

Condensed Church History Timeline

c. 33	Jesus Christ's death, resurrection and ascension. Establishes His Church on Apostles. Church expands with Pentecost: 3,000 converted; Deaconate established, St. Stephen, deacon, was stoned to death at Jerusalem; he is venerated as the first Christian martyr. Sabbath which represented completion of first creation replaced by Sunday, which recalls the new creation inaugurated by the Resurrection of Christ.
c. 34	St. Paul, formerly Saul the persecutor of Christians, was converted and baptized. After three years of solitude in the desert, he joined the college of the apostles; he made three major missionary journeys and became known as the Apostle to the Gentiles; he was imprisoned twice in Rome and was beheaded there between 64 and 67.
39	Cornelius (a Gentile) and his family were baptized by St. Peter; a significant event signaling the mission of the Church to all peoples.
42	Persecution of Christians in Palestine broke out during the rule of Herod Agrippa; St. James the Greater, the first apostle to die, was beheaded in 44; St. Peter was imprisoned for a short time; many Christians fled to Antioch, marking the beginning of the dispersion of Christians beyond the confines of Palestine. At Antioch, the followers of Christ were called Christians for the first time.
51	The Council of Jerusalem, in which all the apostles participated under the leadership of St. Peter, decreed that circumcision, dietary regulations, and various other prescriptions of Mosaic Law were not obligatory for Gentile converts to the Christian community. The crucial decree was issued in opposition to Judaizers who contended that observance of the Mosaic Law in its entirety was necessary for salvation.
64	Persecution broke out at Rome under Nero, the emperor who accused Christians of starting the fire which destroyed half of Rome. Christians gather in homes or catacombs for communal Mass on Sunday. Christians persecuted and forced into hiding

	for over two centuries.
64 or 67	Martyrdom of St. Peter at Rome during the Neronian persecution. Almost all Popes martyred after him until early 4 th century. St. Peter established his See and spent his last years there after preaching in and around Jerusalem, establishing a See at Antioch, and presiding at the Council of Jerusalem.
70	Destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman Titus.
88 to 97	Pontificate of St. Clement I, third successor of St. Peter as bishop of Rome, one of the Apostolic Fathers. The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians was addressed by the Church of Rome to the Church at Corinth to correct irregularities and divisions in that Christian community. Shows Papal jurisdiction over entire Church.
95	Emperor Domitian persecuted Christians, principally at Rome.
c. 100	Death of St. John, apostle and evangelist, in exile marking the end of the Age of the Apostles and the first generation of the Church. Only Apostle not martyred. By the end of the century, Antioch, Alexandria and Ephesus in the East and Rome in the West were established centers of Christian population and influence.
c. 107	St. Ignatius of Antioch, second Bishop successor of Peter there, was martyred at Rome. He was the first writer to use the expression, "the Catholic Church."
112	Emperor Trajan instructed the governor of Bithynia not to search out Christians but to punish them if they were publicly denounced and refused to do homage to the Roman gods. This set a pattern for Roman magistrates in dealing with Christians.
117 to 138	Persecution under Hadrian. Many Acts of Martyrs date from this period.
c. 125	Spread of Gnosticism, a combination of elements of Platonic philosophy and Eastern mystery religions. Its adherents claimed that its secret-knowledge principle provided a deeper insight into Christian doctrine than divine revelation and faith. One gnostic thesis denied the divinity of Christ; others denied the reality of his humanity, calling it mere

