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**Lay Formation Institute: Session I**  
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I. Any study of church history must begin with an invocation into the meaning of the terms being studied: Church and History. Through this initial inquiry, we will see the pressing need to consider the Old Testament in light of the New Testament to better understand the drama of the Church in salvation history

\*\*\* **Church: ecclesia (L.):** meaning “assembly of believers” points to the OT Church, **qahal (Hb.)** that foreshadows what Christ came to perfect--the New Testament Church, the Catholic Church.

\*\*\* **History: historia (L.):** meaning “to weaves a pattern.” God in the OT, over a period of time, used images throughout OT history to reveal to us what we have today. As history does not spring forth from non-events, God uses it pedagogically, as a great Teacher revealing his eternal wisdom to his eternal plan. It will be ancient history that will unite man--not unproved modern notions.

1. As Benin states: “God teaches through the events of history that correspond to his eternal plan. That ultimately, in Christ, the embodiment of law, we may find that the heart of the law of the household is to live in the law”. The “oikonomia” is the wise arrangement by stages whereby the mystery that is Christ is brought to fulfillment (CCC 236).

a. In addition to church and history, the term **typology** is another key term to know and understand as we uncover the meaning of Church in history. Consult **Word of the Week on Typology** from my website. Essentially, typology “gives intelligible coordination to Gods work in salvation history.”—Cardinal Daniellou

II. Covenant- (synonym to testament) is the overarching theme through the Bible. Comes from the Latin word **convener** meaning “to come together.” This word is often understood as a compact agreement, which it is, but God elevates our understanding of this agreement to a sacred family bond Covenant love is more than a contract where you say “this is yours and this is mine,” rather it says “I am yours and you are mine.” And for God, who is entirely relationship, His covenant would not be something external in history, but rather a manifestation of His saving love.

1. Jer.3.16-17... “presence of God will no longer be in the Ark of the Old Covenant, but in Jerusalem shall all nations gather.”

a. Jer.31.31...only mentioning of the New Covenant in the Old Testament. In it he is going to restore the house of Israel by writing the law on their hearts. The law will no longer one of stone (tablets) but of the divine--flesh!!!

b. 2 Cor.5.1-5...“from earthly tent being destroyed to the new building, house in which God dwells in.”

2. It is necessary to note the special characteristics of his covenants with the biblical heroes.  
 3-fold covenant

|                      |                       |                            |                    |                         |                          |
|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Adam-Gen 2.23</b> | <b>Noah-Gen. 9.13</b> | <b>Abraham-Gn. 15</b>      | <b>Moses-Ex.20</b> | <b>David-2 Sam.7.10</b> | <b>Christ-Mk</b>         |
| <b>Marital</b>       | <b>household</b>      | <b>tribal Gn. 17</b>       | <b>national</b>    | <b>kingdom</b>          | <b>Universal</b>         |
| <b>Marriage</b>      | <b>Rainbow</b>        | <b>circumcision Gn. 22</b> | <b>Passover</b>    | <b>Throne</b>           | <b>Baptism/Eucharist</b> |

3. Covenants through the Old Testament have a common thread in that they are marked by sacrifice (or lack there of in Adams case). Adam as the forerunner to understanding “the why” behind sacrifice (Note in this diagram that Rom.5.14 (typology) testifies to the link between Christ and Adam).

a. As early as Cain and Abel there was a sacrificial offering made by both brothers. So as early as the second generation of Adam and Eve we have the theme of liturgical sacrifice continuing soon thereafter.

4. Altar Servers that kept the thread of sacrifice as the hallmark of every covenant and gave us reassurance to the *liturgical current* found in the Old Testament. Note here the altar was understood in times of antiquity as representing the four corners of the earth.

- a. Gn.8.20...Noah built an altar to the Lord to offer up sacrifices
  1. The sacrifice marked the moment God made his covenant oath with him.
- b. Gn.22.2...Abraham built an altar up upon Mt. Moriah to sacrifice his own son.
  1. God spares Isaac and immediately afterwards makes a covenant with him.
  2. This sacrifice is significant in that Isaac foreshadows Christ by carrying wood up a cross in the same Mountainous region as Christ did.
- c. Ex.12...covenant motif continues during the time of Moses when God requires every Israelite to sacrifice an unblemished lamb in place of the firstborn.
- d 2 Sam.7.10...God reaches a flesh covenant with David, which reaches its consummation with the building of the altar and its sacrifices during the time of Solomon.

