

Notes FOR THE EARLY CHRISTIANS AND EARLY CHURCH

(A way to introduce the next portion of the curriculum—the Early Christians)

We have been working with and coming to know Nonviolent Followers of Jesus throughout the entire 2000 years of Christianity. In this new timeline we are noticing the first three to four hundred years of Christianity—the time closest to Jesus—which includes that special time when Jesus and the apostles were on earth. We see the numbers at the top—100, 200, 300. We all know that there are 100 years in a century. (We notice that 100 years happens before we can even say ‘100 years’, so this would be called the first 100 years or the first century. A. D. 64 is in the first century, A. D. 164, even though it has the “1 hundred” in its name it is really part of the second century.) If necessary place a century marker to help remember.

Let’s notice the color of the timeline—yellow. Do you wonder why? Gospel Nonviolence is founded on the life and teaching of Jesus. And when did the world first hear about Jesus? At His Resurrection? At His birth? Over 700 years before Jesus was born the Prophet Isaiah announced, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a GREAT LIGHT.” Isaiah announced that a light would be coming that would put out the darkness and sadness that surrounded human beings. Jesus Christ, the Word, the Prince of Peace, the Savior, the Son of God, is that Light. The yellow reminds us of joy and deliverance—the light of Jesus Christ.

With this timeline we are going to stretch out those first 3-4 hundred years so that we can look closely at that time. We are going to think about how Christianity came to be, where it came to be and we’ll look at some of the Nonviolent Followers of Jesus during this time. We call this work Early Christians and the Early Church.

We set the context by talking about the Roman Empire. The Romans were the rulers of land where Jesus lived.

See www.pbs.org/empires/romans/series/transcript2.html

As a resource we have available the following translation of the Edict of Milan:

"When I, Constantine Augustus, as well as I, Licinius Augustus, fortunately met near Mediolanum (Milan), and were considering everything that pertained to the public welfare and security, we thought, among other things which we saw would be for the good of many, those regulations pertaining to the reverence of the Divinity ought certainly to be made first, so that we might grant to the Christians and others full authority to observe that religion which each preferred; whence any Divinity whatsoever in the seat of the heavens may be propitious and kindly disposed to us and all who are placed under our rule."

See FAHEY—PG 83-84

Ronald G. Musto *The Catholic Peace Tradition* Pg 46

"The empire put on the robes of Christianity and the protection of the Christian God as a means of preserving its rule, and the church began to borrow more and more of the trappings of the empire. (6) Christian bishops of the large cities and towns became increasingly involved in the civil lives of their congregations and in the administration of the empire as a whole. Their talents were recognized by the central government *de jure* as well as *de facto*. The early history of the Roman bishops, the popes, as imperial governors of the city is one example of this recognition. The bureaucratic manners of official Roman dress and ceremony and the Roman imperial diocese became the basis for the church's own organization. The Roman administrative building, the basilica, became the model Christian church, and the Roman *cursus honorum* of graduated steps of civic duties and posts became that of the church hierarchy. The empire as *oikumene* (7) became the model of the universal, or catholic, church. Because Rome had been the capital of the empire the bishop of Rome rose in power and gradually came to replace the Roman emperor in the West and to take on his attributes."

Other resources for this portion of the curriculum:

Clare, John D. (editor). (1993). *Living History: Classical Rome*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company. 64p. **ISBN:** 0152005137.

Hirsch, E. D., Jr. (editor). (2001). *What Your Third Grader Needs to Know*. New York: Doubleday. 366p. **ISBN:** 0385497199.

James, Simon. (1990). *Ancient Rome*. New York: Knopf. 62p. **ISBN:** 0679807411.

Solski, Ruth. (2006). Vitalli Bulakh (illustrator). *Ancient Rome*. Niagara Falls, New York: On the Mark Press. 96p. **ISBN:** 1550352504.