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	appearance (Docetism, Phantasiasm).
c. 144	Excommunication of Marcion, bishop and heretic, who claimed that there was total opposition and no connection at all between the Old Testament and the New Testament, between the God of the Jews and the God of the Christians; and that the Canon (list of inspired writings) of the Bible consisted only of parts of St. Luke's Gospel and 10 letters of St. Paul. Marcionism was condemned by a council held in Rome about 260.
c. 155	St. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna and disciple of St. John the Evangelist, was martyred.
c. 156	Beginning of the heresy Montanism, a form of religious extremism. Its principal tenets were the imminent second coming of Christ, denial of the divine nature of the Church and its power to forgive sin, and excessively rigorous morality. Condemned by Pope St. Zephyrinus (199-217).
161 to 180	Reign of Marcus Aurelius. His persecution, launched in the wake of natural disasters, was more violent than those of his predecessors.
165	St. Justin, an important early Christian writer, was martyred at Rome.
c. 180	St. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons and one of the great early theologians, wrote <i>Adversus Haereses</i> . He stated that the teaching and tradition of the Roman See was the standard for belief.
196	Easter Controversy, concerning the day of celebration — a Sunday, according to practice in the West, or the 14th of the month of Nisan (in the Hebrew calendar), no matter what day of the week, according to practice in the East. The controversy was not resolved at this time. The <i>Didache</i> , whose extant form dates from the second century, is an important record of Christian belief, practice and governance in the first century. Latin was introduced as a liturgical language in the West. Other liturgical languages were Aramaic and Greek. The Catechetical School of Alexandria,

	founded about the middle of the century, gained increasing influence on doctrinal study and instruction, and interpretation of the Bible.
217 to 235	St. Hippolytus, the first antipope; he was reconciled to the Church while in prison during persecution in 235.
c. 242	Manichaeism originated in Persia: a combination of errors based on the assumption that two supreme principles (good and evil) are operative in creation and life, and that the supreme objective of human endeavor is liberation from evil (matter). The heresy denied the humanity of Christ, the sacramental system, the authority of the Church (and state), and endorsed a moral code which threatened the fabric of society.
249 to 251	Persecution under Decius. Many of those who denied the faith (<i>lapsi</i>) sought readmission to the Church at the end of the persecution in 251. Pope St. Cornelius agreed with St. Cyprian that <i>lapsi</i> were to be readmitted to the Church after satisfying the requirements of appropriate penance. Antipope Novatian contended that persons who fell away from the Church under persecution and/or those guilty of serious sin after baptism could not be absolved and readmitted to communion with the Church. The heresy was condemned by a Roman synod in 251.
257	Persecution under Valerian, who attempted to destroy the Church as a social structure.
c. 260	Pope St. Dionysius condemned Sabellianism, a heresy contended that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not distinct divine persons but are only three different modes of being and self-manifestations of the one God.
261	Gallienus issued an edict of toleration which ended general persecution for nearly 40 years.
c. 292	Diocletian divided the Roman Empire into East and West. The division emphasized political, cultural and other differences between the two parts of the Empire and influenced different developments in the Church in the East and West. The prestige of Rome began to decline.
303	Persecution broke out under Diocletian; it was

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	particularly violent in 304.
305	St. Anthony of Heracles established a foundation for hermits near the Red Sea in Egypt, beginning religious life (those who profess vows of poverty, chastity and obedience to follow Christ more closely.)
c. 306	The first local legislation on clerical celibacy was enacted by a council held at Elvira, Spain; bishops, priests, deacons and other ministers were forbidden to have wives.
311	An edict of toleration issued by Galerius at the urging of Constantine the Great and Licinius officially ended persecution in the West; some persecution continued in the East.
313	The Edict of Milan issued by Constantine and Licinius recognized Christianity as a lawful religion in the Roman Empire.
314	A council of Arles condemned Donatism, declaring that baptism properly administered by heretics is valid, in view of the principle that sacraments have their efficacy from Christ, not from the spiritual condition of their human ministers.
318	St. Pachomius established the first foundation of the cenobitic (common) life, as compared with the solitary life of hermits in Upper Egypt. Beginning of communal religious life.
325	Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (I). Its principal action was the condemnation of Arianism, the most devastating of the early heresies, which denied the divinity of Christ. The council contributed to formulation of the Nicene Creed (Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople); fixed the date for the observance of Easter; passed regulations concerning clerical discipline; adopted the civil divisions of the Empire as the model for the jurisdictional organization of the Church.
326	With the support of St. Helena, the True Cross on which Christ was crucified was discovered.
343 to 344	A council of Sardica declared bishops had the right of appeal to the pope as the highest authority in the Church.
361 to 363	Emperor Julian the Apostate waged an unsuccessful campaign against the Church in an attempt to restore paganism as the religion

