

# His-Story

Church history and why it matters to me

## THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES PART II AD 1000-1299

### I. Introduction: Let's make a movie!

The high middle ages are ripe with ideas for movies. Some movies and docu-series around this period include: *Braveheart* (William Wallace), *Genghis Khan* (1162-1227), *King Arthur/Merlin* (many movies), *The Last Kingdom* (BBC), *Richard Lionheart* and *Robin Hood* (many movies), *Beowolf*, *Aladdin*, etc.



### II. Meanwhile in...

#### A. North, Central, and South America

1. Chaco Canyon culture established in modern day New Mexico
2. Navajo Indians migrate to what is now southwest USA
3. Aztecs settle in Mexico
4. Inca tribes settle in Cuzco (Peru) and advocate the worship of one supreme creator God named Viracocha

#### B. England and Scandinavia

1. Scandinavia converted to Christianity
2. House of Normandy established
3. Tower of London built
4. Cambridge and Oxford founded

5. Intermittent war between England and France

#### C. Europe

1. Many great cathedrals built
2. The Gothic period
3. Development of the fire place and chimney
4. The building of a mechanical clock
5. The Crusades

#### D. In the church

1. Bernard of Clairvaux (born 1093)
2. Francis of Assisi (born 1181)
3. Thomas Aquinas (born 1224)

### III. The Golden Age of Medieval Christianity

#### A. Monastic Orders (The Mendicants)

- Rapid growth in cities, trade, and the economy created an ever widening chasm between the rich and the poor. Monasticism, which, up until this point, was mostly Benedictine, sought to adapt and make an impact on the changing culture.
- *Thus, it is not surprising that monasticism, which, through the ages has shown its enormous adaptability, would take new shapes that both questioned the mores of the monetary economy and responded to the needs of a population on the move. These were the "mendicants" — meaning those who lived by begging. (Justo González. The Story of Christianity, Vol. 1. page 302).*

#### 1. Peter Waldo & the Waldensians (1140 ff)

- a. A merchant from Lyons (France)
- b. Was moved to devote himself to a life of poverty and preaching
- c. Gathered a following
- d. The local archbishop forbade them to practice their new order
- e. The Waldensians appealed to the Pope in Rome
- f. The theologians who heard their case ended up treating them with scorn and ridiculed them for their theological ignorance
- g. Abuse and persecution caused the Waldensians to resettle in the remote valleys of the Swiss Alps
- h. (There they existed until the time of the Reformation where descendants of the order embraced Reformed Theology and joined the Protestant cause)

### Notes

i. (Most of this order joined the Methodist or Presbyterian churches, but there are still some practicing Waldensians today).

2. Saint Francis of Assisi & the Franciscans

a. Early years

- Born in 1182 in central Italy; given name was Giovanni
- Francis loved the songs of the French troubadours, so his friends nicknamed him “Francesco” (little Frenchman)
- Family was wealthy and in the merchant class

b. Had a deep religious experience that caused him to commit to a life of poverty

- Known for his extreme happiness
- Story told of one of his friends asking about his happiness
  - “Why are you so happy?” they asked him.
  - “Because I have married,” replied Francis.
  - “Whom have you married?” they inquired.
  - “Lady Poverty!” was his reply.
- Loved to give away what he had
  - § Whenever he was given money he passed it onto the poor
  - § He dressed in rags and loved to be out-doors
    - Once, as he hiked through Italy’s Spoleto Valley, he came upon a flock of birds. When they didn’t fly away, he decided to preach them a little sermon: “My brother and sister birds... you should praise your Creator and always love him. He gave you feathers for clothes, wings to fly, and all other things you need. It is God who made your home in thin, pure air. Without sowing or reaping, you receive God’s guidance and protection.” The flock, it is said, then flew off rejoicing. That perspective is reflected in a hymn Francis composed just before his death in 1225, called, “Cantico di fratre sole” — “Song of Brother Sun.” It exhorts all creation to worship God. The sun and moon. All the birds. All the clouds. Wind and fire. All men of tender heart. All creatures of our God and King (Robert J. Morgan, *Then Sings my Soul*).*
  - § Francis loved to spend time rebuilding an abandoned chapel near his home in Assisi (DIY in the high middle ages! Today they’d probably make a TV show about it)
- When his parents gave him money, he would just give it away to the poor
  - § His father, exasperated with Francis, locked him in the family cellar and appealed to the church to help
  - § The local bishop instructed Francis’ parents that if Francis would not choose to use his parent’s money wisely, then he should give it up for good.
  - § Francis happily relinquished his inheritance, gave his ragged clothes to his father, and walked off into the woods naked.
- In 1209 (Francis was 27) he heard a reading from the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus sent his disciples out to preach the gospel, taking with them no silver or gold.
  - § Until this point in his life Francis was concerned mostly with poverty and giving to the poor. Now he found joy in preaching the Gospel (without abandoning his principles of poverty).
  - § Moved to large cities where he preached and helped the poor and the sick.
  - § Developed a small following
  - § The Franciscans went to Rome to have papal approval for their new monastic order; Pope Innocent III tested Francis’ motives and theology, and ended up granting them papal approval.

