

# AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

## 300s

### 1. cultural background and Church-state relations

- a. 303-11: Diocletian's persecution
- b. 313: Constantine's Edict of Milan: Christianity is now a *religio licita*
- c. mass conversions
  - 1) 30-313: conversions are of individuals convinced that Christianity is true
  - 2) c. 350-88: Ulfilas (an Arian bishop) converts the Visigoths and Ostrogoths (the Vandals, too, become Arian); because German tribes practice *cuius regio, eius et religio* (whose rule, his religion), converting the chiefs converts the tribes
  - 3) "... centuries of patient effort were expended before the great mass of the people fully grasped the essentials of Christianity. In the meantime they were given to ... charms, magic, sortilege, witches" (Bihlmeyer)
- d. 380: an edict of Theodosius I says Christianity is "to be the religion of all"
- e. 390: Theodosius I massacres 7,000 Thessalonians to punish a riot; Ambrose refuses to let him to enter the Church; Theodosius accepts 8 months of public penance
- f. 391: an edict of Theodosius I says Christianity is the official state religion
- g. 395: Theodosius I dies, the last emperor of both halves of the Roman Empire; the Byzantine Empire is born

### 2. heresies and councils

- a. 325: Council of Nicea I: Arianism (Christ is superangel) condemned
- b. Donatism
  - 1) 314: a synod of Arles says rebaptism of heretics is wrong
  - 2) 314: the Donatists (north Africans named for a leader) say sacraments are only valid if the minister is worthy; sacraments work *ex opere operantis* (by reason of the agent)
  - 3) 397-430: Augustine says sacraments are valid if correctly celebrated; they work *ex opere operata* (by reason of the action) (the Latin phrases do not arise till the 1200s)
  - 4) 429-42: the Vandals conquer of North Africa, and the Donatists disappear
- c. 381: Council of Constantinople I
  - 1) Apollinarianism (the Son replaces Jesus' human intellect and will) is condemned
  - 2) Macedonianism (the Holy Spirit is a creature) is condemned
  - 3) the Council asserts that the Holy Spirit is consubstantial with Father and Son

### 3. clergy

- a. c. 306: Synod of Elvira (canon 33): no clergy can have marital relations
- b. patriarchates
  - 1) c. 200s: metropolitan sees begin to unite under patriarchs
  - 2) 325: the Council of Nicea I (canon 6) says the three chief metropolitans (pre-patriarchs) are the bishops of Rome (over Italy), Alexandria (over Egypt), and Antioch (over the rest of the east) (these were the most important cities, and Rome held highest place)

- 3) 325: the Council of Nicea I (canon 7) says Jerusalem has preeminence of honor over other metropolitans, except the big 3
- 4) Carthage has a de facto (not legally stated) preeminence
- 5) 330: Constantine makes Constantinople eastern capital
- 6) 440-50: “patriarch” is first used
- 7) 451: the Council of Chalcedon makes Constantinople the fourth official patriarchate
- c. 378: Roman law gives the pope all ecclesiastical jurisdiction
4. **territorial organization**
  - a. 300s: in the west, “diocese” (a Roman administrative term) replaces “parish” for a bishop’s territory
5. **architecture**
  - a. 303-11: almost all churches are destroyed during Diocletian’s persecution
  - b. 313 on: having triumphed, Christianity builds magnificent churches everywhere
  - c. basilicas
    - 1) c. 315: basilicas begin (*basilikē stoā*, royal hall), copied from Roman markets and courts
    - 2) the oldest is the Lateran in Rome, soon followed by St Peter’s
    - 3) a basilica’s long axis is the nave (*nāvis*, ship); the short axis is the transept
    - 4) the nave above the transept is the apse; it has a semicircular top and contains the bishop’s throne (*cathedra*) and seats for clergy; it is usually oriented toward east
  - d. circular buildings: baptisteries and mausoleums; in the east, large churches also (537: St Sophia)
6. **religious orders**
  - a. c. 305: Anthony codifies the eremitic (hermit) life
  - b. c. 318: Pachomius, also in the Egyptian desert, codifies the cenobitic (community) life
  - c. c. 320-c. 350: “Both systems spread rapidly and were soon firmly established in Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor. By [c. 350] monachism had also made its appearance in Europe” (Oestereich)
  - d. c. 356: Anthony dies
  - e. c. 400: Cassian (c. 360-c. 435) founds St Victor at Marseilles, thus transplanting Egyptian monasticism to Gaul
7. **theology**
  - a. Athanasius (295-373)
  - b. Basil the Great (331-79)
  - c. Gregory Nazianzen (330-90)
  - d. Ambrose (340-97)
  - e. John Chrysostom (354-407)
8. **sacraments: reconciliation**
  - a. the influx of a multitude of indifferent converts had a mitigating effect on penance
  - b. the east
    - 1) 391: the patriarch of Constantinople abolishes public penance and says each individual must act according to conscience
    - 2) 300s-1200s: in the east mostly monks and hermits, not bishops and priests, hear confessions (the east venerates monks and hermits as highly as martyrs: they have “special psychic gifts,” Bihlmeyer)
  - c. the west