5. Imperfect sacrifice. These figures performed an incredible task yet failed in the end. This is going to point to a more perfect sacrifice in Christ. Each covenant had been real, yet partial, which ultimately drives us forward to the climax of the types of the Old Testament--Christ!!!

- a. Noah gets drunk in the vineyard.
- b. Abraham grows impatient for an heir and takes a concubine -mistress.
- c. Moses strikes the rock in anger and gives into his temper.
- d. David commits adultery with Bathsheba.

\*\* The history of the Church (assembly of believers) can be best understood by seeing how God wished to unite his broken family. After Adams failure to sacrifice in the Garden of Eden, God chose leaders (Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David) to sacrifice to him in order to be in covenant with him. All of these men were heroic but only attained an imperfect bond in salvation history. Typology reveals to us how O.T. figures prepared and laid the foundation for the coming of Christ. In addition, the sacrifice of Christ perpetuates itself through the divine mysteries of the church. God has woven a pattern that can only be understood by knowing the key elements of his unfolding plan in the OT.

### III. Understanding matters of the Church in the first century (33-100).

1. Pentecost...consult ***Word of the Week on Pentecost.***
2. Sacramental Church The action that you took to make a covenant with Abraham in the OT was circumcision. This was the external sign that you belong to God. This was how you entered into a family bond with God.
  - A. At the time of transitions of covenant and the time of Christ, baptism was the new external sign that you belonged to God (along with the Eucharist). Acceptance of the incarnation and the new covenant demands attention to the particularities of their origin and purpose. This eventually leads one to an understanding to the fullness of truth.
    1. Abraham (circumcision)...Christ (Baptism)...read Col.2.11-12; Rom 8.15-19.
    2. What Adam could not do for humanity Christ accomplishes and what Moses could not do for Israel Christ accomplishes.
  - B. Acts 15...transitioning from old law to new law. The debate between the San Hedrin and the Apostles on circumcision and Baptism. The first council convened!
    1. Define Council-*The calling of an assembly and hierarchy of the church to define the state and matters of the Church in Doctrine/spirituality.*
      - a) Sadducees-represented the priestly class who put all their authority only in the Pentateuch. Denied the Resurrection of the dead and judgment of eternal life.
      - b) Pharisees-zealous party who kept the law. Known as separatists from

the Gentile nations. Believed in the resurrection of the dead and judgment of eternal life.  
 c) Scribes-Professional interpreters of the law (often were Pharisees).

|                      |                   |                      |              |                      |
|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| -Sadducees           |                   | 49 A.D.              |              | Paul                 |
| San Hedrin-Pharisees | -----Old Law----- | Acts 15-----         | New Law----- | Barnabas-12 Apostles |
| -Scribes             | circumcision      | Council of Jerusalem | Baptism      | Peter/James          |

2. Acts 15 and the significance of understanding 2 Sam.7-15. Focus on flow chart.

a. Acts 15.1-18

1. 1-5: Pharisees want to see the Gentiles circumcised
2. 6-11: We now have the gift of the Holy Spirit and Baptism. We no longer need the Old Law.
3. 12-18: Catholic Church begins with James' decree on universal expression of the Church being the new Davidic Kingdom (fulfilling 2 Sam.11-17). Gentile nations, all nations, being apart of this international plan to unite God's people through baptism.

b. Judaism begins. Still believe in the old law. Still recognize their Rabbis as leaders and authority figures.

1. Judaism is the parent of the Catholic Church. However, the faith of Judaism falls short in that it does not recognize what Christ came to establish.

3. Church is the climax of the OT! Note flow chart! Judaism and primitive Christianity are completed in the Catholic Church.

a. OT Israel is the church of God and the NT Church is the Israel of God.

3. Expansion of the Church in the first century seen in the Acts of the Apostles.

A. Apostles begin to evangelize from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth; baptizing the faithful and calling for them to repent and believe the good news. The following stages is where we begin to see sacramental life beginning: baptism. Eucharist, anointing of the sick!

