

Unit 5

God Works in the Church

The Days of Martyrs and the Fathers

17. The Church Is Persecuted

In the second and third centuries AD the Church suffered ten great persecutions in the Roman Empire. Church leaders, soldiers and influential women were especially targeted. God worked through the suffering of these martyrs to increase the number of Christians in the Empire.

18. The Church Is Freed

At the beginning of the fourth century a Roman prince, Constantino, has a vision promising victory under the sign of the cross. This leads to his victory, the end of persecution in the empire, and a new age marked by development of the liturgy and monasticism and the writings of great Fathers of the Church.

19. The Church in Council

Constantine the Great gathered what would be the first Ecumenical Council, Nicaea I. This Council begins composing the Nicene Creed and organizing the Church in the Empire. The Fathers of this Council and the six that followed are celebrated on three Sundays during the year. Constantine also establishes a new capital, Constantinople, as the "New Rome."

20. The Church Reaches Out

At peace in the Roman Empire, the Church began suffering persecution from the Persians and, with the rise of Islam, from the Muslim Arabs. The Church expanded to the north with the mission to the Slavs of Saints Cyril and Methodius and the conversion of Rus' under Saint Vladimir the Great.

AD 64 - 313	AD 313 - 4 07	AD 325 - 787	AD 310 - 988
Days of the Martyrs	Days of the Fathers	Days of the Council	Days of Outreach
Ignatius of Antioch	Basil the Great	The Pentarchy	Cyril and Methodius

Church History

The next two units present an overview of Church history, which brings the story of salvation down to our own time. This marks the first time this material has been presented in the God With Us Series and demands a somewhat different approach. Our "primary resource" for the first four units has been the Scripture. For the next two units we must look elsewhere.

There are a number of resources available to make this era come to life, but we must do some research ourselves. Most are written from a secular perspective and do not reflect an Eastern Christian point of view. The following areas are readily available:

- 1) **Books** - Consult your local library for children's books on the eras treated in units five and six, such as:

James A. Corrick, *The Byzantine Empire* (San Diego: Lucent Books, 1997)

Elsa Marston, *The Byzantine Empire* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2003)

Don Nardo, *The Byzantine Empire* (Farmington Hills, Mich: Blackbird Press, 2005)

Nancy Zinnser Walworth, *Constantine* (New York: Chelsea House, 1989)

Ask for an extended loan of these books from your library or obtain them through an internet bookseller then share them with the students.

- 2) **Video/DVD Programs** - The *Timeline Video Series* on the Crusades and the fall of Byzantium, directed at middle school students, are featured in **Lessons 21 and 22**. There are also several programs on the Byzantine Empire and the Crusades produced for Public Television, the History Channel, and the Discovery Channel which may also be available through your local library. Segments from these programs, produced for adult audiences, may also be useful although it may be more effective to replace the soundtracks with your own narration at least in part. You may also wish to let interested students borrow these programs for home use. Explore the following:

The Byzantine Empire (Schlessinger Media, Library Video Company) - A survey of the empire from the founding of Constantinople, the "new Rome," to its eventual fall to Ottoman armies. Catechists may wish to judiciously edit the section on the division of the Greek and Latin Churches. Part of the multi-volume *The Fall of Great Empires Video Series*. A Teacher's Guide for Grades 9-12 is included and is available online at www.libraryvideo.com. **Lessons 18-21**

Byzantium: From Splendor to Ruin (Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities, 1989) - This program covers the founding of Constantinople as a second Rome, its flowering when the Roman Empire in the West was shattered, its gradual decline under the impact of Normans, Turks, Venetians, and the Crusades, and finally, its fall in 1453. The program describes the history, art, and religious significance of Byzantium, its attempts to restore the Roman Empire, its influence in the West, and its heritage. **Lessons 18-21**

Byzantium, the Lost Empire (The Learning Channel, 1997 - VHS available through Amazon.com, now on 2 DVD's; see also Discovery Channel Online) - Historian John Romer goes into great detail on the major influences, events, and personalities that composed the 1,000 year history of the empire. He tours sites including Hagia Sophia and the treasury of St. Mark's in Venice to see antiquities never before filmed for television. Segments useful in **Lessons 18-21**.

