

THE BIBLE and the CHURCH FATHERS

Lesson 1: An Introduction to the Fathers

Themes Covered

- Who are the Church Fathers?
- The four criteria to be a Church Father
- The Fathers as a link to the teachings of Christ

Scripture in this lesson

- 1 Corinthians 4:15-16

Review Questions

1. What is a father?
2. What are the four criteria necessary to be a Father of the Church?
3. When was the Patristic period in the Church?
4. What does “orthodox” mean?

Table Discussion Questions

1. Is there anything in this lesson that you have just heard for the first time?
2. Why was it so important to the fathers to guard the Church’s doctrine? What made that work particularly challenging?
3. Which one of the four criteria to be a Church Father do you find the most compelling when discussing the Fathers with someone considering coming into the church?

Memory Verse for this lesson: 1 Corinthians 4:15-16

Even if you should have countless guides to Christ, yet you do not have many fathers, for I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Therefore, I urge you, be imitators of me.

Prep for Lesson 2

John 21:15-19

1 John 4:1-3

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Lesson 2: Heroes & Heresies

Themes Covered

- The Fathers: Sacred Scripture and Tradition
- The Patristic Era
- Christian Persecution
- Development of doctrine

Scripture in this lesson

- Luke 1: 1-4
- 2 Thessalonians 2: 14-15
- John 21:15-19
- 1 John 4:1-3

Review Questions

1. Who are the traditores? What controversy surrounded them?
2. What are the four main eras of the Fathers?
3. Who was Arius? What did he teach?
4. What is the development of doctrine?

Table Discussion Questions

1. Is there anything in this lesson that you have just heard for the first time?
 2. How did the Fathers challenge their world with the Gospel? Did you find their witness powerful?
 3. How can the Fathers be “fathers” to us today?
- Memory Verse for this lesson: 2 Thessalonians 2: 15

Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours.

Prep for Lesson 3

Ephesians 1: 3-10

2 Timothy 3:14-17

CCC 51-73

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Lesson 3: Promise & Fulfillment

Profiles of the Early Church: St Perpetua

Themes Covered

- Covenants in the Divine Economy
- Typology
- Christ, The fulfillment of the Father's promises
- Inspiration & Scripture

Scripture in this lesson

- Jeremiah 31:31-33
- Ephesians 1: 3-10
- John 5:39
- Romans 5:14
- Ezekiel 34:23-24
- 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Review Questions

1. What are the primary differences between contracts and covenants?
2. What is an example of a covenant today?
3. What is typology? Give an Example of typology in Scripture.

Table Discussion Questions

1. Is there anything in this lesson that you have just heard for the first time?
2. Why is understanding covenants necessary for understanding Scripture?
3. Why is Scripture alone insufficient for knowing the truth about Christ and salvation?

Memory Verse for this lesson: Ephesians 1:9-10

- In all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth.

Prep for Lesson 4

- 2 Peter 1:20-21
- 2 Peter 3:15-16
- CCC 80-84, 115-117, 128-130

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Lesson 4: Inspiration and Authority

Profiles of the Early Church: St. Monica

Themes Covered

- Scripture and the Liturgy
- The canon of Scripture
- Interpreting Scripture
- The different senses of Scripture

Scripture in this lesson

- 2 Peter 1:20-21
- 2 Peter 3:15-16

Review Questions

1. What is the canon of Scripture? When was it confirmed?
2. How are Catholic Bibles different for Protestant Bibles?
3. Name and define the different sense of Scripture?

Table Discussion Questions

1. Is there anything in this lesson that you have just heard for the first time?
2. Identify different forms of Gnosticism in our world today?
3. How can we incorporate Scripture into our daily lives?

Memory Verse for this lesson: Ephesians 1:9-10

- Know this first of all, that there is no prophecy of scripture that is a matter of personal interpretation, for no prophecy ever came through human will; but rather human beings moved by the holy Spirit spoke under the influence of God.