1. Expansion of Christ's church occurs in three stages throughout Acts:

- a. Jerusalem (33-35 A.D.)...Acts 1.1-8.5
- b. Judea-Samaria (35-45 A.D.) Acts 8.5-13.1
- c. Ends of the earth (45-62 A.D.) Acts.13.1-28

#### IV. Understanding matters of the Church in the second and third centuries (100-300 A.D.).

1. Church being defined through persecution under the Rule of Rome Persecuted spreading for primarily three reasons: Relationship to Judaism; secrecy of religion; convenience of scapegoat for other mistakes.

A. **Relationship to Judaism**-they were not in favor with the Romans.

1) No theological understanding of who Christ was.

B. **Secrecy of Religion**-*Worship on Sunday*. subversive to the emperors, not cooperating. A political danger to the empire. They would not turn in their sacred books (need for worship). Thought they were engaging in sexual immorality (as many groups did at this time). Did not understand "eating the body and blood" of a man--pagan worship--Cannibalism? They thought this was having an ill effect on family.

1. Christians were simply reading the scriptures and celebrating the Eucharist.

C. **Convenient scapegoat**-If there was a problem with the empire, the Christians seemed to be an easy target. There was no empirical resistance.

1. Example of Nero blaming the Christians for a fire he started.

2. Age of heresies, apologists and martyrs. Persecution soils the faith of future generations.

Tertullian once said, "*The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.*"

A. Heresy: comes from a Gk. word meaning "choice", this was opposed to the

“obedience of faith” (Rom.1:6, 16:26). **Gnosticism (second century)** was the first major Heresy that asserted the superiority of the natural knowledge of the day over doctrine being handed on in the stead of Sacred Tradition.

1. The special emphasis of the Gnostic thought is self-centered believing only in the knowledge given by human culture and education. In Gnosticism, there is a radical de-emphasis on sin: humanity suffers from ignorance, not sin. In addition, Gnosticism states that there is no organic synthesis of faith to be handed on from one person to the next. There were a few major contenders against this heresy.

a. **St. Irenaeus of Lyons** spent his life defending the integrity of the faith against this dangerous heresy. Ultimately, his major work *Against the Heresies* has become a timeless classic in which he clearly shows Christ’s intention to establish a divine teaching program through the Apostolic Church

b. **St. Justin** was known as the rational apologist. He defended faith through reason. Clearly defines (not understood) Christianity’s relationship to Judaism. Another stalwart against Gnosticism. His major works include: *The First and Second Apology* and *the Dialogue with Trypho*.

3. In addition to the heresies and apologists were the martyrs. Again, martyrs had and continue to have a seminal role in the building up of the faith.

A. By martyr, we speak of those who have witnessed to the faith in the giving up of their very lives. Pope Benedict once said of the martyrs (throughout all generations) *“Throughout history the martyrs continue Christ’s self-oblation; they are the life of the Church’s living altar, made not of stones but of men, that express a new kind of cultis: sacrifice is humanity becoming love with Christ”*. This is why we have chalk-full of feast days that celebrate the martyrs of our spiritual ancestors. The church, when criticized and persecuted, understands herself better and is disposed to serving Christ in a more complete way.

**1. Ignatius and Polycarp (110 and 155 A.D.)** were disciples of John, considered Eucharistic martyrs, because of their heroic faith. Read their accounts.

V. Understanding matters of the Church in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries 300-600 A.D.

1. The Church and its developing relationship with the greater Western Civilization Constantine becomes Emperor of the west (western Mediterranean) in the year 306. He has a religious experience that would change the fortunes of the Catholic Church forever. He sees a sign of the Greek monogram of Christ, the *Chi-Rho*, that assures him victory in the Battle of Milvian Bridge near Rome.

A. The Greek monogram in the sky of the Christian God was put on their shields and he attributed this victory to the Christian God. this gives way to the famous **Edict of Milan (313 A.D.)** In agreement with the Eastern Emperor, Licinius, Christian tolleration was granted throughout the Roman Empire. Christianity and Catholicism was no longer an illegal religion.

1. Constantine becomes sole emperor of Rome in 324 A.D. and begins to actively support Christianity. He replaces the Roman Gods with the Christian Gods. He protects liturgical practices and passes laws honoring Sunday, Christmas, and other Christian holidays.

2. He seeks out a symbol of historical truth to Christianity and his mother Helena returns from her pilgrimage to Jerusalem with the true cross (still is at St. Maria Correce Church in Rome where Helena once lived)

a. He had Christian Churches built and Christianity was made the official religion of the Empire (Theodosius 381). The end of the persecution of Christians was the end --for now--of the great number of martyrs that the early Church saw.

