

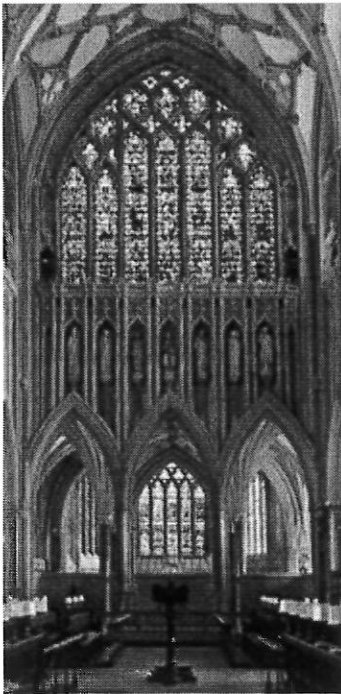
1. Introduction



In this chapter, you will explore the influence of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe during the High Middle Ages, from about 1000 to 1300 C.E.

The Church was the center of life in medieval western Europe. Almost every community had a church building. Larger towns and cities had a cathedral. Church bells rang out the hours, called people to worship, and warned of danger.

The church building was the center of community activity. Religious services were held several times a day. Town meetings, plays, and concerts were also held in churches. Merchants had shops around the square in front of the church. Farmers sold their produce in the square, and markets, festivals, and fairs were held there, as well.



During the Middle Ages, the Church provided education for some and it helped the poor and sick. It was a daily presence from birth to death. In fact, religion was so much a part of daily life that people even said a certain number of prayers to decide how long to cook an egg!

Christian belief was so **widespread** during this time that historians sometimes call the Middle Ages the “Age of Faith.” People looked to the Church to explain world events. Storms, disease, and famine were thought to be punishments sent by God. People hoped prayer and religious devotion would keep away such disasters. They were even more concerned about the fate of their souls after death. The Church taught that salvation, or the saving of a one’s soul, would come to those who followed the Church’s teachings.

In this chapter, you will learn how the Church began and how it grew. You will also discover how much the Church influenced people’s daily lives during the High Middle Ages.



2. The Christian Church Takes Shape

The Christian **religion** is one of the most important legacies of ancient Rome. Christians are followers of Jesus, who, according to Christian scripture, was put to death on a Roman cross in the 1st century C.E. Christians believe that Jesus was the son of God, that God sent him to Earth to save people from their sins, and that he rose

from the dead after his death by crucifixion.

Initially, the Romans **persecuted** Christians for their beliefs. Yet the new religion continued to spread. In 313 C.E., the Roman emperor Constantine issued a decree allowing Christians to practice their religion freely. In 395 C.E., Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

At the start of the Middle Ages, all Christians in western Europe belonged to a single church, which became known as the **Roman Catholic Church**. After the collapse of Rome, the Church played a vital role in society. In part, it was one of the few ties that people had to a more stable time. The Church provided leadership and, at times, even organized the distribution of food. Monasteries, or communities of monks, provided hospitality to refugees and travelers. Monks also copied and preserved old texts, and in this way helped keep both new and ancient learning alive. The spread of monasteries and the preaching of missionaries helped bring new converts to the Christian faith.

The Organization of the Roman Catholic Church Over time, Church leaders developed an organization that was modeled on the structure of the old Roman government. By the High Middle Ages, they had created a system in which all **clergy** members had a rank. The pope, who was the bishop of Rome, was the supreme head of the Roman Catholic Church. He was assisted and counseled by high-ranking clergymen called cardinals. Cardinals were appointed by the pope and ranked just below him in the Church **hierarchy**.

Archbishops came next. They oversaw large or important areas called archdioceses. Below them were bishops, who governed areas called dioceses from great cathedrals. Within each diocese, priests served local communities, called parishes. Each parish had its own church building.

TCI 3.2 The Church in Medieval Europe

1. The Middle Ages is sometimes called "The Age of Faith". Write 3 pieces of supporting evidence for this statement from the text

I. _____

II. _____

III. _____

2. Draw a diagram showing the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church during the High Middle Ages. For each group of clergy, write a one sentence explanation of its role.