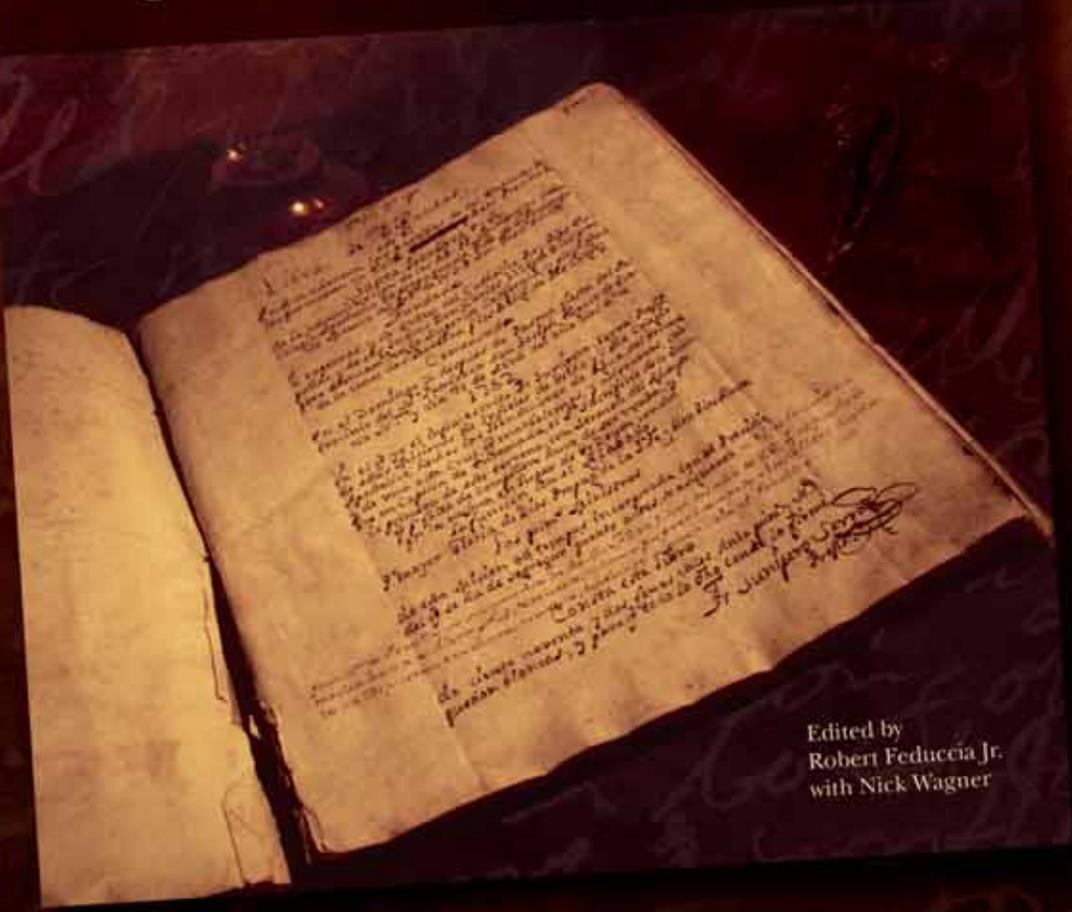


saint mary's press

Leader's Guide for



Primary Source Readings in
Catholic Church History



Edited by
Robert Feduccia Jr.
with Nick Wagner

Michael Greene

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Introduction

Vision

History often paints a two-dimensional picture—a picture that is both long and wide. Students of Church history can see the development of the People of God over time, and they can see the broad expanse of the Church’s influence. Although these are important aspects of learning, the picture remains two-dimensional. To bring texture to such study, a third dimension—depth—is needed.

Church history was made not by actors in a play or movie but by passionate people. Sometimes their passions were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Other times, they were not. But this is part and parcel of the Church’s activity. The People of God collectively reflects on events, discerns the Holy Spirit’s activity, and then moves ahead hoping to follow the Lord more diligently. By adding the depth of humanity to Church history, the student is better able to join with the Church in the task of discerning God’s direction.

Primary Source Readings in Catholic Church History is a collection of readings that moves the student beyond the mere events of history. These readings provide a rich, textured painting of the Church’s progression as a pilgrim people by revealing the thoughts, the emotions, and the situations of particular pilgrims. In “The Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas,” students will read the diary of a third-century saint who sacrificed all for love of Jesus. In “Pope Against King: The Battle Over Appointing Bishops,” a conflict between two men is illuminated by the correspondence between a pope and a king. Both passionately believed they were acting on the Lord’s behalf. These primary sources add the depth of humanity to history. They give the students a front-row seat to history and invite them into the constant task of learning how to live today.

Structure

Primary Source Readings in Catholic Church History was designed to be used in conjunction with *The Catholic Church: Journey, Wisdom, and Mission*, the student Church history textbook by Saint Mary’s Press (Winona, MN: 1994). *The Catholic Church* moves, for the most part, chronologically. However, some chapters are thematic. You might notice that the readings in *Primary Source Readings* also are not always chronological. This structure is due to the thematic nature of some chapters in *Journey, Wisdom, and Mission*.

If you are not using *The Catholic Church*, appendix A in this leader’s guide is a chronological listing of the chapters of *Primary Source Readings* to help you present the readings to the students sequentially. Also, if you are interested in taking a more thematic approach to teaching Church history, appendix B is a topical index.

Content

The chapters in this leader’s guide are rather straightforward. Each chapter is designed to help the students learn the main points from the primary sources and apply them to their living. This is done through four components:

- an in-class activity
- a homework extension of that activity
- review questions to help with reading comprehension
- in-depth questions to help students synthesize the readings

The review questions and the in-depth questions are handouts for easy use in class or as a homework activity. We hope you and your students become immersed in the readings and enjoy this front-row seat to history.

Initiation into a Community: The Body of Christ as a Model of the Church

Summary of the Source: “A Rite of Passage”

Rev. Aidan Kavanagh, OSB, tells the engrossing story of a fictional ten-year-old boy named Euphemius. His years of preparation for Christian initiation brought Euphemius to a decisive moment, a journey from dusk to dawn—and from death to life. On Easter Sunday morning, after a lengthy fast and a nightlong Liturgy of the Word, the catechumens were led from the assembly hall to the vestibule of the baptistery where they were asked to strip naked. With dawn approaching, deacons or deaconesses rubbed each catechumen with oil in preparation for Baptism. Then, one by one, the catechumens descended into the baptistery where a deacon or deaconess fully immersed them three times as the bishop called them to proclaim their faith. After Baptism, costly and fragrant chrism was poured over their heads as the bishop anointed and sealed them with the sign of the cross. Finally, after years of being dismissed from the assembly hall after the Gospel reading, they were united with the entire assembly to partake in the Eucharist. This is historical fiction at its best! Fourth-century Baptisms *were* sensuous and earthy as well as being a powerful witness and challenge to the Christian community.

Classroom Activity

Students will discover and describe the symbols of initiation as they create a collage.

Materials Needed

- magazines that contain images of nature, food, babies, sports, and fashion
- poster board (one piece for each group)
- glue sticks

1. Divide the class into groups of three to five students.

2. Distribute magazines, poster board, and glue sticks to each group.

3. Instruct the students in the following manner:

- ❖ Find and cut out pictures that contain oil, water, human touch, light and dark, the human body, new life, death, special food, and meals.

- ❖ Use the selected images to either re-create a scene from the story or artistically interpret the story.
- ❖ Find words in ads or articles that describe feelings evoked by these images.
- ❖ Glue these images and words on the poster board in a professional-looking way.

4. After the collages are finished, ask the groups to each explain their collages to the rest of the class.

5. After the presentations, lead a discussion with the entire class about “A Rite of Passage” by asking the following questions:

- ❖ Why were items relating to the senses an important part of early Christian initiation ceremonies?
- ❖ Have you ever perceived the presence of God through your senses?
- ❖ Did this story or this activity have an impact on your thoughts or feelings about the sacraments of initiation?

6. For student review, distribute copies of handout 1, one to each student, at a time of your choosing.

Homework Extension

Assign the following homework activity in these or similar words:

- ❖ Turn off all of the lights in your bedroom or in a room with few or no windows. Remain in the darkness for a full 5 minutes. At the end of that time, light one candle. Wait for your eyes to adjust, and make note of what you can see. Pay attention to those things you might never have noticed or paid attention to before. Turn the lights back on. Reflect briefly in writing on your experience of darkness and light using the following points as a guide:

- Why do you think darkness and light were powerful symbols for the early Christians?
- What was it like to sit in the dark for that period of time?
- What did you see by candlelight?
- Describe why you think a lit candle endures as a symbol for Jesus.