Prep for Lesson 5

- Exodus 24:4-11
- Jeremiah 31:31-33
- 1 Corinthians 11:23-27

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Lesson 5: The New Testament

Profiles of the Early Church: St. Didymus the Blind

Themes Covered

- The “new Testament” in the early Church
- “Covenant” and “Testament” in the Old Testament
- the New Covenant
- New Covenant Ministers
- New Covenant Sacrifice

Scripture in this lesson

- Exodus 24:4-11
- Jeremiah 31:31-33
- Luke 22:19-20
- 1 Corinthians 11:23-27
- Hebrews 9:11-25

Review Questions

1. When do we see the phrase “New Testament” being used to refer to the books of the Bibles written by Jesus’ disciples and St. Paul? What did the Christians mean when they spoke of the “New Testament” before then?
2. When the Bible was translated from Latin into English, what English Word was used for testament?
3. What 3 elements are present in Old Testament covenants? In the new Testament, what forms to these elements take?

Table Discussion Questions

1. Is there anything in this lesson that you have just heard for the first time?
2. How do we participate in the sacrifice of the New Covenant?

Memory Verse for this lesson: Jeremiah 31:31-32

- See, days are coming—oracle of the LORD—when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors the day I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. They broke my covenant, though I was their master—oracle of the LORD.

Prep for Lesson 6

- 1 Corinthians 10:16-17
- CCC 1359-1381

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Lesson 6: The Real Presence

Profiles of the Early Church: St. Marcella of Rome

Themes Covered

- The New Covenant and The Eucharist
- Christ the Mediator of the New Covenant
- The New Covenant & the Mass
- The Books of the New Testament
- The Fathers and the Eucharist

Scripture in this lesson

- 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Review Questions

1. What does the expression “New Covenant” mean in the books of the New Testament?
2. When was the Church’s faith in transubstantiation officially defined?
3. Why was it not defined until then? Do we have evidence that Christ’s Real Presence in Eucharist was believed before then?

Table Discussion Questions

1. Is there anything in this lesson that you have just heard for the first time?
2. How do we present ourselves as Living Sacrifices? What are the ways we do that every day?
3. How do we acknowledge the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist? What else can we do to show reverence and respect for the Christ’s Body and Bread?

Memory Verse for this lesson: 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

Prep for Lesson 7

- John 17
- Hebrews 10:12-16
- 1 Corinthians 10:1-6
- CCC 1322-1355, 1544-1553

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Lesson 7: The Fathers of the Church

Profiles of the Early Church: St. Helena

Themes Covered

- Achieving Unity
- Making Disciples
- The Eucharist as a source of Unity
- In Persona Christi
- The Papacy

Scripture in this lesson

- John 17: 20-24
- Matthew 28-18-20
- Hebrews 10:12-16
- 1 Corinthians 10:1-6
- Matthew 16:18-19

Review Questions

1. How did the Apostles incorporate people into the family of God?
2. In What passage of Scripture does Christ Pray for unity among the believers and what does he say?
3. When did Christ institute the Sacrament of Holy Orders?
4. What words did Jesus use as the Last supper to ordain his Apostles as Priests?

Table Discussion Questions

1. Is there anything in this lesson that you have just heard for the first time?
2. What would Jesus want to protect his Church from disunity? What are the fruits of disunity among Christians today?
3. What are some ways that you can strengthen your devotion to the Eucharist?

Memory Verse for this lesson: Matthew 28-18-20

Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.* And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

Prep for Lesson 8

- 2 Timothy 2:1-2
- CCC 857-870, 1548-1551

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Lesson 8: Preserving The Truth

Profiles of the Early Church: Egeria the Pilgrim

Themes Covered

- Apostolic Succession
- Church Unity
- The Fathers and The Church of Rome

Scripture in this lesson

- 2 Timothy 2:1-2

Review Questions

1. What is the Didache and what does it say about the Mass?
2. Name the 2 Fathers who defended the Primacy of Peter and Rome?
3. What is the Source of the Church's unity?
4. What made Leo great?

