

The Medieval Church



In Medieval Europe, the Catholic Church was the dominant spiritual influence; the only entity that spanned the continent and was found in every social and political level

The Village Church



All Saints Church, Newton Green, Suffolk, England

The village church was the center of all religious and most social activities.

Village priests would teach peasants the basic beliefs of Christianity.

On festival days the village churchyard was used for dancing and drinking.

Hierarchy of the Catholic Church



parish priest

lowest rank

responsible for the religious instruction of his community

was part of the **secular clergy**
[religious leaders who lived “in the world”]

bishop

managed a group of parishes called a diocese
many were feudal lords or vassals in their own right

archbishop

managed several dioceses



Hierarchy of the Catholic Church

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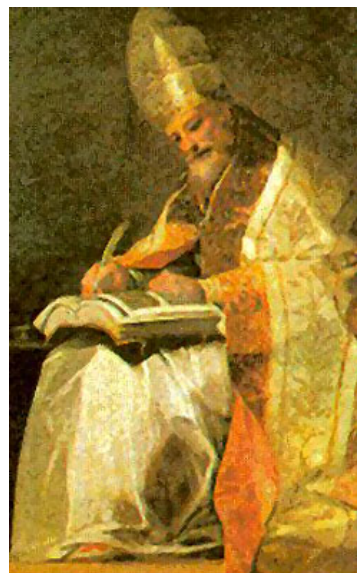
cardinal

a member of the *curia*, the highest rank of clergy
advised the pope on legal and spiritual matters



pope

supreme authority of the church
elected by a gathering of
cardinals



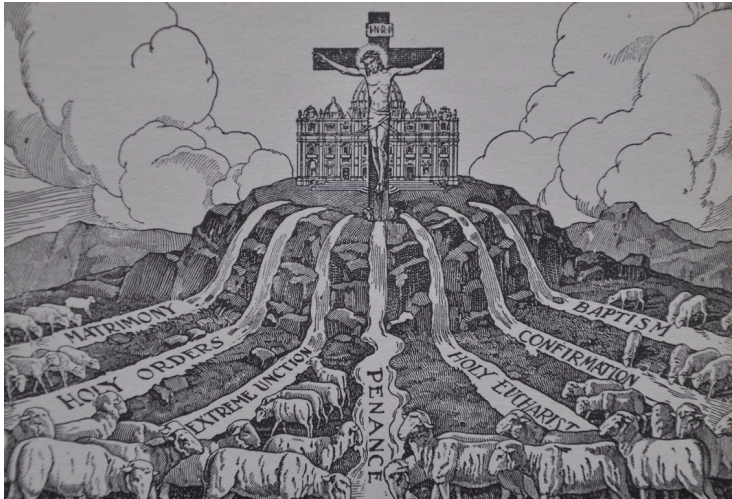
Practicing Religion in the Medieval Period

The Sacraments

to receive God's grace one must take part in the seven sacraments
(church rituals)

Baptism

done at birth to
cleans original sin



Penance and Reconciliation

an attempt to
remove sin from
the soul before
death

Confirmation

the education of
children in the
ways of the church

Eucharist

the taking of
Communion

Anointing of the sick

Holy Orders

when men and women joined the church.

Matrimony

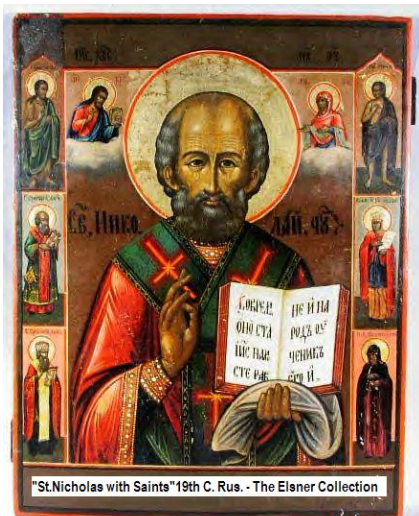
marriage

Practicing Religion in the Medieval Period

Veneration of Saints

St. Nicholas

The Patron Saint of Children



The Virgin Mary
The mother of Jesus
the most popular and
most highly regarded of
the saints



Saints

men and women who
were considered
especially holy and
had earned a special
place in Heaven

Practicing Religion in the Medieval Period

Relics



Set in an ornate reliquary in the Basilica San Domenico in Siena, Italy is the dismembered, mummified head of the revered Saint Catherine of Siena (1347-1380).