Constantine the Christian Emperor (A&E Biography Series) - Traces his 20-year struggle to take control of the splintered Roman Empire, and restore it to its former glory through masterful diplomacy and the judicious use of force. Explores the dramatic story of his conversion, and the momentous changes in the Empire and the world that resulted. **Lesson 18**

Constantinople: Making of a World Capital (VHS, www.greeceinprint.com) - Historical and archaeological material view of the foundation of Constantinople and its gradual transformation into a universal capital through the eyes of a native son making a short film as a birthday present to his uncle Pericles, a retired classics teacher from Constantinople (Greek, available with English subtitles). **Lesson 18.**

The Crusades: Crescent and the Cross (The History Channel 2 DVD's) - Re-creations and computer graphics bring the battles to life along with commentary by historians and incorporating the original History Channel 4-part series on the first three Crusades. **Lesson 21.**

Genghis Khan: Rise of the Conqueror (Discovery Channel DVD) - Follow the rise to glory of Genghis Kahn, the 13th century Mongol leader whose empire covered four times the area conquered by Alexander the Great. Genghis brought his armies from the outermost reaches of eastern Asia to the edge of Europe, uniting the disparate Mongol tribes along the way and establishing an empire that would last until the 17th century. **Lesson 21.**

The Icon and its Era (VHS, www.greeceinprint.com) - An imaginary TV game show looks at the early history of iconography, highlighting the problems of the Age of Iconoclasm and the preparation, the technique and the stages by which an icon is painted nowadays (Greek, available with English subtitles). **Lesson 19**

3. ***Video Games*** - Keep on the lookout for games with historical themes such as:

The Byzantines by Elliot Chin (Microsoft's *GameSpot* video games) in its "Age of Empires" series for PlayStation 2 where, presumably, deft players can defend the Empire against all attackers.

Byzantine Mosaic - "Concentration" style memory game using icons and other Byzantine artifacts online at www.neobyzantine.org.

- 4) **Internet Sites** - There is a wealth of material on any of the topics in these lessons for students to research. A list of topics for Internet research (such as Byzantine, Constantine or Ecumenical Councils) is given at the end of each lesson.

Lesson 17 - The Church Is Persecuted

Objectives

By the end of this lesson the student should know that:

- Recognize that Christians were persecuted in the Roman Empire for atheism or treason because they would not worship the emperor or participate in the state religion.
- Understand that the persecution began with Nero in the days of the Apostles and continued until the early fourth century.
- Become familiar, through the writings of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, with the reasons why the martyrs endured their sufferings.

For the Catechist

Persecution of the Church began during its first days in Jerusalem, as Christ had foretold. "Not only will they expel you from the synagogues; a time will come when anyone who puts you to death will claim to be serving God" (John 16:2). As the Church spread among the Gentiles, it came to be perceived as a threat to civil society as well because it refused to render unto Caesar what belonged to God. The Church rejected participation in the Roman state religion, which the Romans saw as lack of patriotism. Romans saw the Christian rejection of their gods as atheism and persecuted the Church as a menace to the stability of their society for over 250 years.

While Rome was persecuting Christians, the Church was thriving in the Persian Empire. By the time Roman persecution had stopped, a renewal of Zoroastrianism in the Persian Empire turned the Persians against the Christians. After that it was the Arabs in the Middle East, the Turks, the Tatars and the Mongols in Asia who would fulfill Christ's words. In the twentieth century atheistic Communists and Nazis would label the Church as their enemy. To this day Christians suffer for their faith in Asia and Africa from totalitarian regimes or beliefs.

