

## 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



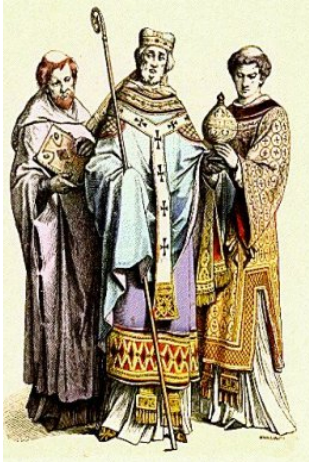
## Hierarchy of the Catholic Church

con't



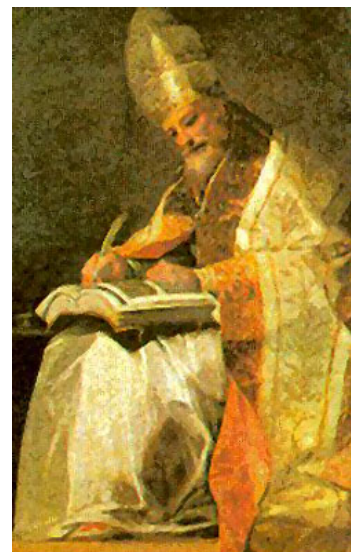
### **cardinal**

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

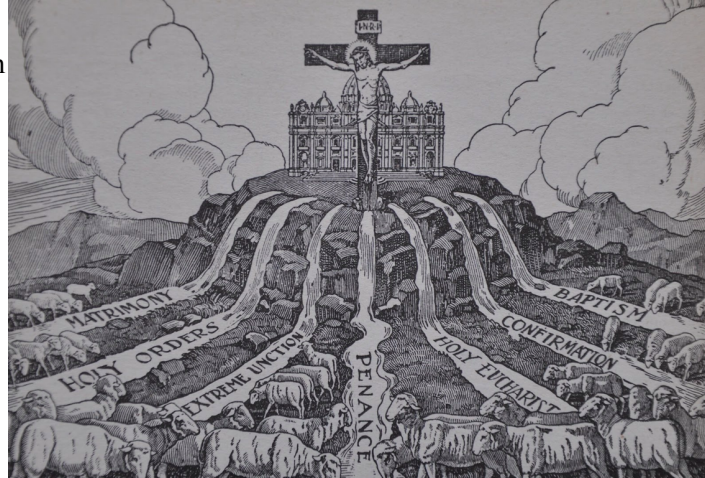
## The Sacraments

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

**Baptism**  
done at birth to  
cleanse original sin

**Confirmation**  
the education of  
children in the  
ways of the church

**Anointing of  
the sick**



**Penance and  
Reconciliation**  
an attempt to  
remove sin from  
the soul before  
death

**Eucharist**  
the taking of  
Communion

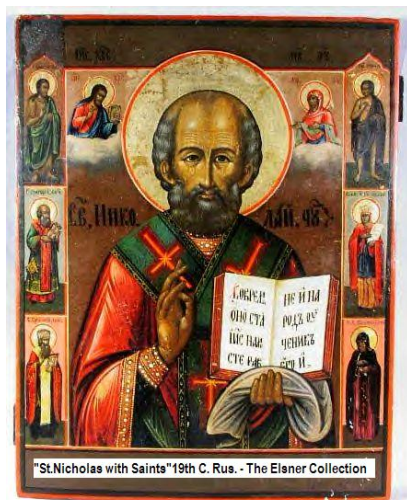
**Holy Orders**  
when men and women joined the church.

**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

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



More women began to begin 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.



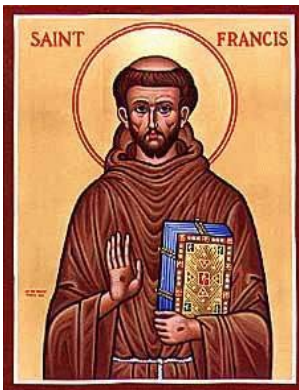
This order developed a new spiritual model and strove to withdraw from the outside world.

## 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.

