

Is a church building different from other kinds of buildings? Can a church's design express faith and beliefs? Can its architecture reflect changing times within the history of the Catholic Church?

If you were to ask someone living in the Middle Ages these questions, they would probably respond with an enthusiastic yes. In Europe during the Middle Ages, the period covering approximately the fifth to the fifteenth centuries and also called the *medieval period*, Gothic cathedrals may have been the grandest expression of faith shown through art. Designed to express the glory and power of God, they featured architectural innovations such as tall, thin walls with large windows that were held in place by structures called flying buttresses. They also had beautiful stained glass and cruciform, or cross-shaped, floor plans. Many of these features were developed in the Middle Ages to add deeper religious meaning and greater physical beauty to the existing style of churches.

Nearly every feature of a medieval cathedral was built for a sacred purpose. Magnificent stained glass served not only to allow more light into the building but also to illustrate stories from the Bible and the lives of saints. This was especially important because many Christians at the time could not read. Now they were able to "read" stories of the lives of Jesus, Mary, and the saints in the windows of these great churches.

The cruciform design of a cathedral emphasized its role as a "house of God." To form the shape of the cross, the *nave*, a long central section where the public gathers for Mass, intersected with the *transept*, an aisle that runs across the interior. Thus, a cross shape

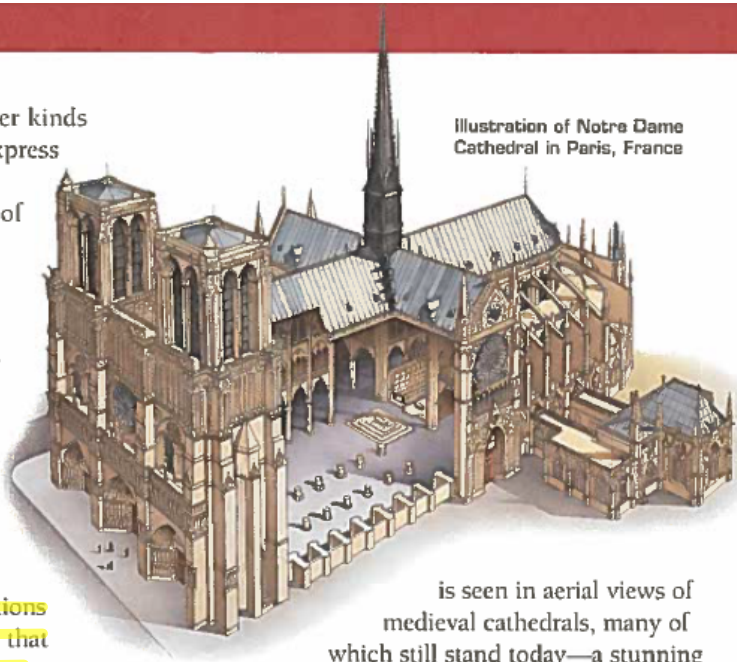


Illustration of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, France

is seen in aerial views of medieval cathedrals, many of which still stand today—a stunning reminder of the medieval Church's collective mind and heart raised toward God.

In what ways have church buildings changed since this period? How are they still the same?

Activity Think of the unique features of your own church. Draw some of them here. What sacred purpose do these features seem to have?

“Art must show the world as changeable. And help to change it,” said Ernst Fischer (1899–1972), an Austrian editor, poet, and art critic.

BELIEVING...

The Church fights to recover the Holy Land.

From the earliest days of the Church, many Christians followed the spiritual practice of going on a pilgrimage, a journey to a shrine or other holy place for spiritual and devotional reasons. But, during A.D. 1000–1200 the Holy Land—the land where Jesus Christ had lived, died, and risen from the dead, including the holy city of Jerusalem—fell into the hands of Muslim conquerors. This caused great anxiety throughout the Christian world. Many feared that, if these conquerors were not stopped, the Muslim armies might sweep into the heart of Europe.

In 1095 Pope Urban II called on all Christian rulers to organize a crusade. Crusade is from the Latin word *crux*, or “cross,” and, on their crusade, Christians were to “take back the cross,” freeing the Holy Land and its sacred sites. Soldiers, nobles, and knights, professional military men of high rank, volunteered to fight in the battles known as the Crusades. They acted out of faith, hoping to save Christianity. There were four major crusades between 1097 and 1204. The First Crusade was the most successful, with the Christian armies taking control of Jerusalem and the surrounding lands in 1099. But by 1187 Jerusalem had fallen again, this time to a great Muslim general named Saladin. Other crusades followed, but Jerusalem remained under Muslim control until 1917, when it was captured by the British during the First World War.