Christians in these situations are faced with momentous choices: to be faithful to Christ at any cost or to deny Him and live in safety. Choices must also be made in our society but in a more subtle way. We may be asked to choose between being "progressive" or "backward." Music, television, and films promote acceptance of secular value systems opposed to the Church's moral teachings. Attractive school or community activities are scheduled on Sunday mornings, forcing people to choose between participating in the life of their church or in these competing activities. Students should be helped to see that, as in the Roman Empire, Christians live in a "counterculture," the Kingdom of God, rather than in mainstream, secularized America. The changing face of our country may require believers to make even more choices than they do today.

Materials Needed:

Opening Prayer: Icon corner, student texts

Introduction: Bibles, easel or wall pad, markers,

Guided Reading: Bibles

Activity A: "Pinch of Incense" Worksheet, pencils

Activity B: "What Would You Do?" Worksheet

Activity C: Kingdom Tree Worksheet, craft items

Icons and Pictures:

Come Bless the Lord: St George (#33)

1. Opening Prayer

Pray the hymn on page 84 in the student text. Remind the students that the Church is portrayed here as more than a group of believers, but as the dwelling place of Christ.

2. Review

Review the main points of the previous lesson using the pages from your wall or easel pad. Use the time line on the Unit Page to recall that the age of the Apostles marks the beginning of the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a new movement in Salvation History.

Ask the students to list the four main aspects of the Church's life described in the Acts of the Apostles (*worship, study, sharing and fellowship*). Discuss how these are the most important aspects of life in your parish today.

3. Introduction

Beginning with your own experiences, talk about occasions when young people may be called sissies or cowards: perhaps they did not want to do something wrong proposed by their friends, or simply did not want to do something in which they were not interested, such as trying out for baseball when they preferred soccer. In either case students often suffer exclusion by making these kinds of choices.

Ask: - How did others treat you as a result of your choice? Did they make fun of you, threaten you, etc.?

- How did you react and how did you feel?
- Did you change your course of action as a result? Why? (Why not?)

Conclude by pointing out that in today's lesson we will see how early Christians were faced with some life-threatening choices: to follow Christ and die or to renounce Him and live.

Background Reading (The Cross of Blood):


"Soon after Christ's own death and resurrection, the image of the cross would take on another, starker side. Taking up of the cross ceased to be symbolic. With the onset of persecution the possibility of death for Christ and the Gospel became a distinct reality. The Acts of the Apostles records the stoning of Stephen and the planned persecution of Christians at Damascus, a plot ended with the conversion of Saul. King Herod had James, the brother of John, beheaded (Acts 12:2) and a few years later, Christians began migrating from Jerusalem to Pella, driven out by the Zealot party which had become dominant in Jerusalem.

"By the time of Nero, Christianity had spread to the largest centers of the Roman Empire. It was no longer identified simply as a sect of Judaism, but was seen as a distinct and dangerous movement. Perhaps the first sign of its impact was that identified by Christ Himself who warned, 'For I have come to set a man "against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's

(continued on next page)

4. Guided Reading, Pages 86-87

17 The Church Is Persecuted



As the first Christians spread from Jerusalem throughout the Middle East and into Europe, they met people of many different cultures and religions. Unlike the Jews, most of these people were polytheists, people who worshipped many gods and goddesses. This is why, when Saint Paul healed a crippled man in the city of Lystra, the people "... cried out in Lycaonian, 'The gods have come down to us in human form. They called Barnabas 'Jove' and Paul 'Hermes,' because he was the chief speaker" (Acts 14:11-12).

The Romans, for example, had hundreds of different gods, under their main gods, Jupiter and his wife, Juno. The entire collection of all their gods was called the Pantheon. The names of some of these gods survive as the names of our planets: Mercury (messenger of the gods), Mars (war), Venus (love and beauty), and Neptune (sea). Even emperors and important public figures from Rome's past were worshipped as part of the state religion.

In the religion of the Roman Empire, every family also had its own protecting spirits who were worshipped privately at home. People could worship as many gods as they wished, but they were still expected to take part in public worship as a patriotic duty. Christians refused to do this because they believed that there was only one true God. They especially refused to say that Caesar is Lord (god), meaning as we still do that only one is Lord, Jesus Christ. Because Christians would not worship the Roman gods, many people suspected them of atheism and even treason. It was said that Christians performed human sacrifices, because people had heard about the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. There were also rumors that the Christians were cannibals, because they were said to eat "body and blood." These rumors were started by people who had heard of the Eucharist but did not understand it.

