

The Catholic Reformation

Duration

One or two class sessions of approximately 40 minutes each

Resources

1. Teacher's Commentary



2. Student Handout



3. Study Guide: Topic 2.5



4. Multiple-Choice Homework



Objectives of Lesson

- To identify some of the continuities and changes in the role of the Catholic Church from 1450 to 1648
- To read a historical source with speaker, audience, and context in mind
- To practice the multiple-choice question format

College Board Objectives from the 2019–20 CED

- Topic 2.5—The Catholic Reformation (p. 67)
- Learning Objective 2.D: “Explain the continuities and changes in the role of the Catholic Church from 1450 to 1648.” (p. 67)

Student Activities

- Close reading of a historical source (either in class or for homework)
- Class discussion of continuities and changes in the role of the Catholic Church
- Practice for multiple-choice questions (Answer Key: 1. C, 2. D, 3. A)

How to Use This Lesson

This lesson is organized around a pair of texts that came out of the Catholic Reformation: St. Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* and St. Teresa de Ávila's *The Life of Teresa of Jesus*. These two texts were chosen because they represent two very different Catholic responses to the challenges posed by the Reformation.

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The Reformation challenged many of the core teachings of the Catholic Church, including ideas about how to reach salvation, how to form a religious community, and how to access spiritual texts.

The Catholic Church formulated a response in light of these challenges through the Council of Trent. While that council developed a cohesive approach for the Church as whole, there were deviations in interpretation throughout the Catholic world. By exploring the two highlighted documents side by side, students will be able to see that, while the Catholic Reformation revived the Church, it also cemented divisions.

We have provided a teacher commentary with historical background, teaching notes, and questions designed to facilitate discussion. The student version is also accompanied by a selection of images that help demonstrate the different approaches present in the text. You may find it helpful for your students to analyze the images either individually or in small groups.

You can conclude with a multiple-choice assignment to help students practice drawing conclusions about the continuities and changes in the role of the Catholic Church from 1450 to 1648. The included homework assignment includes additional perspectives on the topic.

Historical Context

During the Catholic Reformation, some Catholics chose to counteract the challenges of the Reformation by increasing their allegiance to the Catholic Church and its Pope. This approach is exemplified by Ignatius of Loyola, a Spanish Catholic priest who founded the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) in 1541. Under his leadership, the Jesuits vowed extreme obedience to the Roman Catholic pope and enforced strict discipline through a military-inspired religious hierarchy. The Jesuits stressed the principle "*preinde ac cadaver*" ("as if a dead body") in their early works to demonstrate that a Jesuit should be as well-disciplined as a corpse, although they later adopted the phrase "*ad maiorem dei gloriam*" ("for the greater glory of God") as their official motto. Loyola developed the *Spiritual Exercises* as a four-week course of study designed to help participants become stronger in their faith. It was initially designed for participants to complete during a 30-day ascetic retreat in silence and solitude. Famously, Loyola completed his own journey alone in a cave.

St. Teresa of Ávila was a Spanish Carmelite nun who demonstrated an interest in the more mystical aspects of Roman Catholicism from a young age. She regularly participated in self-mortification, which routinely caused her to become very ill and bedridden. During her illnesses, she experienced a series of visions, which she called "devotions of ecstasy" in which she was