- 1) 300s-500s: the west maintains the “ancient severity” longer than the east (e.g., 589: a synod at Toledo insists on only one repentance after baptism); many sinners postpone penance till near death
  - 2) but it gradually eases
    - a) 300s: clerics guilty of capital sins no longer must do public penance
    - b) 384-99: for those who relapse after public penance, Pope Siricius eliminates permanent excommunication: they can attend Mass and receive communion before death
    - c) c. 400-30: Augustine pleads for private confession and no permanent exclusion of grave sinners
    - d) 459: Leo the Great abolishes public penance except for grave public scandals with court sentences
    - e) 590-604: Gregory the Great adopts Augustine’s position
9. **sacraments: Eucharist**
- a. 300s: the service is called *missa* (from *Ite, missa est*, Go, the dismissal is made; “to stay till the *missa*” comes to mean “to stay for the *missa*,” and so the word comes to mean the whole service)
  - b. the influence of many indifferent converts on the Eucharist
    - 1) 300s: Basil the Great and John Chrysostom shorten the service because, “as the people grew lukewarm, lengthy services, instead of increasing their devotion, only irked them” (Bihlmeyer)
    - 2) 300s: “Thunderous applause often gave the church the atmosphere of a theater” (Bihlmeyer)
    - 3) 506: a synod of Agde in Gaul (canon 18) requires communion at least on Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost
  - c. the influence of numerous feasts on the Eucharist
    - 1) c. 350-400: scripture readings are arranged in pericopes (c. 410, Jerome creates the first lectionary)
    - 2) c. 350-400: variable parts of the service change daily to fit the season or feast
    - 3) c. 375-400: Greek gives way to Latin as the liturgical language in Rome
10. **feast days**
- a. Sunday
    - 1) 321: Constantine decrees no public work on Sundays
    - 2) 380: various synods forbid agricultural work on Sundays
  - b. c. 350-400: feasts of the Lord develop quickly
  - c. feasts of the Lord related to Easter
    - 1) 300s: no work during Holy Week and Easter Week
    - 2) 300s: special services develop on Holy Thursday and Good Friday (a day of mourning)
    - 3) 350-400: Jerusalem celebrates Exaltation of the Cross (Sept. 14); it spreads in east (and enters the west c. 650-700)
    - 4) c. 400: Jerusalem observes Palm Sunday; 600s: Rome adopts it, including the palm procession
    - 5) c. 615-50: Discovery of the True Cross (May 3) commemorates Emperor Heraclius’ recovery of the cross from the Persians in 614
  - d. Epiphany

- 1) c. 313: Epiphany (Jan. 6) originates in Jerusalem (probably)
  - 2) 300s-400s: in the east it commemorates Christ's birth and his manifestation of divinity to the magi, at Cana, and in baptism; today it is still called, not Epiphany, but Theophany
  - 3) 300s-400s: in the west it commemorates the adoration of the magi as Christ's call to gentiles
- e. Christmas
- 1) 270: Emperor Aurelian dedicates the empire to the sun god as Sol Invictus (he is similar to Mithras)
  - 2) 274: Aurelian makes Dec. 25 (winter solstice) the Birthday of the Undefeated Sun
  - 3) c. 313-20: Rome begins to celebrate Christmas; it is Dec. 25 to counter the feast of Sol Invictus
  - 4) 400s: the day after Christmas becomes the feast of St Stephen (first martyr, Acts 7:60)
  - 5) 565-78: Emperor Justin II imposes Christmas in the empire (not popular till then)
  - 6) 500s: Mary's birth (now Sept. 8); the annunciation (now Mar. 25)

