

EPIC

A JOURNEY THROUGH CHURCH HISTORY

STUDY SET
QUESTIONS & RESPONSES

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ASCENSION
PRESS
West Chester, Pennsylvania

Nihil obstat: Rev. Joseph T. Shenosky, S.T.D.
Censor Librorum
May 21, 2009

Imprimatur: +Justin Cardinal Rigali
Archbishop of Philadelphia
May 22, 2009

Epic: A Journey Through Church History is an adult faith formation resource of Ascension Press.

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Published by Ascension Press
Post Office Box 1990
West Chester, PA 19380
1-800-376-0520
AscensionPress.com
OurCatholicHistory.com

Cover design: Devin Schadt

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-1-934217-50-4

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OVERVIEW

EPIC



A JOURNEY THROUGH CHURCH HISTORY

Please read the instructions in this overview before you continue to the first lesson, which is found in Session 1 Questions, *Introduction & Mustard Seed*.

Course Overview

This workbook augments the *Epic: A Journey through Church History* study by guiding you through your twenty-week adventure learning the story of the Catholic Church. Over the next several weeks, you will:

- Learn about the major people, places, and events of the past two-thousand years in Church history
- Know the twelve time periods of Church history with the unique color-coded system
- Learn the true story of the Crusades
- Understand the rationale for the medieval inquisitors and the Spanish Inquisition
- Discover the revolutionary character of the Protestant Reformation
- Know the real story of the confrontation between Galileo and the Church
- Discover the massive persecution of Christians in the twentieth century
- Learn about the workings of the Holy Spirit throughout Church history

In this study, you will learn the story of the Church through a video or audio presentation by Church history professor Steve Weidenkopf, followed by group discussion. Supplementary materials (including responses to the questions, a full-color chart, and a bookmark) are used to reinforce the lesson and will help you remember the Church's story for years to come.

Materials

Before you begin, make sure you have the following materials for each participant:

- Copies of the *Epic* Church History Timeline Chart and Bookmark
- A copy of the *Epic* 20-Week Seminar Workbook/Study Set

Course Outline

<u>Session</u>	<u>Title</u>
1.	Introduction & Mustard Seed
2.	Persecution – Part I
3.	Persecution – Part II
4.	Conversion & Councils – Part I
5.	Conversion & Councils – Part II
6.	Missionaries & the Emperor – Part I
7.	Missionaries & the Emperor – Part II
8.	Crusaders & Scholars – Part I
9.	Crusaders & Scholars – Part II
10.	Crusaders & Scholars – Part III
11.	Weak Leaders & Schism – Part I
12.	Weak Leaders & Schism – Part II
13.	Protestors & Defenders – Part I
14.	Protestors & Defenders – Part II
15.	Catholic Reformation – Part I
16.	Catholic Reformation – Part II
17.	Revolutions and Modernism
18.	A World at War
19.	The New Springtime
20.	The Threshold of Hope & Conclusion

Order of Study

Prepare for each session by first reading Section A (“Establish the Context”) in the Student Workbook. Begin each session by watching the appropriate DVD presentation (or by listening to the audio CD). During the presentation, use the blank space under the “Learn the Story” section (B) to record key events and to note your thoughts. After the lecture, discuss the questions in the “Take a Deeper Look” and “Application” sections (C and D) of the workbook. Each *time period* (rather than each lesson) ends with a brief “Wrap-up” section (E) and a list of suggested books for “Further Reading” (Section F).

Answering the Questions

Each session is divided into the following parts:

A. Establish the Context

This section prepares you to learn Church history by providing background information on the specific time period.

B. Learn the Story

The next step is to watch the DVD (or listen to the audio CD) presentation and learn the story of the Church by time period.