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Before the reading, **summarize the objectives of the lesson** on a wall pad or easel pad so that the page can be preserved and used for review next week.

Indicate that in the last lesson we talked about how the first believers fled Jerusalem when the Apostle James was killed and how the Gospel spread further as a result. Rejected by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, it spread to and grew in the Roman Empire. Refer to the map on page 174 to show the extent of the Roman Empire.

Have the students silently **read the first three paragraphs** of the text, then ask:

- What is a polytheist? (*Someone who worships many gods.*)
- Why did the Christians refuse to worship the Roman gods? (*They believed that there was only one God.*)
- Why did some Romans accuse the Christians of atheism? (*They did not worship the Roman gods.*) Of treason? (*They would not worship the emperor or take part in official worship.*)
- What other things were Christians accused of? (*Human sacrifices, cannibalism*)

Background Reading (continued):

enemies will be those of his household" (Mt 10:35-36). A Christian convert in a traditional household of the day could not but expect trouble. A believing wife would have to challenge the patri potestas of the Roman father, his right to determine if a newborn infant would live or die. A Christian girl of noble rank who refused to marry an unbeliever of her father's choice and who sought to stay out all night at a secret meeting where slaves were considered as brethren, even presbyters and bishops, could not be tolerated. Christians were charged with 'tampering with domestic relations,' a serious charge in the organized society of upper class Rome. A confession such as that of Lucian of Antioch who said, 'I am a Christian and a Christian's only relatives are the saints' would convince authorities that these followers of Jesus were bent on undermining society. The reaction of a parent like the father of St Barbara, who gave his own daughter over to torture for disobeying him in maintaining her faith, seems so far fetched to us. Yet it begins to appear distinctly possible as we come to understand the culture of the times."

(continued on next page)

Nero Persecutes the Christians

In 54 Nero became Roman emperor. The next year he had his younger brother and possible rival poisoned. Devoting himself to horse racing, singing, acting, dancing, and sexual exploits, Nero became more and more hated by his people. He tried many times to assassinate his own mother and finally succeeded in 59.

In July, 64, a great fire broke out in Rome, burning for nine days and destroying much of the city. People believed that Nero had set the fire in order to build a new city named after himself. Since one of the few parts of the city untouched by the flames was known to be a center for Christians, Nero blamed them for the fire.

The Roman writer Tacitus, who was not a Christian, described what happened: "Nero-felicitously accused and executed with the most exquisite punishments those people called Christians. . . . Therefore, first those were seized who admitted their faith, and then, using the information they provided, a vast multitude were convicted, not so much for the crime of burning the city, but for hatred of the human race."

"Their death was viewed into a kind of sport they were killed by dogs by having the tails of beasts attached to their loins, or they were nailed to crosses, or set aflame, and when the daylight passed away, they were used as nocturnal targets. Nero gave his own gardens for this spectacle dressed as a charioteer mixing with the common people or dining about the race-course."

"Even though they were clearly guilty and merited being made the most extreme example of the consequences of crime, people began to pity these sufferers, because they were condemned not for the public good but on account of the jealousy of one man" (Tacitus' Annals). It was during this persecution that the Apostles Peter and Paul were martyred in Rome.

Within a few years the Roman army and senate turned against Nero. He was condemned to death in 68 but killed himself before he could be captured.

The Roman Persecutions

Nero was not alone in his persecution of Christians or in the cruelty of the tortures he devised. Over the next 250 years there were nine other major persecutions of Christians in Rome and other parts of the Roman Empire. Emperor Diocletian (284-311) made this persecution a universal policy throughout the empire. The last, most severe and cruel persecution took place under Emperor Theodosius (379-395), who ordered: "that the writings of the Christians should be abolished, churches be razed to the ground, that the scriptures be destroyed by fire, that those holding office be deprived and that of their household disposal of freedom, if they persisted in their profession of Christianity" (Bradford, Ecclesiastical History, written c. 1118).



