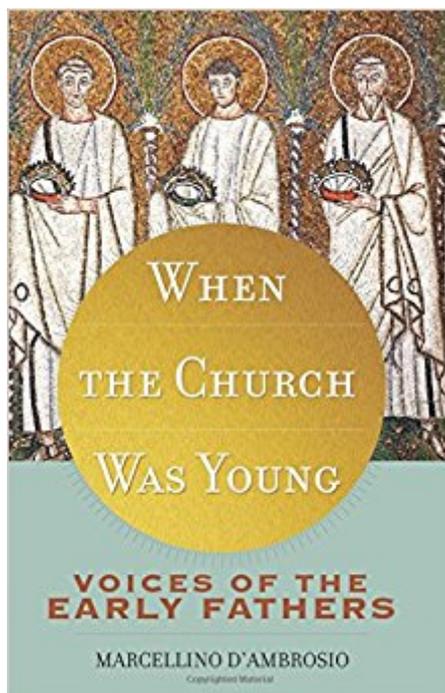


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# When The Church Was Young: Voices Of The Early Fathers



## Synopsis

If the word trinity isn't in Scripture, why is it such an important part of our faith? And if the Bible can be interpreted in many ways, how do we know what to make of it? And who decided what should be in the Bible anyway? The Church Fathers provide the answers. These brilliant, embattled, and sometimes eccentric men defined the biblical canon, hammered out the Creed, and gave us our understanding of sacraments and salvation. It is they who preserved for us the rich legacy of the early Church. Marcellino D'Ambrosio dusts off the dry theology and brings you the exciting stories and great heroes such as Ambrose, Augustine, Basil, Athanasius, Chrysostom, and Jerome. This page-turner will inspire and challenge you with the lives and insights of these seminal teachers from when the Church was young.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio has accomplished the rare feat of combining a scholarship with readability. Christians of all traditions can trace their faith to these pioneers; their story is our story." — Professor David Alton, House of Lords "Gripping, compelling, and fast-moving." — Sarah Reinhard

Marcellino D'Ambrosio is a world-renowned commentator on religious issues. With a Ph.D. in theology (under Cardinal Avery Dulles), nine years of university teaching, and hundreds of published articles, Marcellino has a wealth of knowledge and knows how to make it accessible for a wide variety of audiences. As "Dr. Italy," Marcellino D'Ambrosio has a popular

website, Facebook page, and Twitter feed and appears weekly on a variety of Catholic TV and radio networks. He is the coauthor of the million-copy bestseller *The Guide to the Passion*.

Wonderful book for anyone interested in a first look at the Church Fathers or Early Christianity. D'Ambrosio does not seek to give full biographies or full catalog of early documents. Instead this book makes these great men and women real people with families and sins and problems and describes the times they lived in. Some lengthy quotes are included in other places only snippets as the case required to demonstrate the faith and teachings of these people. For example, St Augustine sounds like it is worth reading despite my memories of hating reading it in a literature class. Here the man is explained making the writing have context that is enriching instead of dry. The Early Fathers are of course Catholic as is the author, but I believe Orthodox and Protestant readers would benefit from this glimpse into the minds of the Early Fathers in their quest for true Church and being like the apostles. Big T Tradition takes us back to those who learned at the knee of Jesus and it is instructive for Catholics and non to see this rich history in an approachable and readable book.

"History shouldn't be boring. History is basically story-telling. Stories shouldn't be boring, especially if we're telling stories about our family..." This was how Dr. D'Ambrosio began his talk many years ago when I attended a lecture he gave on Early Church Fathers. Over the next hour, he regaled us with stories of our Catholic family, and anecdotes about our forefathers in faith. He told us about some of the early martyrs, but the stories which really stuck with me were those concerning the rather colourful lives of St. Ambrose and his protege, St. Augustine. Up until that point, I had no idea that so much passion and drama could be hidden behind the images of those old, bearded men which I saw in stained glass each Sunday. It was with great excitement, therefore, that I pre-ordered Dr. D'Ambrosio's new book, *"When The Church Was Young"*...I was not disappointed. In short, Dr. D'Ambrosio has produced my new favourite introductory volume to the Church Fathers. While quite a lot of Patristics books can be rather dry, the style of this book is easy and relaxed, which meant that I got through the entire book in just a few days. There are several things which I think are uniquely achieved in this book. The first thing which is worth commending is the way in which the author manages to connect the stories of each Early Church Father into an overarching narrative. This is extremely helpful in keeping the chronology and flow of events clear in one's head. The next thing is that, although I would say that this is an introductory book, it is absolutely packed with little nuggets of information I hadn't come across before. In fact, every time I found one of these gems, I put a little post-it on the page and the book is now littered with these slips of paper. The final thing

about this book which sets it apart from others is in the area of what you might call "application". At the end of each chapter, Dr. D'Ambrosio connects the events, issues and themes discussed in that chapter to both contemporary secular society and to today's Church. In these sections, he shows how the lessons learned in the early centuries can be applied to today's world and how the wisdom of the Fathers is the sage advice we need to hear as we attempt to remedy contemporary dilemmas and struggles. Upon completing this book I immediately purchased two more copies, certain that I would quickly find homes for them. No sooner had they arrived, I had put them into the hands of friends, enthusiastic to read them after hearing my glowing reports on Facebook. All in all, I loved this book. It's an excellent introductory guide to the Fathers which is never-the-less jammed full of valuable material presented in an accessible fashion. Dr. D'Ambrosio is right, history shouldn't be boring, and neither is this book, thanks to his excellent retelling of our family story.

The author (and voice) make the church fathers come alive! They're amazing, way more amazing than I could have imagined. An exceptional summary of the work and quotes of a swath early church fathers ranging from Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Origen, Justin, Basil, Jerome, Gregory, and etc. It's fascinating to read about the history of things like the Nicene Creed, the persecutions, the great martyrs, their great faith, how they worshipped, the viewpoints of heretical theology and how they got big and then collapsed, and finding out where our various theologies (like the Trinity) and traditions originated from. Even though the author (a PhD) establishes in his preface that he is speaking to the universal church including Protestants and Orthodox Christians, as an evangelical, I notice the book has slight Catholic bent. I don't mind though, because the scholarship is so good. But it also would be nice to read about these church fathers from a truly universally Christian perspective, hence 4/5. He deliberately chose topics that are close to Catholics yet not much on say, missions.

This book is captivating. It gives you bits and pieces of the earliest Christian leaders' teachings and writings but is more of a history of the early Church. It's fascinating to think of what happened after Jesus ascended into heaven leaving the apostles with the task to "make disciples of all nations". What happens from there is in this book. It's really hard to put this one down. Wonderful book!

This is such a well written book for the average layman who wants to learn more about the people that formed The Church, and the evolution of how things have come about. It is so easy to understand and flows very well. All the names you have heard from the Liturgy at Church, in the

Eucharistic Prayers, this makes one understand how much meaning is in all of that. If you want to develop a more spiritual relationship with God and His Church, this book will certainly do that for you. It also reveals ancient customs and practices that were initiated back then and still are carried through to today but not practiced like we should. To understand the Early Fathers of the Church is to help make The Church become alive to one in today's time. I highly recommend this book to anyone searching for a deeper insight into their faith relationship with God and His Church.

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