would live according to his New Law.
- 7. What special powers and authority did Christ give to his Apostles?** He gave them the ability to heal the sick; the ability to cast out demons; and the power to administer the Sacraments, efficacious signs that confer grace to the faithful.

8. Name some ways in which Christ fulfills his promise to be “with you always.” Christ's mission of the Church will last until the end of the world, and it will enjoy the presence and assistance of Christ himself, above all in the Eucharist, the gift of his Real Presence through his Body and Blood.

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NOTES

Overview of the Next Chapter

Read this summary to the participants:

Chapter 2 takes the Church from persecution to toleration to the state religion. This chapter shows the early persecutions of Christians—especially under the emperors Nero, Domitian, and Trajan—to the relative tolerance—especially under Decius, Valerian, and Diocletian—to the official toleration and imposition by Constantine and later emperors. The chapter profiles St. Ignatius of Antioch and the role of *Pax Romana* in the spread of Christianity.

Key Idea of the Next Chapter

Have a participant read aloud the Key Idea (p. 18). It has been reprinted from the textbook for your reference:

- The Roman Empire largely persecuted the Church for her first three centuries, tolerated her beginning in the fourth, and then adopted her as its official religion at the end of the fourth.

AT THE END OF THE SESSION

Read the Next Chapter

Have the participants read Chapter 2 before the next session.

Closing Prayer

End the session with a closing prayer.

Examples include the *Lord's Prayer*, the *Hail Mary*, or the *Glory Be*.

NOTES

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