

## Slide Script



### 4.1A. The Foundations of the Medieval Church

What do you see in this picture? Where are these people? Which figure stands out? What is he doing? Who are the people on their knees? Describe the figures in the top half of the picture? What is different about them and how they are painted? Where might they be? Who might they be? What do you think the relationship is between the people assembled below and the figures above?

- In this slide we see a priest celebrating Mass, the worship service of the Roman Catholic Church.
- Jesus was condemned to death in Jerusalem in A.D. 33. Because some of Jesus' teachings ran counter to traditional Jewish teachings, a segment of the Jewish leaders of the time opposed him. Ultimately, those who objected to Jesus' teachings worked with Roman officials to put him to death on a cross, a type of corporal (bodily) punishment called crucifixion, which was common at the time. After Jesus' death in A.D. 33, the 11 apostles, or initial followers of Jesus, spread Christianity throughout the eastern Mediterranean world by traveling from town to town and teaching Jesus' ideas. Jesus was a teacher who used parables, or short stories with a moral, to explain his message. His message was that people needed to live moral lives, believing in one God and loving their neighbors as they loved themselves. Christians also believe that Jesus was a healer who performed miracles, such as giving sight to blind people and raising a man from the dead.
- Christians believe that Jesus did not leave many specific rules about what the apostles should teach about his message, so early Christian communities relied heavily on the leadership of a few individuals who had known Jesus when he was alive. One of these was St. Peter, whom Roman Catholics believe was entrusted by Jesus to be the leader of all Christians after Jesus died, because Jesus had said to him, "You are the rock upon which I build my church." St. Peter eventually introduced Christianity in the imperial capital of Rome, and converted many people to this new religion. Peter helped spread the message of Christ so successfully that by the year 800, Christianity was the predominant religion in every European land.
- Four other important early Christians wrote down their versions of the life of Jesus to be used as a text from which later Christians would be able to learn about Jesus' life. These four men—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—created the Gospels, or stories of Jesus' life, within 100 years of his death on the cross. These four books became the foundation of the New Testament. Combined with the Old Testament, these four Gospels, based on the life and teachings of Christ and his apostles, became the cornerstone of Christian

theology. Of the four Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, and John had been apostles of Jesus. Luke, though, gathered the material for his Gospel by traveling with and listening to the stories of St. Paul, another important early Christian leader. St. Paul's story is a testimony to the inspirational influence of the early Christian church. After the death of Jesus, St. Paul, then known as Saul, was in the business of hunting down and arresting Christians. Christian tradition holds that on the road to Damascus St. Paul was knocked off his donkey by a loud voice from heaven, which asked, "Saul, why are you persecuting me?" From that point on, St. Paul dedicated himself to spreading the word of Jesus.

- Early leaders of the Christian church such as St. Paul and the apostles were the precursors to priests. In this slide a priest is celebrating Mass, the service through which Roman Catholics as a community worship their god. The Mass is divided into two parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Liturgy of the Word includes praying and reflecting on passages of scripture. This slide depicts a priest leading the congregation in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, a recreation of the Last Supper, which was Jesus' last meal with his disciples. The Last Supper is celebrated by Christians because during the meal Jesus said that anyone who participates in a meal commemorating that last supper would live forever with him in heaven. The priest reenacts this final meal at the altar, the table where an offering of bread and wine is blessed before being eaten by the congregation.
- The celebration of the Eucharist, or communion, is one of the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic faith. Sacraments are formal rites that Christians believe bring grace to the people who participate in them. Grace is like a special blessing from God that protects a person and enables him or her to go to heaven after death. The seven sacraments are baptism, bestowed upon a child as a sign of admittance into the church; confirmation, the conferring the gift of the Holy Spirit upon adolescents (those becoming adult members of the church); Eucharist (the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion), the culmination of the mass, a memorial of Jesus' death and resurrection; reconciliation, a forgiveness by God for wrongs that a person sincerely regrets committing; marriage; ordination, becoming a priest; and last rites, or final anointing, or blessing, for the sick and dying.
- Over time the tradition developed that only a priest could administer the sacraments to Christians. This tradition was rooted in the belief that administering the sacraments was a holy rite that required specific training and preparation. Because people participated in the sacraments in all the stages of their lives, literally from birth until death, the church became very important in Europe in the Middle Ages. In fact, it became the central point of most peoples' lives.
- Christian belief was so widespread that the Middle Ages is also called the "Age of Faith." Each town had at least one church, and this building was not just the site of Mass and the rites of the seven sacraments. Town meetings, festivals, even markets and fairs were held in the shadows of the church's spires. People looked to the priests, as the agents of the