Your focus should be to remember the main events of each time period; by doing so, you will come to know the story of the Church. Church history is full of many personalities and events. It can be very difficult to remember every little detail, so don't fret if you can't remember whether it was Henry II or Henry III. Instead, focus on learning the "big picture" of what is happening. *Epic* presents Church history in a narrative way so that you can learn, remember, and identify with the story of the Church. As a result, *Epic* does not give every historical detail or discuss every event; only the major events that tell the story of the Church are covered. Additional studies that will delve deeper into each time period are forthcoming.

C. Take a Deeper Look

Catholic historian and writer Hilaire Belloc wrote of a "Catholic conscience of history," which is "an intimate knowledge through identity." What he meant by this was that every Catholic, because his or her "identity" is one with the Church, should have knowledge of Church history. Of course, Belloc knew that not every Catholic intimately knows the story of the Church. He knew well that the story of the Church is not taught by the culture she shaped. In many ways, our culture has lost the story and is weakened as a result. We must learn the story.

The discussion questions in this section are designed to help you learn and remember the two-thousand-year story of the Church. If, in the course of your discussion, other questions come up, write them down and have someone in the group research them and discuss them next time. (For help in answering questions, you can contact us at OurCatholicHistory.com.)

Important Note: Do not look at the recommended answers contained in the back of this workbook before answering them on your own, and if possible, wait until after you have discussed them in a group. (You can read them as a review the next week before the next lesson.)

D. Application

Church history is important because "the past gives meaning to the present and the present determines the future."¹ By studying Church history, we learn the story of our Catholic forebears, those brave men and women who answered God's call to spread the Gospel. In so doing they not only brought the saving mission of Jesus to the far corners of the world, they also built the greatest civilization in world history. We are the beneficiaries of their activity, spiritually and temporally.

1 Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., *Living the Catholic Faith*.

We, too, have a part to play in the story of the Church. Each lesson contains one question at the end that asks you to think about how the lessons of history apply to today – either to the Church, to society, or to you. After answering that question, spend time with God in prayer.

E. Wrap-up

Each time period concludes with a wrap-up section to help you remember the main theme of the time period. This is a brief yet very important step in learning the story!

F. Further Reading (optional)

There is much to learn about Church history. For those who want to pursue outside readings, this section provides a list of good books whose authors approach the subject of Church history and Western civilization from a Catholic worldview.

May God be with you on this journey, and may you grow closer to His Church as a result of your study.

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Session 1 – Questions

Introduction & Mustard Seed

A. Establish the Context

“The Church ... believes that the key, the center, and the purpose of the whole of man’s history is to be found in its Lord and Master.”

– *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 450

Introduction – What is history?

When you hear the word “history,” what comes to mind: the recitation of past events, the memorization of dates, a boring subject from high school or college, or a rousing story that helps explain the world we live in? Unfortunately, for many, the latter is not often the image that springs to mind. History is much more than the memorization of dates; it is God’s theater, the place where He makes known His-story. History is the story of God at work in the world and of the men and women He has called to play leading roles in the divine drama. More specifically, Church history is the story of that great organization, founded by Christ, to spread His Gospel throughout the world. Knowing our history, especially the history of the Church, is crucial to our future, since we cannot shape it without an adequate understanding of the past. As Catholics, Church history offers us insight into who we are, where we have come from, and where we are going.

The story of the Church shapes our identity as Catholics. We are the inheritors of the deeds of great men and women who for two-thousand years have built a great civilization and spread the Gospel throughout the world. Today, unfortunately, one sees an “identity crisis” among many Catholics who do not know the story of the Church nor the role she has played in building Western civilization. In order to know ourselves as Catholics, we need to know the epic story of the Church and the civilization she built.

The authentic story of the Church has rarely been told over recent years. Many of us are at a loss to tell the story of the Church when confronted by misinformation and prejudice. In order to combat the counter-story, we must be armed with the truth of Church history and given the tools to remember that story.

Before you embark on the epic journey of learning the history of the Church, here are some things that you should keep in mind:

1. The Central Event of Human History

Catholics believe that history is not a random series of events; rather, it is the story of God working in the world through His Church and His people. There is a beginning (creation) and an end (the Second Coming)

There are two ways, one of life and one of death: and great is the difference between the two ways.