	of the Empire.
c. 365	Persecution of orthodox Christians under Emperor Valens in the East.
c. 376	Beginning of the barbarian invasion in the West.
379	Death of St. Basil, the Father of Monasticism in the East. His writings contributed greatly to the development of rules for the life of Religious.
381	Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (I). It condemned Arianism as well as Macedonianism, which denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit; contributed to formulation of the Nicene Creed; approved a canon acknowledging Constantinople as the second see after Rome in honor and dignity.
382	The Canon of Sacred Scripture, the official list of the inspired books of the Bible, was contained in the Decree of Pope St. Damasus and published by a regional council of Carthage in 397.
382 to c. 406	St. Jerome translated the Old and New Testaments into Latin; his work is called the Vulgate version of the Bible.
410	Visigoths sack Rome and the last Roman legions depart Britain. The decline of imperial Rome dates approximately from this time.
430	St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo for 35 years, died. He was a strong defender of orthodox doctrine against Manichaeism, Donatism and Pelagianism. The depth and range of his writings made him a dominant influence in Christian thought for centuries.
431	Ecumenical Council of Ephesus. It condemned Nestorianism, which denied the unity of the divine and human natures in the Person of Christ; defined Theotokos (Bearer of God) as the title of Mary, Mother of the Son of God made Man; condemned Pelagianism that held that man could attain salvation through the efforts of his natural powers and free will; it involved errors concerning the nature of original sin, the meaning of grace and other matters.
432	St. Patrick arrived in Ireland. By the time of his death in 461 most of the country had been converted, monasteries founded and the hierarchy established.

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451	Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon. Its principal action was the condemnation of Monophysitism, which denied the humanity of Christ by holding that he had only one nature: divine.
452	Pope St. Leo the Great persuaded Attila the Hun to spare Rome.
455	Vandals sack Rome.
494	Pope St. Gelasius I declared in a letter to Emperor Anastasius that the pope had power and authority over the emperor in spiritual matters.
496	Clovis, King of the Franks, was converted and became the defender of Christianity in the West. The Franks became a Catholic people.
520	Irish monasteries flourished as centers for spiritual life, missionary training, and scholarly activity.
c. 529	St. Benedict founded Monte Cassino Abbey. In 543 he wrote a monastic rule which exercised tremendous influence on the form and style of religious life. He is called the Father of Western Monasticism.
533	John II became the first pope to change his name. The practice did not become general until the time of Sergius IV (1009).
c. 545	Death of Dionysius Exiguus who was the first to date history from the birth of Christ, a practice which resulted in use of the B.C. and A.D. abbreviations. His calculations were at least four years late.
553	Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (II). It condemned the Three Chapters, Nestorian-tainted writings.
589	St. Leander began the organization of the Church in Spain.
590 to 604	Pontificate of Pope St. Gregory I the Great. He set the form and style of the papacy which prevailed throughout the Middle Ages; exerted great influence on doctrine and liturgy; was strong in support of monastic discipline and clerical celibacy; authored writings on many subjects. Gregorian Chant is named in his honor.
596	Pope St. Gregory I sent St. Augustine of Canterbury and 40 monks to do missionary work in England.
597	St. Columba died. He founded an important

