History of the Catholic Church: 33-100 A.D.

8th Grade Religion
How old is the Church?

In approximately 33 A.D., the first Pentecost, the birth of the Church took place.

So...how old is the Church? Subtract 33 from the current year.

33 A.D. The Crucifixion of Christ-
Birth of the Church
Birth of the Church

Pentecost, the 50th Day after Easter, is considered the birthday of the Church.

On the day he died, Jesus sent his Spirit upon the community of disciples gathered in Jerusalem.

The Holy Spirit transformed these ordinary men into courageous disciples willing to spread the good news about Jesus and tell others about salvation.

This was a very small group (like only 100-200 people!) and lived in an isolated area of the greater Roman Empire.
When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. Now there were devout Jew from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, “Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.” They were all astounded and bewildered, and said to one another, “What does this mean?”
What was *THAT* about?!

Acts is the book in the Bible that talks about the early days in the Church.

This passage recounts the Spirit’s descent on the 50th day after Jesus’ Resurrection.
Roman Empire = the whole world?

When the Church was getting started and the disciples were being called to spread the Good News over the WHOLE WORLD, the whole world was the Roman Empire.

This area included what we now call Europe, North Africa, and the NearEast.

The Empire was HUGE but people could travel by roads and ships. People could send letters. There were over 100 tribes with over 100 languages, customs, religions, and gods.

Most people could communicate because they usually also spoke Greek or Latin as a second language.
The Roman Empire
In the Days of Christ
Roman Empire...the times are a changin’

During the time of the Early Church, the Roman Empire saw people living immoral lifestyles.

The larger cities, where the disciples would try to form Christian Communities, were especially corrupt; morality was at a low.

Entertainment often involved going to arenas to watch human gladiators kill each other (dignity of life?!) 

Slavery was common

Would spreading God’s message be easy with this crowd?!
Saint Paul describes the immorality from this time

Read Romans 1:18-32.

List at least 10 evils that he saw happening within the Roman Empire:
Saint Paul describes evil acts...

In Romans 1:18-32, St. Paul describes

Worshipping of idols, maliciousness, greed, ill will, envy, murder, bickering, deceitfulness, sorcery, gossip, slander, hatred of God, insolence, boastfulness, wrongdoing, and rebelliousness against parents
Challenges of early Church Leaders:

Though the wicked lifestyle of many Roman people made converting them difficult, the real challenge to the disciples came in the form of persecutions.

The first people to persecute the disciples of Jesus were Jews who saw Christianity as a direct threat to their religion.

Even Saint Paul had carried out these persecutions until his own conversion (see God’s grace?!).

The Roman Empire allowed for religious freedom as long as it didn’t violate basic laws or stir up rebellion.
At first, Rome considered Christianity a form of Judaism and left it alone.

Beginning in 64 A.D. the emperor Nero outlawed Christianity and started the first official persecutions by the Roman State.
Martyrs for the Faith

From 64 A.D. until 313 A.D. being a Christian was to be an outlaw and an enemy of the state.

The disciples risked their lives to be a Christian and spread the Good News.
Conversion

Conversions were hard for the disciples to make. People were not living a moral lifestyle and following Jesus meant “sacrificing” one’s entire past life. It was also illegal and people risked being put to death.

Following the early disciples and hearing about Jesus meant giving up your own life and choices and putting Jesus was the very center of one’s life.

What did the disciples ask of new Christians?

To live and love like Jesus...to take care of each other. To serve the rest!

Where can we read about these instructions?
In Acts of the Apostles and Paul’s letters make it very clear how early Christians were expected to act. They centered their lives on weekly Eucharist meetings (early Mass?!). They would:

- gather to hear the Word of God
- take up collections for those in need
- pray over the sick
- celebrate the Eucharist
Acts of the Apostles:

How did these early Christians act?

Read and write describe:

Acts 4:32-35
Acts 2:42-47
Acts 5:12-16
Community= Christian...COURAGE!

The term “Christians” was interchangeable with “Community” because the message of Jesus to take care of each other was such a strong one.

Once the persecutions began, they had to protect one another.