Nero

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Have the students read the next sections, "Nero Persecutes the Christians" and "The Roman Persecutions" to see how misunderstanding led to persecution. After the reading discuss the following:

- What kind of a person was Nero?
- Why did he accuse the Christians of burning Rome? (*To draw suspicion away from himself.*)

Note that the kinds of cruel punishments described by Tacitus were not unusual for slaves or captives.

Have the students **reread Tacitus' explanation** of how people came to pity the Christians. Stress how their bravery made people think twice about what was happening. God worked through the martyrs' torments to bring others to Christ.

Point out some of the effects of persecution:

- Christians had to meet in secret.
- They could not have any buildings or property for their churches.
- Christians could not hold any public office.
- Their personal property and the belongings of the Church could be seized.
- They were liable to be imprisoned or executed.

Background Reading (continued):

"Christians came to be charged with other crimes: from atheism and treason (especially in the case of public servants who refused to offer sacrifices at military or civic functions), to immorality, cannibalism and incest (due to the closed nature of their gatherings). Those convicted in these increasingly high profile cases, as we might call them, could be exiled to a life of hard labor in the mines and quarries of islands like Sardinia and Patmos or could be put to death.

"Up to the second century the persecution of Christians was a fitfully carried out local affair depending on the concern of local authorities or the families of the accused. By the third century the spread of Churches throughout the empire caused Christianity to be seen as an empire-wide challenge. The Emperor Septimius Severus instituted the severest and most widespread persecution to date throughout North Africa, particularly in Alexandria (201-11) and the East. 'Mobs and family members as well as government officials and soldiers were dedicated to the eradication of Christianity through torture, rape, maiming, and exposure to infamy. The severity of persecution throughout the third century caused many to die, others to renounce their faith and, by the end of the century, still others to flee the cities for the desert. While some apparently went there to steel themselves for martyrdom, others like Paul of Thebes had fled to live an ascetic life in the wilderness, beginning what came to be known as 'white martyrdom,' the monastic life.'" (*ID* 133-135)

Saint Ignatius of Antioch

We do not know the names of all the Christians killed in the Roman persecutions. One whose story is known is Saint Ignatius, the second Bishop of Antioch, who lived from ca 30 to 107. He refused to obey the order of Emperor Trajan to worship the Roman gods and was accused of encouraging others to do the same. He was sentenced to death, and the authorities decided to have him taken to Rome and fed to wild beasts in the arena to make an example of him.

On the way from Syria to Rome, Ignatius passed through a number of cities where he encouraged the Christians he met to remain faithful to Christ. He also wrote letters to various Churches that assisted him in his last journey. In his letter to the Church at Rome he said, "I am God's wheat, ground fine by the teeth of death to be made pure bread for Christ."

Saint Ignatius felt that nothing was worth denying Christ. He wrote, "The early pleasures, no languages of the world can comfort me in any way. I prefer death as Christ Jesus is power over the fiercest lions of the earth. He who died in place of us in the one object of my quest. He who rose for our sakes in my one desire. The same for my birth is close at hand. I urge you, my brothers. Do not stand in the way of my birth to real life. . . My desire is to belong to God. Do not, then, send me back to the world. Do not try to tempt me with material things. Let me attain pure light. Only on my arrival there can I be fully a human being. Give me the privilege of witnessing the passion of my God."

Ignatius reached Rome on December 20, the last day of the winter festival, and was brought at once before the prefect. At the prefect's command, Ignatius was bound off to the Colosseum, where, we are told, two fierce lions were let out and Ignatius was killed at once. Christians took the more solid parts of his body that were left, wrapped them in linen and sent them to Antioch as a holy treasure.

The Church Continues to Grow

Roman officials thought they could eliminate the Christians through persecution. They felt that when people would see how Christians were persecuted, they would stay far away from their treacherous group. The opposite happened; people began to worship only Christians more.