	monastery at Iona, established schools and did notable missionary work in Scotland. By the end of the century, monasteries of nuns were common; Western monasticism was flourishing.
622	The flight of Mohammed from Mecca to Medina signaled the beginning of Islam which, by the end of the century, claimed almost all of the southern Mediterranean area.
680 to 681	Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (III). It condemned Monothelitism, which held that Christ had only one will, the divine.
692	Trullan Synod. Eastern-Church discipline on clerical celibacy was settled, permitting marriage before ordination to the diaconate and continuation in marriage afterwards, but prohibiting marriage following the death of the wife thereafter.
754	Donation of Pepin, ruler of the Franks, of land grants to the papacy were later extended by Charlemagne (773) and formed part of the States of the Church.
c. 755	St. Boniface was martyred. He was called the Apostle of Germany for his missionary work and organization of the hierarchy there.
787	Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (II). It condemned Iconoclasm, which held that the use of images was idolatry, and Adoptionism, which claimed that Christ was not the Son of God by nature but only by adoption. This was the last council regarded as ecumenical by Eastern Orthodox Churches.
844	A Eucharistic controversy involving the writings of St. Paschasius Radbertus, Ratramnus and Rabanus Maurus occasioned the development of terminology regarding the doctrine of the Real Presence.
865	St. Ansgar, apostle of Scandinavia, died.
869	St. Cyril died and his brother, St. Methodius (d. 885), was ordained a bishop. The Apostles of the Slavs devised an alphabet and translated the Gospels and liturgy into the Slavonic language.
869 to 870	Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (IV). It issued a second condemnation of Iconoclasm, etc. This was the last ecumenical council held in the East.
966	Mieszko, first of a royal line in Poland, was

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	baptized; he brought Latin Christianity to Poland.
988	Conversion and baptism of St. Vladimir and the people of Kiev which subsequently became part of Russia.
993	John XV was the first pope to decree the official canonization of a saint — Bishop Ulrich of Augsburg — for the universal Church.
997	St. Stephen became ruler of Hungary. He assisted in organizing the hierarchy and establishing Latin Christianity in that country.
1009	Beginning of lasting East-West Schism in the Church, marked by dropping of the name of the Pope from the listing of persons prayed for during the liturgy. The deletion was made by the Patriarch of Constantinople.
1054	Start of the Great Schism between the Eastern and Western Churches; it marked the separation of Orthodox Churches from unity with the pope (consider Pope one among equals with bishops, reject primacy).
1059	A Lateran council issued new legislation regarding papal elections; voting power was entrusted to the Roman cardinals.
1079	The Council of Rome condemned Eucharistic errors (denial of the Real Presence of Christ under the appearances of bread and wine) of Berengarius, who retracted.
1097 to 1099	The first of several Crusades undertaken between this time and 1265. Recovery of the Holy Places and gaining free access to them for Christians were the original purposes.
1122	The Concordat of Worms provided that the emperor could invest prelates with symbols of temporal authority but had no right to invest them with spiritual authority, which came from the Church alone, and that the emperor was not to interfere in papal elections. This was the first concordat in history.
1123	Ecumenical Council of the Lateran (I), the first of its kind in the West. It endorsed provisions of the Concordat of Worms, etc.
1139	Ecumenical Council of the Lateran (II) adopted measure stating that holy orders is an invalidating impediment to marriage, etc.
1171	Pope Alexander III reserved the process of canonization of saints to the Holy See.

1179	Ecumenical Council of the Lateran (III) provided that popes be elected by a two-thirds vote of the cardinals, etc.
1215	Ecumenical Council of the Lateran (IV). It ordered annual reception of the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist; defined and made the first official use of the term transubstantiation to explain the change of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ; adopted additional measures to counteract teachings and practices of the Albigensians and Cathari, etc.
1226	Death of St. Francis of Assisi, founder of the Franciscans. Several "mendicant religious orders" founded at this time that beg for alms to support themselves instead of self-supporting monks.
1231	Pope Gregory IX authorized establishment of the Papal Inquisition for dealing with heretics when crimes against faith and heretical doctrines threatened the good of the Christian community, the welfare of the state and the very fabric of society.
1245	Ecumenical Council of Lyons (I).
1274	Ecumenical Council of Lyons (II). It accomplished a temporary reunion of separated Eastern Churches with the Roman Church, etc.
1280	Pope Nicholas III, who made the Breviary the official prayer book for clergy of the Roman Church, died.
1281	Union with the Eastern Church from 1274 ends.
1309 to 1377	For a period of approximately 70 years, seven popes resided at Avignon because of unsettled conditions in Rome and other reasons.
1347 to 1350	The Black Death swept across Europe, killing perhaps one-fourth to one-third of the total population; an estimated 40 per cent of the clergy succumbed.
1377	Return of the papacy from Avignon to Rome. Beginning of the Western Schism - rival claimants to the Papacy.
1414 to 1418	Ecumenical Council of Constance. It took successful action to end the Western Schism involving rival claimants to the papacy; rejected the teachings of Wycliff; condemned Hus as a heretic, etc.