Table Discussion Questions

1. Is there anything in this lesson that you have just heard for the first time?
2. What do you think about Pope St. Gregory's word that warn against speaking ill of bishops? Why should we take them seriously still today?

Memory Verse for this lesson: • 2 Timothy 2:1-2

So you, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well.

Prep for Lesson 9

- Malachi 1:10-11
- CCC 1074-1076

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Lesson 9: The Doctrine of the Mysteries

Profiles of the Early Church: St. Ephrem of Syria

Themes Covered

- Art in the Early Church
- Mystagogy
- The Sacramental Foundation
- The Great Teachers of Mystagogy

Scripture in this lesson

- Malachi 1:10-11

Review Questions

1. Define Mystagogy
2. In the Early Church, what did people intending to be baptized learn before Easter? What did they learn after Easter?
3. What is the Discipline of the Secret?

Table Discussion Questions

1. Is there anything in this lesson that you have just heard for the first time?
2. How do you participate in the mysteries of salvation history?
3. Was there a particular area or piece in this lesson that stood out to you or spoke to you?

Memory Verse for this lesson: Malachi 1:11

From the rising of the sun to its setting, my name is great among the nations; Incense offerings are made to my name everywhere, and a pure offering; For my name is great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.

Prep for Lesson 10

- Luke 24:13-35
- Ephesians 5:21-33

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Lesson 10: All in the Family

Profiles of the Early Church: St. Ambrose of Milan

Themes Covered

- John Chryostom on Marriage
- The Road to Emmaus
- Divinization
- St. Augustine the mystagogue

Scripture in this lesson

- Luke 24:30-32
- Ephesians 5:31-32
- Galatians 2:20
- John 1:12

Review Questions

1. According to St. John Chryostom, of what is marriage an icon?
2. What are Manichaeism, Pelagianism, & Donatism, and how did Augustine argue against them?
3. What is divinization?

Table Discussion Questions

1. Is there anything in this lesson that you have just heard for the first time?
2. In what ways do you live your life as self-gift? In other words, how do you give yourself away in love to others?
3. Are any of the heresies Augustine combated still with us in any form?

Memory Verse for this lesson: Luke 24:30-32

While he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?"

Prep for Lesson 11

- Acts 2:38-42
- CCC 2471-2474

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Lesson 11: Fathers and Martyrs

Profiles of the Early Church: St. Basil the Great

Themes Covered

- Life in the Early Church
- The martyrs and the Eucharist
- Martyrdom as a Eucharistic sacrifice

Scripture in this lesson

- Acts 2 38-42
- Revelation 6:9

Review Questions

1. What is Martyrdom?
2. What verse of Acts clues us in to the four reasons the martyrs were willing to die for the Faith? What were the reasons?

Table Discussion Questions

1. Is there anything in this lesson that you have just heard for the first time?
2. Did any of the stories of the martyrs inspire you to live the Faith more passionately?
3. Who are some other saints who have inspired you on your journey to grow closer to Christ and his Bride the Church?

Memory Verse for this lesson: Acts 2:41-42

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day. They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.

Prep for Lesson 12

- Luke 9:21-26
- Wisdom 3

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Lesson 12: Living the Mysteries

Profiles of the Early Church: St. Justin Martyr

Themes Covered

- White Martyrdom
- Sons and Daughters of the Father
- Temples of Sacrifice
- Heirs with Christ
- Living eucharistic lives
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Scripture in this lesson

- Luke 9:23
- John 15:18-20
- 2 Peter 1:3-4
- Romans 12-1
- Wisdom 12:1
- Wisdom 3:1,.5-7

Review Questions

1. What is the difference between red and white martyrdom?
2. What makes martyrdom like the Mass?
3. What is the importance of self-gift?

Table Discussion Questions

1. Is there anything in this lesson that you have just heard for the first time?
2. How can we live out martyrdom in our daily lives?
3. What can you tell others about what you have learned in this study?

Memory Verse for this lesson: Romans 12:1

I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship.