

History of the Catholic Church

Chapter 3: Conversions (Part II)

Church Fathers

- **Church Fathers:** Heirs to the apostles, the leaders and protectors of the early Church.
- **Note:** The age of the Fathers extends from the first century through the eighth century. Nearly 90 men are considered Church Fathers: hermits, monks, popes, apologists, preachers, philosophers, lawyers, scholars, theologians, and saints (113).
- **Key:** Church Fathers must be orthodox, holiness of life, Church approval, antiquity (114).

Ambrose

- **Secular Career:** Ambrose embraced a secular career in politics. He studied grammar, rhetoric, and law, and he even learned Greek. At age 29, appointed governor.
- **Bishop:** Small boy shouted “Ambrose for bishop!” as crowd fought over the next bishop. He was baptized on a Sunday and ordained a priest a few days later, and then consecrated bishop the following Sunday. Began intensive studies (118).
- **Caesero-Papism:** Ambrose argued that the Emperor is within the Church, not above it.

Jerome

- **Jerome:** Brilliant mind; lived in Antioch for 5 years; appointed papal secretary; he learned Greek and Hebrew; translated Sacred Scripture into Latin (Vulgate);
- **Anger:** Jerome has an anger problem, and wrote with a sharp pen; moved to Bethlehem

Augustine

- **Augustine:** One of the most influential persons in Western Civilization
- **Note:** Taught grammar in Thagaste and rhetoric in Carthage, Rome, and Milan; Augustine is a bridge of the classical world (Roman and philosophical thought) and the Catholic world. He was the unmatched thinker for the next 800 years.
- **Ambrose:** Baptized Augustine and his son Adeodatus on the Easter Vigil in 387
- **Ordained:** Augustine was ordained a priest in 391 and four years later Bishop of Hippo

Augustine's Works

- **Two Works:** Two famous works include *Confessions* and *The City of God*.
- **Confessions:** Sort of an autobiography in the form of a dialogue with God
- **The City of God:** Defends the Faith from accusation that Rome's demise was because of its conversion; two cities – City of Man (self-love) and City of God (love of God)
- **Augustine:** Wrote against the Manicheans, Donatists, and Pelagians
- **Manicheans:** Gnostic beliefs (material-evil; spiritual-good); elect had secret knowledge
- **Donatists:** Rigorists; *lapsi* could not return; if cleric *lapsi*, then sacraments are invalid
- **Pelagius:** Original sin not communicated to the human race; personal sin of Adam only; Jesus provided a good example for all of us; denied the operative power of grace; we have the capacity by our own will to live a life of perfection and attain heaven (131).

Council of Ephesus (431)

- **Nestorius:** Patriarch of Constantinople (408-450) attacked the use of the word *Theotokos* to describe Mary as the “Mother of God.” Mary gave birth to the man Jesus.
- **Saying:** He was fond of saying that “God is not a baby two or three months old.” (132)
- **Key:** Nestorius argued that Mary is *Christotokos*, or “Christ-bearer,” not *Theotokos*.
- **St. Cyril of Alexandria:** Condemns Nestorius’ preaching and teaching on the nature of Christ and the role of the Blessed Mother. Wrote to Pope Celestine I to condemn him.
- **Council of Ephesus (431):** Cyril is papal legate and council lasted one day! Nestorius’ writings are condemned. He is deposed and then excommunicated (133).

Pope Leo I (440 – 461)

- **Pope Leo I:** He is considered great for two reasons: 1). Instrumental in dealing with a heresy called Monophysitism (i.e., Jesus only had one nature – human absorbed into divinity); 2). He defended the city of Rome against Attila the Hun in 452.
- **Council of Robbers:** Met in Ephesus and prevented Pope Leo’s *Tomb* from being read
- **Council of Chalcedon (451):** 500 bishops present; Leo’s *Tomb* is read and council fathers shouted, “Behold, the Faith of our Fathers; the Faith of the Apostles!” (135)
- **Key:** Jesus is one divine person, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, with two natures – divine and human. Jesus is truly God and truly man and must be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation. Leo’s *tomb* is one of the most significant contributions (135).
- **Attila:** Stopped short of sacking Rome by Leo; Vandals latter looted the city
- **Key:** Leo’s pontificate was one of the most momentous of the century (137).

Collapse of the Roman Empire (476)

- **Decay:** Rome in the fifth century was a fatigued state; Ethnic German warriors demanded increased recognition and authority from the Roman government (138).
- **Odoacer:** Rebelled against Rome and overthrew the boy-emperor Romulus (138).
- **Key:** The change in the army reflected the overall change in Roman society. After 500 years of rule, the Roman Empire started to buckle in exhaustion. It was this exhaustion and lack of confidence, not the Church or invading hordes of barbarians, that broke the Roman system. The Church was the only transnational organization in existence (139).

Conversion of Clovis

- **Clotilda (474-545):** One of the most important saints in Church history (143).
- **Key:** Clotilda married Clovis of the Franks in the late fifth century. She argued from reason and most importantly, prayed for the conversion of her husband (144).
- **Battle:** Clovis prayed to Clotilda’s God in a battle, which swung in his favor (145).
- **Christmas Day:** Clovis is baptized in 496 in a packed cathedral by sacred chrism from a dove. The oil was used for the next 1,300 years to anoint the kings of France (145).
- **Key:** Clotilda changed the course of history with Clovis’ conversion. Clovis was the only Catholic king in the west, and his conversion legitimized the faith in the eyes of his people. The Franks would dominate the Continent for centuries, which contributed to the eventual conversion of the Arian Germanic tribes (146). St. Clotilda, pray for us!