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1431 to 1445	Ecumenical Council of Florence. It affirmed the primacy of the pope against the claims of conciliarists that an ecumenical council is superior to the pope, etc.
c. 1456	Gutenberg issued the first edition of the Bible printed from movable type, at Mainz, Germany.
1512 to 1517	Ecumenical Council of the Lateran (V). It stated the relation and position of the pope with respect to an ecumenical council; condemned erroneous teachings concerning the nature of the human soul; stated doctrine concerning indulgences, etc.
1517	Martin Luther, priest and Augustinian, begins the Reformation in Germany and start of Lutherans. Total break with apostolic succession and authority of Church with "Bible only" doctrine and personal interpretation, neither of which is found in the Bible. Rejects some books of the Bible.
1519	Zwingli triggered the Reformation in Zurich.
1536	John Calvin, leads the Reformation in Switzerland and starts Calvinism.
1545 to 1563	Ecumenical Council of Trent. It issued a great number of decrees concerning doctrinal matters opposed by the Reformers, and mobilized the Counter-Reformation. Definitions covered the Canon of the Bible, the rule of faith, the nature of justification, grace, faith, original sin and its effects, the seven sacraments, the sacrificial nature of the Mass, the veneration of saints, use of sacred images, belief in purgatory, the doctrine of indulgences, the jurisdiction of the pope over the whole Church. It initiated many reforms for renewal in the liturgy and general discipline in the Church, the promotion of religious instruction, the education of the clergy through the foundation of seminaries, etc.
1559	Establishment of the hierarchy of the Church of England.
1582	The Gregorian Calendar, named for Pope Gregory XIII, was put into effect.
1789	Religious freedom in the United States was guaranteed under the First Amendment to the Constitution.

	This century is called the age of Enlightenment or Reason because of the predominating rational and scientific approach of its leading philosophers, scientists and writers with respect to religion, ethics and natural law. This approach downgraded the fact and significance of revealed religion. Also characteristic of the Enlightenment were subjectivism, secularism and optimism regarding human perfectibility.
1809	Pope Pius VII was made a captive by Napoleon and deported to France where he remained in exile until 1814.
1854	Pius IX proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.
1864	Pius IX condemned some 80 propositions that explicitly and/or implicitly rejected divine revelation and the supernatural order. They were derived from the scientific mentality and rationalism of the century.
1869 to 1870	Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (I). It defined papal primacy and infallibility; covered natural religion, revelation, faith, and the relations between faith and reason.
1900	1,600 Christian Denominations.
1918	The Code of Canon Law, in preparation for more than 10 years, went into effect in the Western Church.
1950	Pope Pius XII proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
1962 to 1965	Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (II). Pastoral orientation toward renewal and reform in the Church and the better accomplishment of the Church's mission in the contemporary world.
1983	The revised Code of Canon Law, embodying reforms enacted by Vatican II, went into effect in the Church of Roman Rite.
1991	The Code of Canon Law for Eastern Churches went into effect.
1992	Approval of the new <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> .
2012	43,000 Christian denominations worldwide.
2013	1.2 billion Catholics worldwide.

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