

TIMELINE OF CHRISTIANITY

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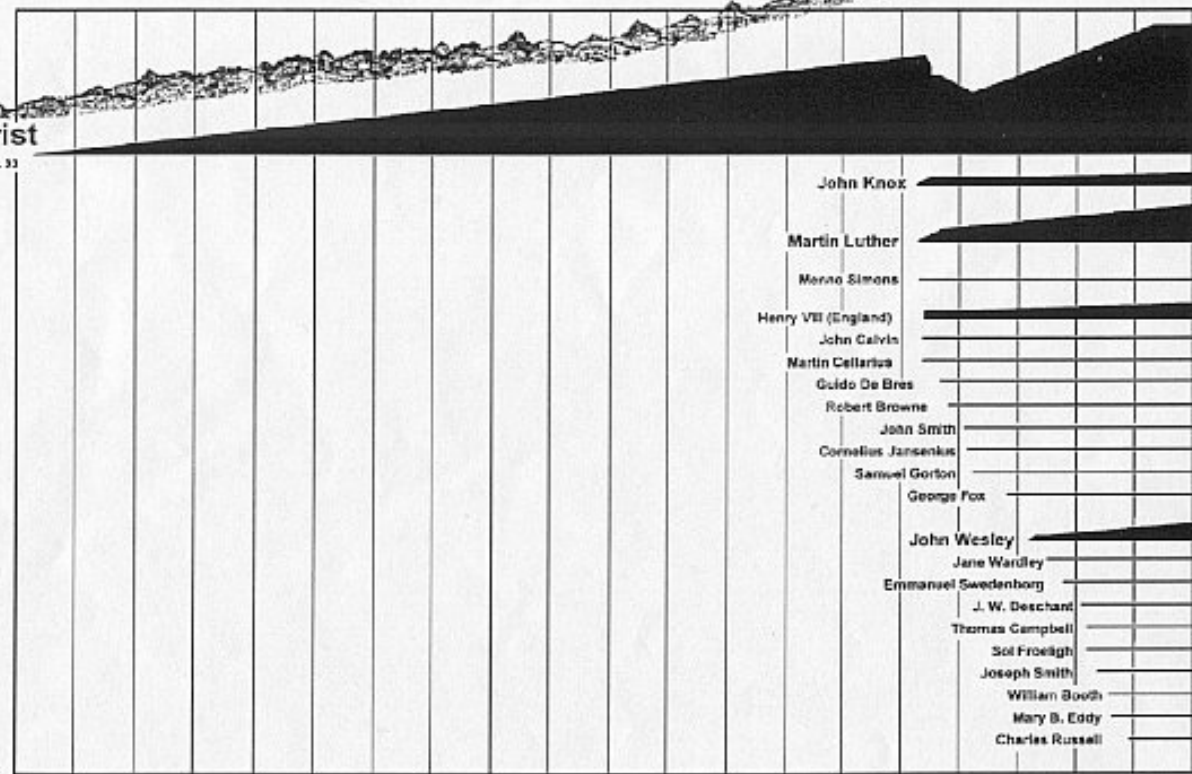


Christ

A.D. 33

Catholic Church

Nearly 2000 years ago, Jesus Christ established His visible Church on earth. For centuries, this Church remained united, fulfilling St Paul's words of "One Lord, one Faith, one baptism," and safeguarding Biblical teachings and Christian traditions. Beginning with the Protestant Reformation in the 1500s; however, Christianity suddenly and tragically split into numerous opposing sects. Protestors (later known as protestants) renounced the Catholic faith and broke away from the Church, establishing new churches with new laws and leaders. Many of these new sects in turn, divided into opposing factions as time went on. Presently, there are approximately 30,000 different Christian sects, who all believe different things. Yet there is still only one Roman Catholic church; still united in faith and belief after 2000 years. What makes the Catholic Church unique are the four "marks" or clear signs it bears. They are: 1) One; 2) Holy; 3) Catholic; and 4) Apostolic.



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ONE

The Catholic Church is ONE because all its members practice one faith, are in one communion, and are all under one visible head, the Pope, who stands in place of our invisible head, Jesus Christ (John 10:16). Whatever country you may live in, the same fundamental doctrines and beliefs govern your faith as a Catholic, uniting you in faith with all other Catholics throughout the world. In Catholic Churches worldwide one can hear, though in different languages, the same basic prayers (Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, etc), the same basic catechism, and most importantly, the same Holy Mass (the most important unifying prayer and action of the Church). Because all Catholic Bishops, priests, and lay people are united under one leader, the Pope, this unity is possible. Christ himself planned it this way, when He chose His twelve Apostles (the first priests and bishops of the church), and appointed Peter as their head.



HOLY

The Catholic Church is HOLY because it's founder, Jesus Christ, is holy; because it teaches His holy doctrine; and enables us to become holy (1 Peter 1:16). Jesus Christ, the invisible head of the Church, demonstrated His holiness in the pure and faultless doctrines He preached while on earth, and in the miracles and sinless actions He performed. As many people of His day pointed out, only God himself, could have performed such works. Jesus desired us to follow Him (Matt 5:48); however, and through the Church and the 7 sacraments He established, showed us the way. As the head governs the body, so Jesus governs His body, the Church; enabling us, through Him to become holy and inherit everlasting life (Romans 8:17). Each of the 7 sacraments and each of the Church's teachings brings holiness into our reach, as the multitude of Saints of the Catholic Church who have succeeded in becoming holy attests.



CATHOLIC

The Catholic Church is CATHOLIC (the word "catholic" signifies universal) in three ways; in time, because from the minute our Lord commissioned His Apostles down to the present, it has existed, instructed, and labored, bringing people to Christ. It is universal in place, because it is not confined to a particular country, but is rather for all people (Matt. 28:19), and in fact is found in far more countries than any other religion. It is universal in doctrine, for it presents the same teachings and sacraments everywhere, in whatever language, and to whatever class of people, from rich to poor. Furthermore, on the promise of Jesus, Himself, it will go on doing so, until the end of time.



APOSTOLIC

The Catholic Church is APOSTOLIC because it was founded by Christ on His apostles, and has always been governed by their successors. After Christ appointed His twelve apostles (Luke 6:14), as the first priests and bishops of the church, they in turn appointed other apostles (Acts 1:23), deacons (Acts 6:5), priests (1Tim 4:14; Titus 1:5), bishops (Phillipians 1:1), and disciples to guard and spread Christ's teachings. Pope John Paul II is the 264th bishop of Rome. St Peter being the first, and this position holds authority over all the other bishops of the world, just as Peter was chosen by Christ to be the leader of the apostles (Matt 16:18; John 21:15). The bishop of Rome is more commonly referred to as the "Pope", from the latin word paps, meaning "father".