Faith Word
pilgrimage



The Battle of Jaffa, a battle won by the crusaders in 1102, by Henri Auguste Calixte César Serrur (1794–1865)

It is often thought that the Crusades reflected a misguided faith. Many crusaders used their religious commitment as an excuse to kill Muslims, Jews, or others not considered followers of Christianity. Over time, many of those who supported or fought the Crusades somehow forgot that using force to spread the Gospel is contrary to everything for which Christianity stands. They forgot God's commandment to protect human life—not take it!

The excesses of the Crusades hurt non-Christians and Christians alike. In 1204 the armies of the Fourth Crusade attacked and looted Constantinople, a city in the eastern part of the Christian world. There was no reason for this terrible act of violence, and, thus, the ill-will between Christians of the east and west only grew deeper.

Activity Discuss: If you were to make a pilgrimage to a holy place or shrine, where would you go? Why?

A changing society

Life in medieval Europe was ruled by feudalism, a system that organized society strictly by social class and land ownership. In feudalism, serfs were peasants who had the lowest positions in society. They farmed land and were bound to it, but they did not own it. Vassals, who had a higher position in society than serfs, held the land, but in exchange for the land they had to give

military or other services to overlords—the actual landowners and the most powerful class in society.

Most people did not question feudalism, believing that this was the way God meant things to be. The Crusades, however, brought about change. Though destructive to human dignity in many ways, the Crusades helped to promote cultural, economic, and technological growth throughout Europe. Crusaders brought back new ideas, inventions, and renewed appreciation

for ancient learning. Soon, manufacturing and other nonagricultural businesses in the towns expanded.

Peasants began moving to the towns, hoping to find freedom from the drudgery of farmwork. And as the towns expanded, great universities were founded. These centers of learning became places for great advances in human knowledge.

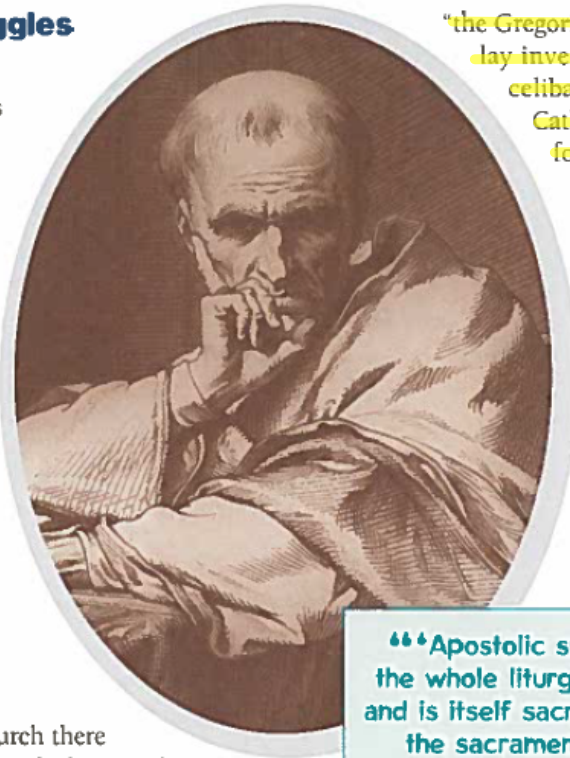
Compare and contrast life in feudal society with life in modern society.

The Church struggles with corruption.

During the Middle Ages the Church's power had increased, and most of the world looked to the leader of the Church, the pope, for moral and spiritual leadership. The pope was recognized as Europe's supreme ruler, ruling on all matters—both worldly, or secular, and spiritual. And it was even commonly accepted that the pope had authority from God to give power to kings, princes, and other civil rulers.

Yet at this time in the Church there was much corruption. Some bishops and abbots were living like princes, concerned only about money and power. And the actual kings and princes were insisting on appointing the bishops and abbots within their kingdoms. This illicit practice by secular leaders—laypeople, not ordained bishops—to invest, or empower, a Church leader with authority was known as **lay investiture**. This practice opposed Church teaching, since bishops are successors of the Apostles. As explained in the *Catechism*, “The risen Christ, by giving the Holy Spirit to the apostles, entrusted to them his power of sanctifying: they became sacramental signs of Christ. By the power of the same Holy Spirit they entrusted this power to their successors. This ‘apostolic succession’ structures the whole liturgical life of the Church and is itself sacramental, handed on by the sacrament of Holy Orders” (1087).

At this time the papacy, too, seemed to become the possession of a few noble Roman families. These powerful families quarreled among themselves over who would hold the power of the papal throne. Finally, however, a great and saintly pope, Pope Gregory VII, was elected. He guided the Church from 1073 to 1085 and started what we now call



Pope Gregory VII, engraving, 1754

“the Gregorian reforms.” Gregory forbade lay investiture. He also insisted on celibacy for priests in the Roman Catholic Church. He banned all forms of **simony**, the buying and selling of spiritual things, spiritual services, or Church offices. In some cases, under the practice of simony, even entire dioceses and abbeys had been sold to the highest bidder. Gregory's reforms were supported by thousands of reform-minded clergy, and by the laity all over Europe.