An underground system was developed with the use of coded messages to let each other know when and where the community would meet and celebrate the Eucharist. This was key to the survival of the Church.

They had to go against the common pressure to “do like the Romans do” and stick up for each other even when it meant death!
What did the early Church do?

In the early Church, there was no written Gospel. There was no printing press and no bible yet. The community shared stories and memories of the apostles and other people that had known Jesus personally.

The first major theological task of the early Church was to gather these stories to preserve the teachings of Jesus.
First theological task of disciples:

Many of the letters that Peter, Paul, and other apostles sent to early communities were written before the Gospels.

These letters represent the earliest theology of the Catholic Church and were saved and made part of the New Testament. Paul’s letters were especially helpful for these early Christians. Paul’s letters helped the early Christians discover the deeper meaning and contained info on the life and teachings of Jesus.
Second theological task of disciples:

The early church had to decide whether or not to keep a close relationship with the Jewish faith. Most of the early converts were Jews and it was familiar.

Initially, many converts (even Peter) continued to practice the old Jewish customs and religious laws (Kosher foods, marriages within the faith, temple laws).

When Gentiles joined, they were expected to follow Jewish customs.

This could explain why many parts of our religion are not that different from the Jewish religion, however, changes did start to take place...
Changes from Jewish ---> Christianity

Paul felt it wasn’t fair to the Gentiles to make them follow Jewish laws when they had not been Jewish.

This caused unrest in the early Church from the former Jews but eventually, the Church adopted Paul’s approach.

It wasn’t until the Roman’s demolished the Jewish temple in Jerusalem that the early church broke from Judaism. This was in 70 A.D.
Converting Jews and Gentiles, alike

Jerusalem was the center of where the Apostles began converting and the people were mainly Jewish. Peter traveled and spread the word.

When more disciples joined, they traveled outside of Jerusalem and traveled to Jewish communities in the Roman Empire.

When Jews started to persecute early Christians, many disciples fled Jerusalem and Palestine. This actually helped spread the message of Christianity to the outside world.
By the end of the first century, almost all preaching by the early Christians was aimed at Gentiles.

The good news appealed to the outcasts of Roman society. It gave these people that had been ignored and abused real hope. It promised them a place to belong both here on earth, and in Heaven.

Many of these converts were enslaved, laborers, widows, elderly, outcasts, sick, or sinners. Rich elders and noblemen also began to convert and during the Eucharistic celebrations, rich and poor would drink from the same cup of blood=unity
The disciples formed communities in every major city of the Roman Empire by the end of the first century. Rome, the center of the empire, became the center of the Church...

What is there now?

(The Vatican!)
Charisms

Charism; Greek word meaning, “gift” or “talent”

Each disciple was blessed with a unique combination of charisms from the Holy Spirit that made their mission special. St. Paul explains:

*Some people God has designated in the church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then, gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts.*
Whenever there was a need in the community, the situation was handled by the person who seemed to have the special gift for treating that need. It was through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that these charisms were developed.
Ordination

Some disciples were chosen and anointed to share in the priesthood of Jesus in a special way just like Jesus chose the Apostles (remember, one of the marks of the Church is that we are APOSTOLIC and try to do what the Apostles did).

Here is what Paul said about Priests (do these stand today?)

*Therefore, a priest must be irreproachable, temperate, self-controlled, decent, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not aggressive, but gentle, not contentious, not a lover of money.*

The Church was organized by rules, duties, and a body of truths (Tradition)
The First Great Debate

The first debate of the early Church could have easily destroyed it. When Peter felt that Gentiles should not have to follow Jewish laws, it caused a debate. The problem had to be resolved and quickly!

The Apostles and Elders had a meeting in Jerusalem in 49 A.D. They discussed, argued, and prayed to the Spirit for guidance. Finally, Peter and the other disciples accepted Paul’s position and it became official policy that Gentiles did not have to follow Jewish religious customs.

This became known as the Council of Jerusalem. This established the process the Church has followed ever since to solve its problems.
A little about Paul...

Played one of the greatest roles in promoting the early Church

About 24 when Jesus was crucified in 33 A.D.