– *The Didache*

to history. Moreover, there is one central event upon which the whole of human history hinges, the Incarnation. The coming of the God-man and its saving implications is an event that radiates backward and forward in human history.

2. *The Mystery of the Church*

The Church is a mystery that is visible and invisible. “The Church is in history, but at the same time she transcends it. It is only ‘with the eyes of faith’ that one can see her in her visible reality and at the same time in her spiritual reality as bearer of divine life” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 770). Although, in the study of Church history, we gaze predominantly on the visible element, we must also ponder that which we see “with the eyes of faith.”

3. *The Purpose of the Church*

Christ founded the Church for one purpose: to continue His saving work. The Church has no mission outside of Christ—it is not her mission, but His. As Jesus ascended into Heaven, He commanded His apostles to preach and teach the Good News (cf. Mt 28: 19). Evangelization and catechesis are the primary actions of the Church, and throughout history she has expended great energy in fulfilling that divine commission.

4. *The Church Is Holy yet Contains Sinners*

History involves the actions of persons endowed with the gift of free will. Sometimes those actions are in accord with God’s law, and sometimes they are not. The Church—established by God, imbued with the Holy Spirit, and comprised of the triumphant saints in heaven—is holy, yet she also contains sinners. Throughout history there have been those, even among the holders of the highest office, who have not acted in a holy manner. This should not be a reason to turn from the Church; rather, it should be a reason to rejoice in the fact that the Holy Spirit is truly present in the Church and has guided her in good times and bad.

5. *What’s in a Name?*

The names of things are very important, and the language we use bespeaks our perspective. For example, saying someone is “anti-abortion” as opposed to “pro-life” says something about the person using the term. In history, this is also true. History in the United States has been traditionally presented through the lens of English Protestantism, and for many of us, this perspective has shaped our understanding of historical persons and events. For example, most history books treat Elizabeth I as the good “Virgin Queen” of England—never mentioning the hundreds of Catholic priests and lay men and women she killed. Additionally, her half-sister Mary is known as “Bloody Mary” for her persecution of Protestants—however, her desire and actions to restore England to the Faith is never mentioned. It is important to know our history and to use the terms that accurately describe it.

6. *History Doesn’t Repeat Itself, It Rhymes*

Catholics don’t believe that history is one endless cycle of repeating events or even that we are “doomed” to repeat past mistakes. Rather, human history is living and dynamic and is moving toward the final fulfillment. However, the careful student of Church history will find events that rhyme, where the action of God is very discernible and things happen in the past that set the stage for future events.

The Mustard Seed

It is ten days since they saw Jesus ascend into glory and fifty days since His Resurrection from the dead. The apostles gather together in the Upper Room, and they suddenly hear and feel a mighty wind and see tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit filled that little “band of brothers” on the day of Pentecost two thousand years ago. This event marks the beginning of the Catholic Church, God’s chosen instrument of salvation. It is in a room in Jerusalem that the organization that would build a civilization and nurture billions of people is born.

The Twelve are commissioned by Christ and emboldened by the Holy Spirit to go into the world spreading the Gospel. Most go beyond the confines of the Roman Empire; some stay within it and bring the Gentiles into the fold. The Church soon suffers persecution and the first martyr, St. Stephen, is called to give his life for Christ. A man who originally persecutes the Church is miraculously converted and becomes a tireless preacher of the Faith, traveling extensively to bring the Good News to the Gentiles. His missionary efforts produce much fruit and lead to the first discussion of Church discipline. The apostles gather in Jerusalem to discuss how to handle the infusion of non-Jewish converts: Are they subject to the Law of Moses or not? After listening to both arguments, St. Peter provides the answer and the first definitive statement of Church discipline. The development of doctrine and liturgy is also noticeable during this time period and recorded in the *Didache* (or *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*).