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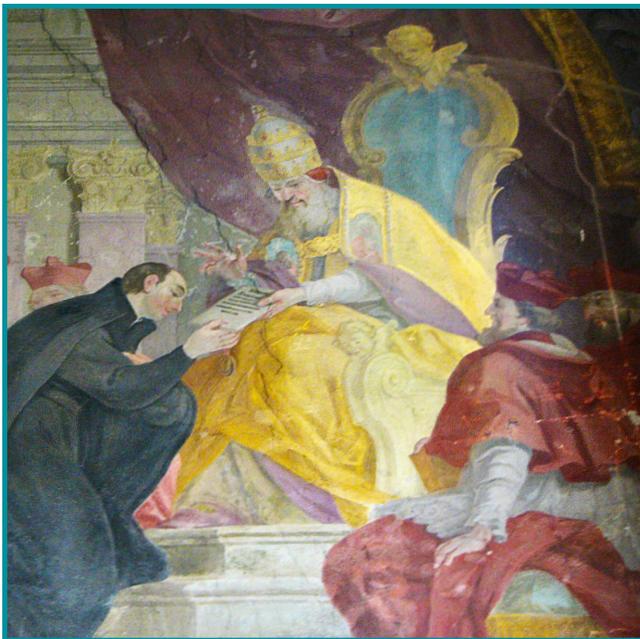
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in direct communion with God. After expressing some concerns that her visions might be demonic, she sought guidance from her local Jesuit religious leaders. They encouraged her to record her visions. The experiences recorded in *The Life of Teresa of Jesus* are some of the strongest examples of mystical thought that emerged from the Catholic Reformation. In them, St. Teresa of Ávila articulates a sense of one on one experience with God and angels that is passionately uncontrollable and completely distinct from the ritualized practices of the Roman Catholic mass and religious hierarchy.

At the heart of both these texts are questions about the Catholic Church and its followers. What is the role of the Church? What is the role of the Church hierarchy? Ritual? The Pope? Individual religious experience? These questions were prompted by the Reformation as well as internal attempts of reform within the Catholic Church itself. The various answers to these questions shown in these documents demonstrate how the Catholic Reformation revived the Church but also cemented divisions within Christianity.

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Fresco of Approving of bylaw of Society of Jesus by Johann Christoph Handke. Located in the Church of Our Lady of the Snow in Olomouc. This fresco depicts Ignatius of Loyola receiving bylaws for the Society of Jesus from Pope Paul III in 1540.



*The Ecstasy of Saint Theresa by Bernini. Located in the Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome. This statue illustrates one of the most famous scenes from Theresa of Ávila's *The Life of Teresa of Jesus*.*

The Catholic Reformation

Passage 1

Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, 1522–1524

“Let the following Rules be observed.

First Rule. The first: All judgment laid aside, we ought to have our mind ready and prompt to obey, in all, the true Spouse of Christ our Lord, which is our holy Mother the Church Hierarchical.

Second Rule. The second: To praise confession to a Priest, and the reception of the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar once in the year, and much more each month, and much better from week to week, with the conditions required and due...

Fifth Rule. The fifth: To praise vows of Religion, of obedience, of poverty, of chastity and of other perfections of supererogation. And it is to be noted that as the vow is about the things which approach to Evangelical perfection, a vow ought not to be made in the things which withdraw from it, such as to be a merchant, or to be married, etc.

Sixth Rule. To praise relics of the Saints, giving veneration to them and praying to the Saints; and to praise Stations, pilgrimages, Indulgences, pardons, Cruzadas, and candles lighted in the churches.

Seventh Rule. To praise Constitutions about fasts and abstinence, as of Lent, Ember Days, Vigils, Friday and Saturday; likewise penances, not only interior, but also exterior...

Commentary

① Religious orders, such as the Jesuits, are governed by a set of regulations developed by the founders that establish the practices of the order. These are called “Rules.” Some of the oldest Rules for religious orders, such as the Rule of St. Benedict, have been in place for over 1500 years.

② This may be a tricky section for students. You may find it helpful to share that it was very common for religious documents in the 16th century to refer to the Church as either the spouse of Christ or a mother. The language was intended to represent important ideas about how people were supposed to think about the Church using biblical metaphors.

You may find it helpful to lead a discussion exercise about what these metaphorical labels were intended to represent about the Church. What does it mean to say something is the “spouse of Christ”? A mother?

It might be useful to use this opportunity to discuss how those ideas of closeness, kinship, and guidance were challenged by the leaders of the Reformation.

③ Questions for Discussion

1. What would make these values important to religious life?

2. Do these vows address the challenges of the Reformation?

3. Why or why not?

④ Supererogation is probably a new word for students. This is a good opportunity to review some general strategies for how to handle unusual vocabulary in passages. Encourage students to try to discern the meaning from the passage without the vocabulary word by using context clues.

⑤ The veneration of the saints was a major point of contention in the Reformation because the reformers felt that the Roman Catholic practice came dangerously close to idol worship. The Council of Trent and the Society of Jesus, reaffirmed the Catholic Church’s commitment to the veneration of the saints through documents like this.

⑥ According to Catholic teachings, a penance is a voluntary self-punishment that is inflicted in order to abrogate a sin. Penance can be either public or private. This passage is paired with a selection from the works of St. Teresa of Ávila, who imposed very severe penances on herself because she felt she was deeply sinful. Her self-imposed penances often left her bedridden.

Thirteenth Rule. To be right in everything, we ought always to hold that the white which I see, is black, if the Hierarchical Church so decides it, believing that between Christ our Lord, the Bridegroom, and the Church, His Bride, there is the same Spirit which governs and directs us for the salvation of our souls. Because by the same Spirit and our Lord Who gave the ten Commandments, our holy Mother the Church is directed and governed.

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Fresco of Approving of bylaw of Society of Jesus by Johann Christoph Handke. Located in the Church of Our Lady of the Snow in Olomouc. This fresco depicts Ignatius of Loyola receiving bylaws for the Society of Jesus from Pope Paul III in 1540.

7 **Questions for Discussion**

This passage represents the fundamental principles of Ignatius of Loyola and the Society of Jesus. You may want to encourage students to spend some time working through it slowly. The discussion questions below are one way to start. If you prefer, you can also use this passage as the basis for a “quick write” assignment that asks students to describe how this approach represents a response to the Reformation.

1. Can you put this in your own words? What does it mean?
2. What is the role of the Church here? What is the role of the believer?
3. Why is the Hierarchical Church so important to Ignatius of Loyola?

Passage 2

Teresa of Ávila, *The Life of Teresa of Jesus*, 1567

“Our Lord was pleased that I should have at times a vision of this kind: I saw an angel close by me, on my left side, in bodily form. This I am not accustomed to see, unless very rarely. Though I have visions of angels frequently, yet I see them only by an intellectual vision, such as I have spoken of before. It was our Lord’s will that in this vision I should see the angel in this wise. He was not large, but small of stature, and most beautiful—his face burning, as if he were one of the highest angels, who seem to be all of fire: they must be those whom we call cherubim. Their names they never tell me; but I see very well that there is in heaven so great a difference between one angel and another, and between these and the others, that I cannot explain it.

I saw in his hand a long spear of gold, and at the iron’s point there seemed to be a little fire. He appeared to me to be thrusting it at times into my heart, and to pierce my very entrails; when he drew it out, he seemed to draw them out also, and to leave me all on fire with a great love of God. The pain was so great, that it made me moan; and yet so surpassing was the sweetness of this excessive pain, that I could not wish to be rid of it. The soul is satisfied now with nothing less than God. The pain is not bodily, but spiritual; though the body has its share in it, even a large one.

Commentary

① Teresa of Ávila takes care throughout her autobiography to emphasize that her visions were given to her by God and that she was an involuntary recipient. This point is worth exploring in some depth with students so that they can better practice AP Historical Thinking Skill 4: Contextualization.

She records her visions at the same time that the Inquisition was occurring throughout Europe. Through this process, the Roman Catholic Church sought out supposed heretics and subjected them to painful punishments, torture, and execution. Teresa of Ávila’s own grandfather had been condemned by the Inquisition. Many of the Inquisition victims were women accused of heresy and witchcraft. One of the most common accusations levied against these women was that they had received demonic visions that granted them supernatural powers. Given this historical context, Teresa of Ávila was rightfully scared that her autobiography could make her a target.

As a discussion activity, you could have students explore how the factors of race, class, and gender affected Teresa of Ávila’s life. You can choose to make this exercise a comparison between Teresa of Ávila and Ignatius of Loyola. This exercise would help students develop an understanding of point of view and perspective.

② During the sixteenth century, theologians spent considerable time and energy classifying different types of angels in a field of study called “angelology.” The identification of the angel in the vision as a “cherubim” demonstrates that Teresa of Ávila was up-to-date on the most recent Church scholarship.

③ Questions for Discussion

1. The language used here is violent and invasive. What kind of a relationship between Teresa of Ávila and the Divine does it suggest?
2. How is this different than Ignatius of Loyola’s approach?
3. What is the significance of those differences?

It is a caressing of love so sweet which now takes place between the soul and God, that I pray God of His goodness to make him experience it who may think that I am lying. 4

During the days that this lasted, I went about as if beside myself. I wished to see, or speak with, no one, but only to cherish my pain, which was to me a greater bliss than all created things could give me.

I was in this state from time to time, whenever it was our Lord's pleasure to throw me into those deep trances, which I could not prevent even when I was in the company of others, and which, to my deep vexation, came to be publicly known. 5 Since then, I do not feel that pain so much, but only that which I spoke of before,—I do not remember the chapter,—which is in many ways very different from it, and of greater worth. On the other hand, when this pain, of which I am now speaking, begins, our Lord seems to lay hold of the soul, and to throw it into a trance, so that there is no time for me to have any sense of pain or suffering, because fruition ensues at once. May He be blessed for ever, who hath bestowed such great graces on one who has responded so ill to blessings so great!”



The Ecstasy of Saint Theresa by Bernini. Located in the Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome. This statue illustrates one of the most famous scenes from Theresa of Ávila's The Life of Teresa of Jesus.

4 Questions for Discussion

One of the major points of debate in the Reformation was the role of intercessory figures between a believer and God. The Catholic Church has traditionally taught that priests, saints, and holy figures such as the Virgin Mary can provide an intercessory role. The reformers argued that no intercessors were necessary because all people participated in a “priesthood of all believers” that allowed people to commune directly with God.

During the Catholic Reformation, the Council of Trent reasserted the Catholic belief in intercession in response to Reformation challenges. At the same time, however, they allowed for one-on-one relationships with God through mystical experiences such as this one.

The differences between the direct communion between the “soul and God” in this passage and the strict emphasis on hierarchical authority in The Spiritual Exercises represent how the Catholic Reformation both revived the church but also led to divisions.

1. What is the relationship between a person and God here?
2. How is this similar to the ideas of the Reformation?
3. How is it different?

- 5 Teresa of Ávila became a quasi-celebrity as a result of her visions. Throughout her autobiography she expresses frustration with her growing notoriety, but her public profile as a devout Catholic woman probably provided a layer of protection from the Inquisition.

The Catholic Reformation

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Topic 2.5: The Catholic Reformation



OVERVIEW

Also known as the Counter-Reformation, the Catholic Reformation describes the Catholic Church's response to Protestantism and its own reforms to reduce corruption and to revive spirituality among the Catholic faithful. The establishment of the Jesuit Order, the Council of Trent, and the spiritual writings of Teresa of Avila contributed to a revival of Catholicism in Europe.

WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?

It took some decades after Martin Luther's 95 Theses for the Catholic Church to make a focused effort to respond to the Reformation. The Counter-Reformation peaked between 1540 and 1580. During this period, the Council of Trent met, the Jesuit Order was established, and Teresa of Avila initiated monastic reforms.

KEY TERMS

Jesuit Order

Officially known as the Society of Jesus, this Catholic religious order was established by Ignatius of Loyola in order to oppose Protestantism through education and spiritual warfare.

Council of Trent

This council of Catholic bishops met between 1545 and 1563 to determine the Catholic Church's response to Protestantism.

Anathema

These Edicts from the Council of Trent cursed heretics and denounced Protestant doctrines.

Index of Prohibited Books

Books that were placed on this list were deemed heretical by the Catholic Church and were forbidden to be read by Catholics.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

The Council of Trent resulted in **continuity** because...

The Council represented an **affirmation** of Catholic doctrine, reaffirming the primacy of the pope and traditional Catholic beliefs about the role of faith and good works in attaining salvation.