§ Francis and company returned to Assisi where they established the “Order of the Lesser Brothers” (or Friars Minor). They owned absolutely nothing.

- A sister order was founded for women by Saint Claire under the same order as the Franciscans
- “Franciscan preaching, singing, and begging became a common sight throughout western Europe.” (Justo González. *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 1. page 304).

### 3. Saint Dominic & the Dominicans

- a. Born to an aristocratic family in Caleruega, Castile (Spain)
- b. Studied over 10 years in Palencia and was then named canon of the cathedral of Osma
- c. Followed the monastic rules of Saint Augustine
- d. Encouraged study and preaching against heresy
- e. *From its very beginnings, the Order of Preachers—for such was the official name of the Dominicans—emphasized study. In this Dominic differed from St. Francis, who did not wish his friars to have even a Psalter, and who was suspicious of study. The Dominicans, in their task of refuting heresy, must be well armed intellectually, and for that reason their recruits received solid intellectual training. They soon gave to the church some of its most distinguished theologians...* (Justo González. *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 1. page 305).

### B. The Papacy

1. Tension all around: papacy, emperor, people (who’s got what power over who?)
  - a. Several cities in the empire rebelled and made themselves republics
  - b. People of Rome rebelled and made themselves a republic, vowing submission to the pope only in matters of ecclesiology (church and spiritual related matter)
  - c. Tension between the pope and the emperor until Frederick Barbarossa (1152-1190) became emperor; Barbarossa established peace with the papacy and brought some stability
  - d. When Frederick died (in the third Crusade), the cardinals elected a new pope: Lotario dé Conti di Segni (age 37) who took the name Innocent III; he became the more powerful pope in the history of Christianity
2. Innocent III
  - a. Innocent III claimed the pope has the authority to declare who the emperor should be (since political rule was not determined by heredity)
  - b. Innocent III was not afraid to intervene in the lives of kings and hold them accountable (especially in their marriages) and was not afraid to excommunicate them.
3. After Innocent III, the papacy continued to gain power
4. The sacraments were developed and named as: baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, extreme unction, ordination, and matrimony

## Notes

### Pope Innocent III

Harry Rosenberg

The medieval papacy attained the peak of its authority and influence under Innocent, who was pope 1198-1216. He had a unique ability to apply abstract concepts to concrete situations. His aristocratic background together with his outstanding personal abilities, sharpened by a precise training in canon and civil law as well as theology, fitted him to become a cardinal. In papal service he demonstrated unusual skill in dealing with the enormous variety of religious and secular problems which arose.

Innocent’s diplomatic skills enabled him to wield papal authority to a remarkable degree throughout Christendom, although not always with the success he desired. He successfully upheld papal political power in Italy when it was gravely threatened by the union of the kingdom of Sicily with the German Empire. But Pope Innocent was unable to rescue King John from his rebellious English barons.

Because he believed the pope had unique authority as the ‘Vicar of Christ’ and as the successor of Peter, Innocent claimed the right to set aside any human actions since these were contaminated by sin and therefore came within his competence. Consequently he decreed an election for the German kingship null and void because, while one candidate had the majority of the votes, Innocent’s candidate had the ‘saner’ votes.

The Fourth Lateran Council, called by Innocent in 1215, was the fitting climax to his career. This general council symbolized the mastery of the papacy over every feature of Latin Christendom (and seemingly over Greek Christendom, since the fourth Crusade had resulted in a Latin Empire of Constantinople). Innocent’s council confirmed the shameful isolation of Jews from society at large, requiring among other things that they wear a special badge. Sadly the Jews were increasingly confined to living in ghettos.

From: *Eerdmans’ Handbook to the History of Christianity*. ©1977. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.



C. **Architecture:** Medieval churches had two purposes

1. Didactic (for teaching)
  - a. Books were not common, and most people were illiterate
  - b. The churches became places of learning and of hearing the Bible read and explained
  - c. Elaborate art—art that tells a story—was intricately included into cathedrals
2. For worship
  - a. The Eucharist (Communion) was central and was considered miraculous (the transformation of bread and wine into Christ's body and blood)
  - b. A church building had to be worthy of such a happening
3. Architecture influenced by the cross
  - a. Early basilicas were T-shaped
  - b. Later Romanesque churches reflected more the Latin cross
  - c. Towards the middle of the 12th Century, Gothic architecture became popular

**Notes**

IV. **Why this segment of history matters (or *should matter*) to me**

- A. How does this lesson enhance your knowledge of God?
- B. In what new ways are you challenged in your own walk with Christ?



*The contrast between Romanesque and Gothic architectural styles was marked. Above: Southwell Cathedral, England (Romanesque). Below: Cathedral of Notre Dame, Chartres, France (Gothic).*

Image taken from: Justo González. *The Story of Christianity, Vol. 1.*