

Welcome to the EPIC Journey through Church history. We're going to take a brief moment and go through sessions one through seven, just do a review for those of you who are using this in the parish or in the home and you want to take a six-week type break in between this 20-part study. We're going to look at the first seven sessions as a review, and then we'll have another review later for the next six sessions. So, we started off our whole discussion of Church history trying to figure out what is history and what is the Church trying to find in those terms and also trying to change the way in which we view history. When we went through high school and college, it was a kind of a bland and boring memorization of dates and events and people that had no bearing or no meaning on our lives or anything we could use. That example of the Calvin cartoon or Calvin is from Calvin and Hobbes, where he's writing a history test and his history teacher asks him, *What year did the Pilgrims land at Plymouth Rock* and he says, *1620*. In the next panel is shows writing underneath this little answer back to his teacher that says, *As you can see, I've memorized this utterly useless fact long enough to answer a test question. I now intend to forget this fact for the rest of my life. You've taught me nothing, but how to manipulate the system. Congratulations.* And many of us probably have felt history to be like that. Just as bland memorization of dates that are boring has no meaning on our lives. But really what history is, for us as Catholics is a study of the story of our family. It's our family history. It's like going up into our attic and finding an old chest full of fun and interesting family facts. Maybe we have a relative or a loved one who passes away. We go up in their attic and we find all kinds of letters that they wrote to people that they knew - their friends, their loved ones, and it gives us insight into who they were, and it also helps us know their story because *their story* ultimately shapes and impacts our story and that's true with our own family and it is also true with our spiritual family, the Catholic Church. We have to know our history because history informs the present and the present gives shape to the future. So, unless we know our history, and especially as Catholics in the modern world, unless we know the story of our Church, and learn it and remember it and then pass it on to others we're at a disadvantage in our culture. We are called to go forth into the world and to evangelize our culture, to change our culture, to bring about a culture of life and a civilization of love but we cannot do that unless we *know Christ intimately in the Scriptures*. And unless we know the story, the intimate story of the Church and about our fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord who came before us and their actions and their activities and how they shaped built up Western civilization. So, we have as our tools for our journey through Church history, the EPIC Church History Chart. It has been divided into 12 different time periods to help us remember the main players, the main events, the main story of what is going on or what has gone on these past 2000 years in the history of the Church. And we have our Church history study set that also has great information in the back to help us remember this wonderful story.

MUSTARD SEED: So, we've looked at so far in sessions one through six different time periods and our first time period was the *Mustard Seed* and this is where the Church is very small. It's beginning to growing out. It starts out as an organization founded by the Lord on a small band of brothers, 12 apostles who are given the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and they use the gift of the Holy Spirit and the grace they have received from the Holy Spirit to go forth into the world and to continue Jesus's saving mission to spread the gospel, to spread the *Good News*, to bring people into an *intimate relationship* with Jesus Christ and His Church and so we see in the beginnings of the Church, how the Church comes under attack, and is persecuted and then we have the first martyrs of the Church, Deacon St. Stephen, who gave his life after utilizing Scripture to present a case of Christ. So, he was stoned to death. Now a future apostle was present at that event, St. Paul (Saul), and we see how soon after St. Stephen's martyrdom and one of the apostles, St. James the Greater (the brother of St. John) gives his life as a witness. We saw through the next several sessions how the Church will be under persecution, and that's a main theme that ran through the entire 2000-year history of the Church. *The Church has constantly been persecuted* even in our own day, sometimes a very active bloody and violent persecution. Sometimes persecution is nonviolent, but still persecution, nonetheless. So, we looked at how the apostles after being filled with the Holy Spirit of Pentecost and how they dispersed throughout the whole known Roman Empire to advance the gospel and how they came into contact with Gentiles.

51 And St. Paul in particular, how he missions to the Gentiles and brought them into the Church. And we
52 see how the Church was faced with several big questions. One of the first in her 2000-year history was,
53 *What do we do with the Gentiles?* We saw through the Council of Jerusalem how St. Peter definitively
54 proclaimed and started exercising that office that the Lord gave him, the power and authority given to
55 him and to say the Gentile did not have to follow circumcision. They have to follow some of the dietary
56 laws, but not all of them. So, the Church answers that first big question through an exercise of the
57 apostolic ministry of St. Peter. We saw two of a brief time of Roman persecution in our time period of
58 Mustard Seed with Nero, and how Nero burned the city of Rome and then tried to blame it on the
59 Christians. Many times, the Christian faith was made illegal in the Roman Empire, and that law would be
60 on the books until the year 313. And Constantine would then overturn that law. We saw how Pope St.
61 Clement wrote a letter to the Church community in Corinth during this time period and how they
62 addressed the problem with the Corinthians who were in revolt against their clergy and makes it clear
63 that the clergy derive authority from God, not from the people. And then he exercises this universal
64 primacy that the Holy Father has by virtue of being a successor of St. Peter.