Initiation into a Community

The Body of Christ as a Model of the Church

Please provide complete answers to the following questions. You may need to record your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

Review Questions

1. In “A Rite of Passage,” what did the bishop instruct the catechumens to do as he entered the vestibule of the baptistery?
2. Why were the catechumens instructed to face westward? eastward?
3. Describe the place where the catechumens were baptized.
4. Describe the roles that the bishop, presbyters (priests), deacons, and deaconesses played.

In-Depth Questions

1. Compare and contrast the fourth-century ritual of initiation with a celebration of infant Baptism, first Eucharist, and Confirmation that you have seen. List some of the more notable similarities and differences.
2. Rev. Aidan Kavanagh wrote a story that could be classified as historical fiction. Why do you think he chose a fictional story to describe the rites of initiation?
3. The rites of initiation include imagery of birth and death. Look for and list examples of both. Does it surprise you that birth and death are images used **in church**? Why are birth and death so powerful? What does it have to do with Christian initiation?
4. “A Rite of Passage” describes an early Christian celebration of initiation as a **feast for the senses**. Choose three symbols from the list below and provide your interpretation of them:
 - rubbing a person with fragrant oils
 - full immersion in water
 - laying on of hands
 - light and darkness
 - nakedness and new white robes
 - words about death and new life
 - fasting and sharing in a holy meal

The Ship of Salvation: The Church as an Institution

Summary of the Source: “The Dream of Saint John Bosco”

“The Dream of Saint John Bosco” depicts the Church as a flagship with auxiliary ships surrounding it, and the sea around it is portrayed as a hostile world. The ships’ command structure is hierarchical: the Pope captains the flagship, while the bishops command the auxiliary ships. The ships are the churches, while the voyagers are the faithful. The two defenders of this flotilla are the Virgin Mary and the Blessed Sacrament. No matter how violent the attacks, no enemy—no matter how formidable—can sink or destroy the ships. If a ship is damaged, it is repaired at once. If a pope is wounded and dies, another immediately replaces him. A clear chain of command guides the flotilla to its destination. This simple and strong image of the Church with its unbroken command provides an example of the hope people feel from the institutional model for the Church.

Classroom Activity

This activity helps the students understand the hierarchical nature of the Church through an examination of other institutions.

1. Ask the students to name three institutions: the government, the school, and a business are examples of institutions. Write the names of the institutions the students suggest across the top of the board, leaving space between each name.

2. Point out that all institutions have a structure of leadership. Then invite the students to describe the structure of leadership for each of the three institutions listed. Write the students’ descriptions below the name of each institution.

3. To prompt a discussion among the students, ask the following questions in these or similar words:

- ❖ Which of these institutions has a hierarchical structure? [Draw a pyramid \triangle next to each institution that has a hierarchical structure.]
- ❖ What purpose does each institution serve? [Write the word “Purpose” below each institution, followed by a short statement of the purpose that the class agrees upon.]

- ❖ Are any of these institutions more collegial in nature? In other words, is power shared more equally in some than in others? [If no collegial institution is represented on the board, ask for an example of one, such as a board of directors or a student council.]
- ❖ Do you think the Catholic Church could have survived for over two millennia if it did not have an institutional structure? [Invite opposing views and discussion.]
- ❖ In what ways does the Church also exhibit a collegial structure?

4. Conclude by asking students to name ways they can see the hierarchical structure of the Church as a gift and to identify ways they can more fully participate in the collegial nature of the Church.

5. For student review, distribute copies of handout 2, one to each student, at a time of your choosing.

Homework Extension

Assign the following homework activity in these or similar words:

- ❖ In your textbook, reread “The Dream of Saint John Bosco.” Then read paragraphs 18–21 in chapter 3, “On the Hierarchical Structure of the Church and in Particular on the Episcopate,” of *Lumen Gentium (Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and PostConciliar Documents* [Collegeville, MN 1984], pp. 369–374). This document is also posted on the Vatican’s Web site.
- ❖ After your reading, prepare a presentation for class that includes the following topics:
 - What explanation of the Tradition does the Catholic Church provide for its hierarchical structure?
 - How does “The Dream of Saint John Bosco” bring these words from *Lumen Gentium* to life?
 - Which description of the hierarchy was most enjoyable to read and why?