The Emperor Nero uses Christians in Rome as human torches after the burning of the city in A.D. 64. The apostles Peter and Paul meet their martyrdom during this persecution. This is the first of many government-sanctioned persecutions that will span the next three centuries. Following the persecution of the Emperor Domitian, the pope intervenes in a dispute in the Church of Corinth. Pope St. Clement’s letter to the Corinthians in A.D. 96 illustrates the primacy of the Roman pontiff during the earliest days of the Church. The Mustard Seed period ends with the death of the last and most beloved apostle, St. John; the Church is still a small, but growing, organization. In the next period, the Church will continue to grow even in the face of severe and cruel persecution.

B. Learn the Story

View Track 1, *Introduction & Mustard Seed*, of the *Epic: A Journey through Church History* 20-Week Study DVD (or listen to the audio CD). Follow the presentation by referring to your *Epic* Church History Timeline Chart.

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N O T E S

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C. Take a Deeper Look

Answering these questions will help you learn the story of the Church. If other questions come to mind write them down to discuss in the group.

Introduction: What is history?

1. Why do we like stories? Why are they important to us?
2. Jesus spoke to His disciples in parables. List some of these parables. Which is your favorite? Why?
3. Is history important? Why should we study it?
4. Hilaire Belloc spoke of a “Catholic conscience of history.” What is this? Do you have it? If so, how did you acquire it? If not, why not?

5. As Catholics, how do we understand history?

Mustard Seed

1. What event marks the beginning of the Church? What happened?
2. What was the major topic of discussion at the Council of Jerusalem? How was the issue resolved?
3. Why did the persecution of Christians erupt in A.D. 64? Was the persecution widespread? What was its effect?
4. What are the key points raised in Pope St. Clement's letter to the Corinthians?

Nero's Persecution as Told by Tacitus

But neither human help, nor imperial munificence ... could stifle scandal or dispel the belief that the fire had taken place by order. Therefore, to scotch the rumor, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians. Christus, the founder of the name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate, and the pernicious superstition was checked for a moment, only to break out once more, not merely in Judea, the home of the disease, but in the capital itself, where all things horrible or shameful in the world collect and find a vogue. First, then, the confessed members of the sect were arrested; next, on their disclosures, vast numbers were convicted ... They were covered with wild beasts' skins and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses, and, when daylight failed, were burned to serve as lamps by night. Nero had offered his gardens for the spectacle, and gave an exhibition in his circus mixing with the crowd in the habit of a charioteer or mounted on his car. Hence, in spite of the guilt which had earned the most exemplary punishment, there arose a sentiment of pity, due to the impression that they were being sacrificed not for the welfare of the state but to the ferocity of a single man.

– *Annals* XV, 44

D. Application

This question asks you to think about how the lessons of history apply to today – either to the Church, to society, or to you. After meditating on this question, spend time with God in prayer.

The apostles went beyond the known world to begin the spread of the Gospel. How were they able to accomplish such a feat? What was your journey of faith? Who first brought the Gospel to your attention? How have you helped spread the Gospel?

Dear Lord ...

E. Wrap-up

Conclude your study of the Mustard Seed period and remember the main events by doing the following:

1. What is the color of this time period? How can you remember it?
2. What is the main theme of this period?
3. Write a one- or two-sentence summary of the Mustard Seed period in order to recall the main events of Church history during this time.

F. Further Reading

For those who want to pursue outside readings, here is a list of good books that cover this time period, whose authors approach the subject of Church history and Western civilization from a Catholic worldview. This list is not exhaustive but is provided as a starting point. Happy reading!

Acts of the Apostles. *Scripture gives us the story of the early Church, highlighting the activities of Saints Peter and Paul.*

Belloc, Hilaire. *Europe and the Faith*. Rockford, IL: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1992. *An excellent essay of how the Church saved and built Western civilization and the importance of the Church to Europe.*

Cavins, Jeff. *Acts: The Spread of the Kingdom*. West Chester, PA: Ascension Press, 2006. *Scripture teacher Cavins provides a foundational study on the Acts of the Apostles, exploring how the Church continues Christ's mission.*

Clark, Kenneth. *Civilisation*. New York: Harper & Row, 1969. *A history of Western civilization utilizing art. Very perceptive review of historical events and the shaping of culture. This book is a companion to the BBC television series, which is available on DVD.*

Sienkiewicz, Henryk. *Quo Vadis*. Translated by W. S. Kuniczak. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1993. *A work of fiction that provides a vivid description of early Christians in the Roman Empire through a compelling and riveting narrative.*

Whitehead, Kenneth D. *One, Holy Catholic, and Apostolic: The Early Church was the Catholic Church*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000. *An excellent apologetic work on proving that the early Christian Church was one, holy, catholic, and apostolic—which are the marks of the Catholic Church.*

Introduction & Mustard Seed

A. Review the Context

Discussion Leaders: Make sure everyone has an *Epic* Church History Timeline chart to use when discussing questions about the time period. Briefly go over the other sections of the chart—especially the Events & Influences section—so that you can situate the story of the Church in the larger story of the world.

B. Learn the Story

Discussion Leaders: Unless there are comments or questions about Steve Weidenkopf's presentation, dive into answering the discussion questions in Section C.

C. Take a Deeper Look

Introduction: What is history?

1. *Why do we like stories? Why are they important to us?*

Answers will vary, but ultimately, we like stories because God is a storyteller—or, more precisely, God is an *author*. The Scriptures and the lives of human beings throughout the centuries give witness to God's storyteller nature. We also like stories because they foster a sense of relationship and sharing. We are made in God's image and likeness, and since God is relational, we too greatly desire to be in relationship with others. When we read a good book or see a good movie, we desire to share that experience with others. We do this because we are relational and we desire to live life as a shared adventure (this sense of life as a shared adventure finds its expression in our vocation, particularly in the sacrament of marriage).

Stories are important to us because life makes sense when understood as a story. Kurt Bruner, author of *The Divine Drama*, summed this up nicely: "The meaning of life can be found in story, and the meaning of story can be found in life." Stories give shape to our lives and they help us remember our history.

2. *Jesus spoke to His disciples in parables. List some of these parables. Which is your favorite? Why?*

Parables are the stories Jesus told in which He describes the kingdom of God and invites us to the heavenly feast (See *Catechism* No. 546)

Here is a partial listing of the parables of Christ:

The Mustard Seed (*Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:31-32; Luke 13:18-19*)

The Sower (*Matthew 13:3-8; Mark 4:3-8; Luke 8:5-8*)

The Pearl of Price (*Matthew 13:45*)

The Unmerciful Servant (*Matthew 18:21-35*)

The Laborers in the Vineyard (*Matthew 20:1-16*)

The Ten Virgins (*Matthew 25:1-13*)

The Unjust Steward (*Luke 16:1-9*)

The Prodigal Son (*Luke 15:11-32*)

3. *Is history important? Why should we study it?*

History is important because it is our story and remembering this story is vital to the life of a nation. St. John Paul II recognized the importance of history when he wrote: “History is an essential element of culture” (*Memory & Identity*, 74). A nation that loses its story is a nation whose culture is weakened and that weakness will pervade all aspects of society. The Church’s story is rich and must be learned and remembered in order to strengthen the identification of her members with her in order to continue the work of evangelization.