## 11. **fasts**

- a. Saturday
  - 1) 300s: the east has a half-fast on Saturdays
  - 2) 400s: the west has a full fast
- b. Lent
  - 1) 200s: fasting in Holy Week
  - 2) 300-50: extended to 40 days (Jesus fasted 40 days)
- c. ember days
  - 1) "ember"
    - a) either a contraction of *jejunium quatuor tempora* ("fast of the four seasons")
    - b) or from Anglo-Saxon *ymb-ren* (*ymb*, around; *rennen*, to run; the running of the annual cycle)
  - 2) 200-25: Rome has thanksgiving fasts for crops in June (Pentecost week), September, and December (paganism has fasts petitioning good crops at similar times)
  - 3) 440-61: Leo I prescribes thanksgiving fasts for crops on the Monday, Wednesday, and Friday of Pentecost Week, and similar three days of fasting in September and December
  - 4) 461-500: a fourth ember season (March) is added; ordinations shift from Easter to ember Saturdays
  - 5) c. 600s: in England, Gaul, and Germany
  - 6) 1000s: in Spain
  - 7) never practiced in the east

## 12. **devotions: saints**

- a. pre-300s: recognition of New-Testament martyrs is almost universal: John the Baptist, Stephen, Peter and Paul
- b. 300s (Rome and Africa): communion-of-saints doctrine prompts banquets at graves; martyrs' graves especially, it is believed, bless the food
- c. 300s: martyrs' tombs become places of pilgrimage, where intercessory prayers are requested

- d. 313 on: since martyrdom is now rare, the devotion given martyrs and confessors spreads to others of heroic virtue: holy bishops and monks (also now called “confessors”) (c. 600: the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* of Gaul lists 6000 saints)
- e. 313 on: angels (especially the archangel Michael) and OT figures are venerated and invoked
- f. 313 on: churches are assigned patron saints (usually the one with relics in the altar) at consecration
- g. 30-537: all popes until Silverius (536-37) are “St.” (except John II [533-35], who bought the papacy)

### 13. arts: church furnishings

- a. altar
  - 1) pre-313: a simple movable table; post-313: a stone table, at intersection of nave and transept
  - 2) 300s: basilicas are built with altars over martyrs’ graves, and altars take on sarcophagus form
  - 3) like the church, the altar is now a sacred space; consecration of it, and an image of Christ, are added
  - 4) pre-500: all churches have one altar (still the case in the east)
  - 5) 500 on: western churches add side altars for private Masses
- b. chalice: pre-500, any material; post-500, metal
- c. ciborium: canopy on four pillars around altar; 700s, a dove-shaped vessel for consecrated hosts hangs from the ciborium, to house viaticum (communion for sick and imprisoned)
- d. a grating separated the altar from the nave; 600s: the grating becomes the iconostasis, with icons
- e. 500s: an ambo (pulpit) was for scripture readings and sometimes the homily

### 14. arts: painting

- a. 200s: the catacombs are decorated with frescoes—the beginning of Christian painting (favorite subjects: Good Shepherd, the orans [a female figure praying with outstretched arms])
- b. 313 on: church interiors are covered with frescoes and mosaics (favorite subjects are Christ Pantocrater, Lamb of God, apostles and saints, evangelists’ symbols)

### 15. arts: sculpture

- a. 200s: Christian sculpture begins (the Good Shepherd, Peter, Hippolytus of Rome)
- b. sarcophagi of the wealthy have carved reliefs

### 16. arts: vestments

- a. 30-300: no vestments; clergy wore ordinary civilian clothes
- b. 300s: clergy wear holiday-best clothes
- c. 400s on: holiday fashion changes, but vestments do not; thus clerical dress becomes distinctive
- d. alb: floor-length inner garment (tunic) of white linen
- e. chasuble: wide, loose outer garment of white linen; originally floor-length (now called “Gothic”), from the 800s it narrows and shortens (becoming “fiddleback,” now called “Roman”)
- f. stole: c. 380 the Synod of Laodicea mentions the stole (the long, thin, floor-length prayer mantle)

### 17. morals of the clergy

- a. 325: the Council of Nicea I (canon 17) says clergy who charge interest will be excommunicated

**18. morals of the laity**

- a. c. 310: a synod of Elvira (canon 79) prohibits gambling