3. In the fourth Century, there emerged a new series of heroes for the Catholic Church: monks.

A. **Antony of Egypt (250-355)** was the first to follow Christ in this sole devotion of penance and prayer as he goes into the desert to live the life of penance, fasting, and almsgiving (monk comes from the Latin meaning monos or alone). Many flee to his way of life and seek this man as a spiritual master.

B. Pachomius of Egypt was another great leader who lived the life of a monk but did so in communal living.

1. Monks were a radical witness to Christ and witnessed to a new Christian spirituality. The lifestyle of the Christian was to be a sign against the secular ways of society and towards the struggle of Christianity.

a. Monastic life would soon be implemented in the city (St. Martin of Tours, France) and take hold in Christian areas as a new way of living the Gospel life. This would set the tone for future communities and religious life.

4. Great scholars and Theologians appear during this time as well.

A. **St. Athanasius (4th century)**: Immortalized Saint Antony by writing his biography, *The Life of Antony*. He was also well known for his defense against the heresy of Arianism in which he explained the unity of the two natures of Christ through his treatment of the Incarnation.

1. **Arianism**: this heresy asserted that Christ was not God but the highest creature of God. There was an emphasis on Christ's human nature and de-emphasis on Christ's divine nature...go into detail of heresy.

B. **Augustine (4th century)**-Early Bishop of the Church. His works include *Confessions*, in which he discusses his conversion into the Church, and *The City of God*, where he discusses the relationship between the Church and the world. He ranks among the great scholars of the likes of Thomas Aquinas.

1. He calls the first worldwide or ecumenical **council in Nicaea (325 A.D.)** The bishops develop a creed to clarify the Church's understanding of Christ's hypostatic union (divine nature and human nature).

2. Also is present at the **Council of Hippo (395 A.D.)** to define the canon of the NT (27 books)...explore the reasons behind the canon of the New Testament.

C. **St. Jerome (late 4th early 5th century)**-lived as an ascetic in a cave in Bethlehem. He translated the bible into what we now know as the *Latin Vulgate*. This was the translation of the bible into the Latin vernacular.

D. **Chrysostom**-Bishop of the city founded by Constantine--Constantinople--defended the faith vigorously against attackers of the Church. He was known for his eloquent homilies and preaching.

5) Authority of the Pope being defined. The bishop of Rome was given full authority at the **Council of Sardica (343 A.D.)**

A. Emperor Gratian confirms that the bishop of Rome as the sole authority figure over all the Churches (378 A.D.). This was not a political move but an understanding of the intentions of Christ.

1. Pope Damasus- Reflecting upon the scripture passage from Isaiah 22 and Matthew 16 states: "Authority does not come from an Emperor or a human bishop alone, but from the hand of God who entrusted the office of Peter with his Church. To be in union with Christ here on earth is to be in union with His Church." Re-quote the analogy of the need for authority.

6. (small groups with chapter) The Church and the Barbarian tribes. Initially the Visigoths plundered Rome in 411 A.D. and left the West depleted. In time over the fifth century, the Vandals and Huns took over major parts of the Western Empire. It was a time of great challenge for the Church, both physically and spiritually. Among the tribulation rose many heroes, the greatest Pope Leo (440-461).

A. Pope Leo the Great meets up with Attila the Hun in a town outside of Rome called Mantua (452). There he convinced Attila to withdraw his troops. In addition, Pope Leo the Great brought a strong centralization to Europe with healthy governance.

B. Saint Remigius, Avitus and King Clovis of the Franks (modern day Europe). Franks were barbarian peoples who had no true religion.

1. The great saint Remigius inspires Clovis to convert to Christianity (wife Clotilda affects this decision) and later St. Avitus, bishop of Gaul, highlights this great conversion: "Thanks to you this great corner shines with new brilliance and a star glitters in the West...your faith is our victory."

**\*\*\* see the following words of the week from website for more reflection on our time together:**

- 1-Faith
- 2-Witness
- 3-Kingdom
- 4-Mystery
- 5-Type
- 6-Freedom
- 7-Peter
- 8-Church
- 9-Covenant
- 10-Gospel
- 11-Heresy
- 12-Informed
- 13-Keys
- 14-Worship