The Council of Trent resulted in **change** because...

The Council represented a **reformation** of Church practices, creating new religious orders, establishing seminaries to train and educate priests, and banning the sale of indulgences.

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IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

Ignatius of Loyola was born in Spain in 1491 and came of age during the Reformation. Having grown up reading stories about knights, he decided on a military career, which was successful until his right leg was shattered by a cannonball. While he was recovering, Ignatius read religious texts in the hospital and experienced a conversion. He went on a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where he left his sword and dagger on an altar to the Virgin Mary, pledging himself to serve Christ and the Church.

In 1539, Ignatius of Loyola founded the Jesuit Order with his friend, Francis Xavier. The Jesuit Order was dedicated to serving the Pope, combatting Protestantism through education and spiritual warfare, and the observation of strict spiritual practices. Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, a book of his personal meditations and prayers, has become a classic of Catholic spirituality.

While Ignatius of Loyola was founding a new religious order, **Teresa of Avila** was reforming the existing Carmelite Order. During the Late Middle Ages, monastic discipline had become lax. Teresa of Avila restored monastic discipline and became revered as a mystic and spiritualist.

BAROQUE ART AND THE CATHOLIC REFORMATION

Baroque art, with its grandiose style and emphasis on capturing dramatic moments, was used by the Catholic Church to promote the goals of the Counter-Reformation. The Ecstasy of St. Teresa, a famous sculpture by **Bernini**, captures a moment in which St. Teresa is emotionally overwhelmed by her spiritual union with Jesus Christ. This sculpture promoted the spiritual benefits of the monastic life and religious orders, which had been abolished by Protestants. Many of **Caravaggio's** paintings dramatically depicted biblical scenes, such as Jesus being crowned with thorns.



St Ignatius of Loyola, Founder of the Jesuits



Bernini's Ecstasy of St. Teresa, from the collection of Alvesgaspar.

The Catholic Reformation

Questions 1–3 refer to the passage below.

“Since it is clear from experience that if the Sacred Books are permitted everywhere and without discrimination in the vernacular, there will by reason of the boldness of men arise therefrom more harm than good, the matter is in this respect left to the judgment of the bishop or inquisitor, who may with the advice of the pastor or confessor permit the reading of the Sacred Books translated into the vernacular by Catholic authors to those who they know will derive from such reading no harm but rather an increase of faith and piety, which permission they must have in writing. Those, however, who presume to read or possess them without such permission may not receive absolution from their sins till they have handed them over to the ordinary. Bookdealers who sell or in any other way supply Bibles written in the vernacular to anyone who has not this permission, shall lose the price of the books, which is to be applied by the bishop to pious purposes, and in keeping with the nature of the crime they shall be subject to other penalties which are left to the judgment of the same bishop. Regulars who have not the permission of their superiors may not read or purchase them.”

Council of Trent, *Rules on Prohibited Books*, 1564

1. Which of the following Reformation practices was the policy described in the passage designed to eliminate?
 - (A) The expansion of religious pluralism in some states to maintain the peace
 - (B) The beginnings of widespread conflicts between European monarchs and nobility
 - (C) The widespread dissemination of translated religious texts through the printing press
 - (D) The refusal of some reformers to recognize the subordination of the church to the secular state
2. The decisions issued by the Council of Trent contributed to which of the following results in Europe over the next century?
 - (A) The establishment of collaborative ecumenical councils between Catholics and Protestants
 - (B) The widespread rejection of Protestant beliefs and practices by European monarchs
 - (C) An almost universal abandonment of Catholic practices targeted by the Reformation, such as the veneration of the saints
 - (D) A revival of Catholic belief expressed in literature, art, and theological treatises
3. Based on the passage and the historical context in which it was published, which of the following would most likely have challenged the author’s authority?
 - (A) Radical religious groups, such as the Anabaptists
 - (B) Catholic functionaries, such as those leading the Inquisition
 - (C) Christian mystics, such as Teresa of Ávila
 - (D) Members of religious orders, such as the Society of Jesus