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Point out that Church leaders (*bishops, priests and deacons*) were especially targeted in persecution. Ask the students why they think that may be so. Remind the students of Zechariah's saying, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be dispersed" quoted by Jesus (Mark 14:27), to help them answer the question.

Note that a *second group especially targeted was Christian soldiers*. They were sworn to obey their superiors, but some disobeyed when ordered to worship the Roman gods. Famous examples are the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (p. 91) and Saint George.

A *third group were the influential women* of the Christian community (p. 92). In traditional cultures men would not visit women in their homes; it was other women who encouraged the faith of women, especially if their husbands were not Christians.

Have the students read **the remainder of the text**. If desired, divide the group in three, each group reading about one of the targeted categories mentioned above and sharing what they learned with the class.

The Church Continues to Grow Pages 88-89


Note that the emperors and officials who killed the martyrs are all but forgotten, while we continue to honor the martyrs in the Church through

- a) *Feastdays* - Use the Church calendar to show upcoming feasts of martyrs celebrated in our Church.
- b) *Icons* - If possible bring the students to see icons of martyrs in your parish church and tell their stories.
- c) *Relics* - Describe the practice of honoring the relics of martyrs by placing them in the holy table, in the antimension, or in icons. Whenever possible, have the students see the way relics are kept in your parish church.

willing to endure all this suffering for Christ. More people joined the Church as a result. God worked in the age of persecution by using their witness to draw more people to the Church.

A famous example is the **Forty Martyrs of Sebaste** (March 9). These soldiers were tied up and thrown into a freezing lake to die unless they abandoned Christ. Four were let go to tempt the sufferers to deny Christ and live. One man renounced his faith and was pulled out but died anyway. One of the guards, impressed by what he saw in the other disciples, declared himself a Christian and was thrown into the lake with the others.

Years later Christians would speak of the blood of the martyrs as "water for the garden." The martyrs had made the Church grow by the witness of their suffering.



Saint Barbara

Women Martyrs of the Roman Persecution

Church leaders like Saint Ignatius of Antioch were often targeted in the persecutions. If they gave in, their congregations would join. Other influential Christians were the leading women (*deaconesses, widows, amatores*), who had great influence with other women and their children. They, too, suffered. Some well-known women martyrs are:

The Great Martyr Anastasia - A consecrated widow, known for her work with the poor, Anastasia was honored at death in Rome in 299 (feast day: December 22).	The Great Martyr Catherine - A noblewoman and well-known Sicilian in Alexandria, Catherine died under torture in 305 (feast day: November 24/25).
The Great Martyr Barbara - Discerned by her own father, Barbara was tortured and killed during the persecution of Emperor Maximian, c. ca 250 (feast day: December 4).	The Great Martyr Christina - Daughter of a Roman military officer, Christina was killed in Rome c. 220 for denying idols (feast day: July 24).

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Close by stressing that, while some Christians did go back on their baptismal promises, ultimately the Roman strategy of persecution did not work, as more and more people joined the Church. We believe that God was working in the midst of the tortures and killings to bring more people to see the truth of the Gospel and to believe in Christ.

5. Activity A ("A Simple Pinch of Incense")

Distribute the Activity A Worksheet and have the students read and complete it. Then divide the class into two groups, Have one group collate the reasons why Perpetua should offer sacrifice to the emperor, and have the second group collate the reasons why she should not. Then have one student sit on the floor to represent Perpetua and have one or two from each group try to persuade her of the right action, using the reasons each group has collected.

Conclude the activity by commenting on their arguments. Pay special attention to those who would justify lying to achieve a desired end (offering incense without believing in the Roman religion).

6. Activity B (What Would You Do?)

Distribute Worksheet B. Discuss the students' reactions to the graffiti and to people making fun of religion. Point out that this often happens when a religious group is a minority in any society. In addition to the questions on the worksheet, you might ask:

- Have you ever made fun of another religious group (Hindus, Jews, Muslims, etc.)?
- Is this any different than when people make fun of our beliefs?
- If you have done this in the past, what should you do about it?
- What difference do you see between respecting members of other religions and accepting what they believe as true?