65 **PERSECUTION:** We then moved into our next time period, *persecution of the Christian Church during the*
66 *Roman Empire*. That persecution lasted for over 200 years and at times was very active and widespread
67 throughout the empire and other times it was regional and local and other times too there was peace in
68 the empire and there was no active persecution of the Christians. But for the most part, there was this
69 animosity by Roman society to the Christian Church, and we saw to how they pagan writers attacked the
70 faith and issued propaganda documents and letters and books about the faith attacking the Christians
71 for being comprised mostly of ignorant and poor people, which was a big deal in a Roman society which
72 was highly class structured. You wouldn't want to associate with the poor or the ignorant if you're a
73 Roman nobleman or noble woman. *Trying to convince Romans not to join the Christian Church was the*
74 *objective of the Roman writers*. They also accused the Church of being *bad citizens*, of not caring for the
75 welfare of the Empire, not caring for the Emperor, not worshiping the state and local gods. We saw how
76 Christians were looked upon as believing in unreasonable doctrine, the doctrine of the Incarnation How
77 *could it be and why would a God become a human being* was just unfathomable to the Roman mind. We
78 saw how the final attack of the pagan writers was *cannibalism*. They accused the Christians not only of
79 eating their own god in the Eucharist, but also of killing infants and participating in human sacrifice. And
80 again, all these attacks trying to dissuade Roman people from joining the faith. The Church during this
81 time of persecution was attacked not only by the Romans (external persecution), but also internally in
82 the form *heresy*. We saw the rise of **Gnosticism** for example, where the Gnostics believe in the goodness
83 of the spirit, the badness of the body and how the Church had to wrestle with and deal with that heresy.
84 Also, the rise of certain *early schisms* in the Church as well. One in particular a man by the name of
85 Novation, who was upset with the Holy Father for showing mercy to those Christians who had given in
86 to the persecution and then were contrite and repented after their sacrifice and wanted to come back
87 to the Church. And we saw how the Holy Father treated them with mercy and St Hippolytus and others
88 wanted them to be treated with rigorism, with severe and stern discipline, or for even in some cases,
89 not even allowing them to come back to the Church. So St Hippolytus is then captured during the
90 persecution, arrested and sent to the mines of Sardinia and there he meets Pontian and he reconciles
91 himself to the Church, and comes back to the Church and then is canonized for his witness because he
92 gives his life in the mines for Christ and as he was the only anti pope in history of the Church to be
93 canonized, known as Saint Hippolytus. We saw persecutions, the rise of the great persecution under
94 Diocletian in the beginning of the fourth century after he divided the Roman empire into EAST and
95 WEST. Then begins an attack against the Church, an attack that was very severe, but ultimately led to
96 the conversion of the empire to the Church. And that's one of the great things that comes out as a result
97 of the persecution is that *the blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christianity* and the blood given by the
98 martyrs leads to the conversion of the empire.

99 **CONVERSIONS and COUNCILS:** in our next title period from 313 to the year 499, we have Constantine,
100 the man who had a miraculous vision of the crossing the sky as he marches to Rome to battle. He

converts (not until he is on his deathbed to the faith), and he starts to enact policies that were favorable to the Christians and in particular, Constantine calls a council the first Ecumenical Council in history of the Church, **the Council of Nicaea**, in order to put in an end to the Arian heresy (Jesus is not God, not the same *nature* as God) that had arisen in North African. The Church dealt with that heresy and taught definitively and produced the Creed, the Nicene Creed, which we still say at Mass today. We see the beginnings in this time period, the Emperor Constantine being very involved in the affairs of the Church, and how that's come to be known in history as *caesaropapism*, for the Eastern Emperor is very involved in theological disputes and ecclesiastical affairs and how that causes a different relationship to develop between the Church in the EASTERN half of the empire. And in the WEST, we see the rise of a period of great saints like St. Augustine, Pope St. Leo the Great, who not only defended Rome, but also fought against heresies.

MISSIONARIES and the EMPEROR: And then we move into our next time period of Missionaries and the Emperor where the Church begins to grow and to convert the pagan German tribes and missionaries from England and from Ireland are sent to the continent to bring back the tribes who had been converted to Arianism as a result of the heresy from the EAST. We see the rise of **monasticism** as well. In the WEST, we see St Benedict and Emperor Charlemagne who briefly reunited Europe with the blessing of the Holy Father as the Holy Roman Empire that would last for 1000 years until it was destroyed by Napoleon. Charlemagne had a great impact on WESTERN society and on the Church, and also to during this period, we see the rise of Islam, that great movement that will affect the Church from the seventh century all the way down to our present day, and how all the ancient Christian lands were conquered by the Muslims, and how that would ultimately lead to our next time period of Crusaders and Scholars and gave rise of the Crusades. Also, during the period of *Missionaries and the Emperor*, we saw four main Ecumenical Councils where again the Church is dealing with heresy and again answering that question as to *Who is Jesus?*, The Church ultimately teaches that *Jesus is one divine person with a human and divine will and nature that, hypostatic union*, So a Church fight against heresy, such as Monophysicalism (Christ only has one divine nature) and Monotheism (Christ had only one will). And were a denial at the heart of who Jesus is and the Church recognizes and reiterates her constant teaching, that He is God and man, *consubstantial with the Father, one and being with him*. In our next period, the Church is going to enter into a dark period of time that will bring about a reform and our next time period of Crusaders and Scholars.