Her right thumb also resides in a smaller reliquary.



Reliquary Casket with Scenes from the Martyrdom of Saint Thomas Becket, ca. 1173-80

Powers of the Church



A practice known as **simony** developed where lords would sell church offices.

When an Abbot or Bishop was appointed to the church they were given a ring and a staff which symbolized the spiritual authority which was being *invested* in them by the church. Political rulers began to appoint church leaders (bishops, priests, etc.) in a practice known as **lay investiture**.

The church could **excommunicate** individuals, or deny them the ability to receive the sacraments.

The church could also place an **interdict** over an entire country. All churches would be closed and clergy would be forbidden to perform marriages, burials, other sacraments.

Pope Gregory VII

1073-1085



Pope Gregory VII wanted to end the practice of lay investiture. These actions became known as the Gregorian reforms.

This led to a conflict with Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV who wanted to retain the right to appoint clergy.

“I, Henry, king by the grace of God, with all of my Bishops, say to you, come down, come down, and be damned throughout the ages.”

Pope Gregory excommunicated Henry and supported his overthrow.



Henry IV traveled to Canossa in northern Italy to meet the pope and apologize in person.

Pope Gregory accepted Henry’s penance and lifted his excommunication.

The Concordat of Worms

1122



Henry eventually overthrew the Pope and Gregory died in exile.

The conflict continued for several generations.

Finally in 1122 an agreement was made.

The Church won the sole power to appoint church officials.

The Holy Roman Emperor was allowed to give new bishops the symbol of government authority, the lance, while the church instilled the symbols of spiritual authority, the ring and staff.

New Religious Orders

Women

From the mid 11th century to the mid 12th century a wave of religious enthusiasm swept through Europe.

More women began to seek spiritual involvement and joined convents.

The church was one of the few areas where women could get an education.



Convents also became popular places for women who were unable or unwilling to marry.

New Religious Orders

The Cistercians

This increase in religious activity led to the formation of several new monastic groups.

This Cistercian order were very strict, ate a simple diet, and owned only a single robe.

They removed all decorations from their churches and buildings and split their time between prayer and manual labor.

They weren't allowed to speak unless absolutely necessary.



This order developed a new spiritual model and strove to withdraw from the outside world.

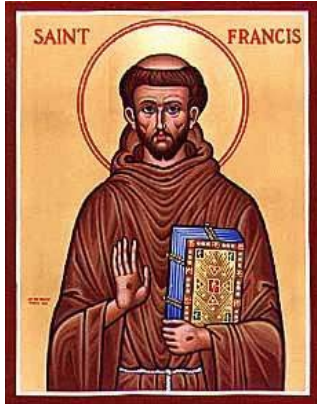
New Religious Orders

The Franciscans

The Franciscan order was founded by Francis of Assisi.

The son of a wealthy merchant, he lived a bit of a wild youth and had a religious conversion in his early 20s.

Francis gave up all of his material possessions and began to teach to the poor.



The Franciscan order tried to live as Christ had lived. The followers of the order believed in a vow of absolute poverty.

St. Francis also taught that there was beauty and holiness in nature.

The Franciscans took an active role aiding the poor.

New Religious Orders

The Dominican Order

The Dominican Order was founded by a Spanish priest named Dominic de Guzman who, like the Franciscans, believed in a vow of poverty.

He saw the true mission of his order as one to end **heresy**, or beliefs that went against the Catholic Church.



The Dominicans believed they were watchdogs of the Catholic faith.