The Ship of Salvation

The Church as an Institution

Please provide complete answers to the following questions. You may need to record your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

Review Questions

1. In “The Dream of Saint John Bosco,” what is John Bosco’s stated purpose in telling the story of his dream?
2. Why are books and pamphlets included as weapons against the Church?
3. Name the command structure of the flagship and the auxiliary ships.
4. What happens when a ship is damaged or a pope falls?
5. How is the relationship between the Church and the world described in the dream?

In-Depth Questions

1. During the last half of the twentieth century, many countries in eastern Europe were Communist, and Christians were not allowed to publicly gather for worship. In such times, do you think it is important to have a strong chain of command in the Church? Explain.
2. John Bosco’s dream paints an image of the Church. Respond to these questions: If the role of Christian imagination is to imagine that which is real, does this dream help you understand the reality of the Church better? What are the strengths and the weaknesses of this image of the Church?
3. The dream of John Bosco depicts the Church as having an unbroken chain of command: as soon as one pope dies, another replaces him as captain of the ship. Why is this unbroken chain of command important?
4. If you were writing a similar story of a dream, what would you place on the two columns as the major defenders or protectors of the Church?

The Descent of the Holy Spirit: The Church Is Revealed

Summary of the Source: “Acts of the Apostles 2:1–42”

In Acts 2:1–42, Saint Luke describes the extraordinary event of the Pentecost. Jewish followers of Jesus from throughout the Mediterranean region had gathered for Pentecost, the traditional Jewish celebration of the new harvest and the Sinai covenant. Suddenly they experienced “the rush of a violent wind” (2) and tongues of fire descending upon them. Using language reminiscent of the great Theophany at Mount Sinai (see Exodus 19:16–25), Luke recounts the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the gathered community.

Luke theologically expresses the core meaning of this event through his account of Saint Peter’s *kerygmatic* sermon. Saint Peter proclaims that Jesus’s death and Resurrection made this gift of the Holy Spirit possible. Through the Holy Spirit, this community of believers becomes, and continues to be, a reality much more profound than the sum of its parts: it is a living, dynamic body that carries with it the power to forgive sins and Christ’s offer of salvation to the world. This event has been recognized as the birth of the Church.

Classroom Activity

Students will look at several Old Testament passages that refer to *fire* and *wind* or *breath* to understand more deeply the symbols at Pentecost.

1. Divide the class into groups of three to five students.

2. Ask the students to look up the following references to fire and wind or breath in the Old Testament:

Fire

- Exodus 3:1–6
- Exodus 13:20–22
- Isaiah 6:1–6
- Isaiah 66:15–16
- Malachi 3:1–3

Wind or Breath

- Genesis 2:4–7
- 2 Samuel 22:10–11
- Wisdom 7:24–25
- Isaiah 59:19–20
- Ezekiel 37:1–10

3. Ask the students to read the passages aloud in their groups and assign the following tasks in these or similar words:

- ❖ After reading the passages, describe what fire and wind or breath symbolizes in each passage.
- ❖ Refer to Acts 2:1–42. Write a paragraph that expresses your group’s opinion on this question: What is Saint Luke trying to tell Christians through the use of the symbols of fire and wind?

4. Allow the groups to share their paragraphs and lead them in a discussion of this question: What do you think a Christian should learn from a better understanding of these symbols?

5. For student review, distribute copies of handout 3, one to each student, at a time of your choosing.

Homework Extension

Assign the following homework activity in these or similar words:

- ❖ In terms of Church history, the symbols of fire and wind or breath were significant for the birth of the Church. Refer to your time in class and the insights you gained into Saint Luke’s use of the symbols of fire and wind or breath. How are fire and wind still present in the Church? Create something artful that demonstrates how these elements are still present in the Church. To help you with this, you might first look at pictures, or recall the event, of your own Baptism or Confirmation. From that review, make a collage, write a poem, or draw a picture, for example.