4. *Hilaire Belloc spoke of a “Catholic conscience of history.” What is this? Do you have it? If so, how did you acquire it? If not, why not?*

Hilaire Belloc (1870–1953), in his famous work *Europe and the Faith* (1920), writes of a “Catholic conscience of history.” What he means is “an intimate knowledge through identity.” A Catholic is one whose very identification with the Church produces an understanding of the history of the Church and Western civilization. In the words of Belloc, “The Catholic brings to history self-knowledge.” Belloc’s thought strikes at the core of Catholic life. A Catholic is a member of the greatest organization in the history of the world, an entity that has significantly shaped human events for the past 2,000 years. In essence, Catholics are inheritors of this great story, even if they don’t know it. However, it is vital to the life of Catholics and to the life of the Church that the story be learned and remembered. Unfortunately, the story has been obscured over the last century or so by those who take issue with the Church and her teaching. This is why Belloc spent the latter years of his life writing history books from a Catholic world-view in order to combat the prevalent Protestant worldview found in history books.

5. *As Catholics how do we understand history?*

Ancient Greek and Roman historians presented history as a series of repetitive cycles. St. Augustine (A.D. 354–430) saw history as linear, punctuated by climaxes and overseen by God, who is involved in human events. For the Catholic, history has a definitive beginning (creation) and end (the return of Christ). The central event in human history is the Incarnation—all history radiates outward from this point. Christ is the key to human history and it cannot be properly understood without an emphasis on Him (see *Catechism* No. 450).

Mustard Seed

1. *What event marks the beginning of the Church? What happened?*

Pentecost. The Holy Spirit descended on the apostles and the Blessed Mother ten days after the Ascension. This event marked the beginning of the Church and its great adventure to spread the Gospel throughout history. St. Peter begins this journey with a powerful proclamation of Christ and His mission. This witness is followed by the conversion of 3,000—the first converts in Church history. Read **Acts 2** for the full story.

2. *What was the major topic of discussion at the Council of Jerusalem? How was the issue resolved?*

The issue at hand was whether Gentile converts to the Faith needed to be circumcised and follow the Jewish dietary laws. Division among the apostles centered on St. James the Less, bishop of Jerusalem, who favored Gentile acceptance of the Law, and St. Paul, who did not. After discussion, it was St. Peter who provided the opinion that prevailed—the Gentiles did not have to be circumcised and only had to refrain from eating meat offered to false gods, and the flesh of strangled animals. Read **Acts 15:1–20**.

3. *Why did persecution of Christians erupt in A.D. 64? Was the persecution widespread? What was its effect?*

The mad Roman emperor Nero ordered the burning of a particular section of the city of Rome. The fire quickly went out of control and the city suffered significant damage. After public outcry, and in order to deflect criticism, Nero blamed the Christians for the fire. The persecution of Christians was limited to Rome, but it did lead to the empire-wide outlawing of the Christian Faith (a law which would not be repealed for almost 250 years—in A.D. 313). Sts. Peter and Paul were martyred during this persecution, a persecution which produced sympathy for Christians among the Roman people.

4. *What are the key points raised in Pope St. Clement's letter to the Corinthians?*

There are three main points raised in the very important Epistle of Pope St. Clement.

1. Church officials do not derive their authority from the people but from God.
2. Apostolic succession.
3. The universal primacy of the bishop of Rome.

Before the year A.D. 100, the Church's teachings on bishops and especially the bishop of Rome is explicitly mentioned and taught by the Holy Father. This letter was highly revered by the early Christians and was considered second only to the Scriptures in authority.

D. Application

Discussion Leaders: If time permits, ask the group members to share their personal responses to the application question.

The apostles went beyond the known world to begin the spread of the Gospel. How were they able to accomplish such a feat? What was your journey of faith? Who first brought the Gospel to your attention? Who have you spread the Gospel to?

Close with the prayer found in the Leader's Guide.

E. Wrap-up

1. *What is the color of this time period? How can you remember it?*

Remember the Mustard Seed time period by its color, mustard yellow: a reminder of the parable of the Kingdom of God as a mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32).

2. *What is the main theme of this period?*

The main theme of the Mustard Seed period is the beginning of the Church and the start of the Church's mission to spread the Gospel.

3. *Write a one- or two-sentence summary of the Mustard Seed period in order to recall the main events of Church history during this time.*

Answers will vary but they should contain most of the main events listed on the *Epic Church History* Timeline chart.

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