Background Reading (Standing Firm in Our Calling):

"From apostolic times the Church has revered the martyrs, who witness to Christ even to the shedding of their blood. Beginning with the apostles and martyrs of the New Testament, martyrdom has been seen as the model of Christian witness. An important aspect to that witness is that martyrs stand firm in their commitment to Christ, even though all the forces of family and society may be ranged against them.

"As the Church became more secure in the Roman world, the chances of Christians witnessing to Christ through blood martyrdom began to diminish. More and more those men and women who felt the need to expend their lives in radical witness to Christ found their opportunity in the pursuit of virginity and asceticism. These people were attracted to what came to be called the monastic life. This life began to be seen as a kind of 'white' martyrdom: one lived out by standing firm in asceticism, as the martyrs had stood firm in their witness. Some ascetics, like the STYLITES, actually spent their lives standing in a circumscribed place, highlighting this connection with the determination of the martyrs. This commitment of the martyrs and ascetics to remain faithful, despite the spiritual forces ranged against them, served as the inspiration for generations of Christians living under oppression.

"Their witness takes on a new dimension in the modern world. Contemporary society has removed any social stigma from people who abandon their commitments. Couples divorce or clergy and religious return to the lay state with an ease that reflects our acceptance of change. We appreciate the idea of a mid-life crisis and expect that people will change their state in life as a result. Perhaps we need to look again at the witness of both 'red' and 'white' martyrdom, where standing firm despite physical or spiritual opposition brought victory" (LLIII 26).

7. Activity C (The Kingdom Tree)

Remind the students of Jesus' Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32) and the project of the Kingdom Tree. Have the students add a branch representing the Roman Persecutions and the Martyrs who suffered in it.

8. Time Line

Refer to the time line poster. Have the students brainstorm the names of people mentioned in this lesson (*Emperor Nero, SS Ignatius of Antioch, Anastasia, Barbara, Catherine, Christina, and the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste*) and indicate the period in which each lived, to illustrate the story of the Roman persecutions.

9. Summary

End the lesson by summarizing the lesson from the aims on page 254, from the elements in the student text on which you focused, and/or from any other points raised in the lesson.

10. Closing Prayer

Conclude with the reading of the kontakion on page 90 in the student text.

“A Simple Pinch of Incense”

The Holy Martyr Perpetua was killed in Carthage, North Africa, in the year AD 203. She was 22 years old, a wife and the mother of an infant son. She was still a catechumen when she was arrested, but was baptized before her trial. At her trial she was given the choice: offer incense to the Emperor Septimus or face the wild beasts in the arena. Her father tried to persuade her, "Perpetua, I beg you to offer the sacrifice. A simple pinch of incense won't mean anything!" But Perpetua would not, and she was sentenced to certain death.

What reasons do you think Perpetua's father had for telling her to offer the sacrifice? What reasons would Perpetua have for doing what she did? Write your ideas below.

1. Father: "Offer the Sacrifice" because _____

2. Father: Perpetua: "I cannot offer the Sacrifice" because _____

Perpetua and Felicity, her servant, died in the arena. The Church remembers them on February 1.

What Would You Do?



^From Lanciani's *Ancient Rome*

The graffito (a crude drawing scratched on a wall) was scratched on a stone in a guardroom on Palatine Hill in Rome in the first century AD. It was probably made by an ordinary Roman — a guard or a servant — to make fun of Christ and Christians. The caption reads, "*Alexamenos worships his god*" and shows a person praying to a man with an ass's head with his arms in the form of a cross.

1. What do you think this drawing is trying to say?
2. Tell about times you have heard people today making fun of God, Christ, or the Church?
3. What would you do if someone made fun of Christ or your belief?
4. What do you think Christ would think of your response?

The Kingdom Tree

Add a branch marked Roman Persecutions and list the martyrs mentioned in this lesson and the years in which they suffered.