Devout, well-educated Jew

Frequently called, “Saul” his Hebrew name

Paul was on his way to arrest Christians when he had his conversion experience (Acts 9:1-22)

After conversion, used charisms and energy to convert others

Traveled through Greece and Asia Minor establishing communities

Wrote numerous letters after leaving these communities encouraging them

Compassionate, full of energy, brave, tough, and loved Jesus with whole being
The Holy Spirit Inspires the Church

Gospels are written:
Mark in about 60-70AD
Matthew and Luke in about 70-90 AD
John in about 90 AD

Other writings:
Epistles (letters) mostly attributed to Paul
Seven letters written by other Church leaders
Acts of the Apostles
Book of Revelation
Your turn...Dig Deeper

In the early Church, miracles seemed to play a major role in helping promote faith in the Gospel. Read Acts 9:32-43 and write out your answers to the following questions

1. What miracles were performed? By whom?
2. Do you think we still need miracles to spread the faith? Why or why not?
4. What is one miracle you have experienced in your own life?
The First Hundred Years: Quiz

Part One True or False:

1. The Church began within the Roman Empire.
2. The Roman Empire was an ideal society.
3. From the very beginning, all Christians were considered enemies of the state.
4. Saint Peter is known as the “Apostle to the Gentiles”.
5. The first books of the New Testament to be written were the Gospels.
Part Two: Fill in the blank.

7. ________is usually considered the birthday of the Church.

8. Many people in the Roman Empire spoke a second language of Greek or ____.

9. In 64 A.D., the emperor _______outlawed Christianity and started the first official persecution by the state.

10. Three key ideas that help us understand what it was like to be a disciple of Jesus in the early years of the Church are ________, ________, and ____________.

11. The Acts of the Apostles shows us that the early Church had the special help of ________________, who enabled many disciples to perform miracles.

12. The first Church council was held at ________________.
Choose one of the choices below. You will have until the end of the period to complete the activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create a timeline showing the major events from the years 33-100 A.D. Make sure to include at least 10 important people and events.</td>
<td>Create a television infomercial explaining the major events in the early Church. Infomercial should explain for anyone unfamiliar with Church history.</td>
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<td>Create (write a script) an interview with the early Church fathers. Include questions and responses on: things that worry them, things that make them hopeful, and in general about the events in the years of 33-100 A.D. Must be at least one page long.</td>
<td>Create an journal of St. Paul. Imagine that he kept a journal on his travels. Who did he encounter? How was he received? How did he feel? Must be at least 1 page long.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pick a Disciple or Apostle and write a biography of their life and major contributions to the early Church (at least 2 paragraphs)</td>
<td>Write a 2 (or more) paragraph essay about the early Church. Include details about how they operated, what role the Apostles had, what was expected of the members, etc.</td>
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Rubric...how do you earn the grade you want?

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<th>20</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>Student uses class period wisely and is on task at all times</td>
<td>Student generally uses time wisely and gets back to work when redirected</td>
<td>Student is often seen off task and works too loudly</td>
<td>Student is frequently off task and too loud</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finished project</td>
<td>Finished product is neat, easy to understand, and sticks to the topic</td>
<td>Finished product is mostly neat and is relatively clear and mainly sticks to topic</td>
<td>Finished product is not very neat and/or not as easy to understand; could be much more on topic.</td>
<td>Finished product isn’t neat and/or clear; is not on topic.</td>
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<td>Includes all components</td>
<td>Student followed all directions in the square of choice.</td>
<td>Student followed most of the directions in the square of choice.</td>
<td>Student followed half of the directions in the square of choice.</td>
<td>Student did not follow the directions in the square.</td>
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<td>Creativity &amp; Content</td>
<td>Student had all major events in the time period covered and was creative in the presentation of the facts.</td>
<td>Student had most of the major events covered and was relatively creative in the presentation of the facts.</td>
<td>Student was missing several of the major events and was not very creative in the presentation of the facts.</td>
<td>Student was missing many of the major events and was not creative in the presentation of the facts.</td>
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<td>Total points</td>
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