“‘Apostolic succession’ structures the whole liturgical life of the Church and is itself sacramental, handed on by the sacrament of Holy Orders.”
(CCC, 1087)

But reform was a difficult task, and Gregory found that demanding that the emperor, Henry IV, submit to his reforms was indeed difficult. Henry would not obey. Gregory sentenced him to **excommunication**, a severe penalty imposed by the Church for serious sins against the Catholic religion. Thus, Henry was excluded from participation in the sacramental life of the Church. Later, when Henry pretended to be sorry, Gregory lifted the penalty of excommunication. But the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV returned to Germany and, putting together an army, drove Gregory from Rome. Gregory eventually died in exile, but the Gregorian reforms survived and are still in place in the Church today.

Faith Words

simony
excommunication
lay investiture

Activity Imagine that you are a member of the reform-minded clergy or laity. On a separate sheet of paper, write a letter of support to Pope Gregory VII for his reforms.

BELIEVING...

Fearing heresy, the Church launches the Inquisition.

How does being Catholic influence your daily life?

Many people refer to this time in history as the High Middle Ages. If one word could categorize this period, it would probably be *Christendom*. *Christendom is not the same as Christianity, the religion of the followers of Jesus Christ. Christendom refers to a cultural and political atmosphere that came into existence during this period in Europe when nearly everyone was Catholic and Catholicism influenced every aspect of people's lives.*

The reign, or rule, of Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) marked the high point of papal power. In the year 1215 Pope Innocent III gathered about 1,200 bishops, abbots, and other Church leaders for a great ecumenical council, the *Fourth Lateran Council*. At this council, which met in Rome, every aspect of Catholic life was discussed and regulated by decree. Among the decisions of the council were the rulings that:

- Catholics must receive Holy Communion at least once a year
- *transubstantiation* would be the term used to describe the changing of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ that takes place at Mass during the consecration, by the power of the Holy Spirit and through the words and actions of the priest.



As the Church moved into the later Middle Ages, the world was a place of strict order and conformity. But because civil law and Church law were so closely related, secular and spiritual leaders alike began to fear that any threat to the faith was a threat to all of society. Thus, the leaders of the Church began to defend the faith against heresy. Those who taught false doctrines, and sometimes even those who criticized the Church in a positive and faithful way, were identified as heretics.

Faith Words

Christendom
transubstantiation

In order to investigate suspected heretics, in 1231 Pope Gregory IX set up an official court called the *Inquisition*. This court investigated people who were accused of heresy. It had the authority to impose fines, imprison people, and even condemn unrepentant heretics to death. In 1252, during the pontificate of Pope Innocent IV, suspected heretics were even tortured to make them confess their beliefs against Church teaching. And, in Spain, the Spanish Inquisition, launched by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in 1497, was particularly vicious. Going beyond simply finding and punishing people who were suspected of heresy, the Spanish authorities also targeted Jewish and Muslim converts to Christianity, accusing them of secretly practicing their former religions.

It is not easy for us to understand how, in the name of the Gospel, people could be so cruelly punished. Yet we know that fear can cloud a good conscience and alter good judgment. And the leaders of the Inquisition acted out of fear as well as faith. Fear and other vices, both personal and communal, steered those in power to give in to unjust and even inhuman practices that were common in that period of history. All of this gave rise to unjust situations and conditions that had a negative impact on society and its institutions, including the Church. The excesses of the Inquisition mark a sad episode in history. Again, as in the Crusades, some people forgot that Jesus' message is one of love for all people, not violence.

Activity Design a screensaver or logo that shares Jesus' message of love for all people. How can you live out this message?

Friars witness to Christ.

When peasants began to relocate from farms to towns during the High Middle Ages, a huge increase in the number of poor people in the cities resulted. There were no social structures in place to care for them. This shift in population also led to an increase in the types of social problems that accompany urban poverty. Many of those who left farms and villages to go to towns also began to fall away from their faith. To make things worse, many priests were poorly trained and could not explain or defend the truths of the faith. Some of these priests even led noticeably unholy lives. It was clear that the Church was in need of reform.

As has been the case throughout history, God saw the Church's need. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit there arose those who found a new way to help Christians to live the Gospel—a new form of religious life. The men who came together to live this new religious life called themselves friars. **The word friar comes from the Latin word *frater*, meaning "brother."** Unlike the monks of the monasteries, who owned property and lived a life apart from the world, the friars were *mendicant*, a word taken from *mendicus*, the Latin word for "beggar." **They would do their work out in the world, and they would depend entirely on the generosity of other people for their daily needs. They would work directly with and among the poor and would travel from town to town, preaching the Gospel.**

The friars dedicated themselves to following Jesus' invitation to "sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor" (Luke 18:22). They saw the social responsibilities of the Christian faith as an essential part of humanity's partnership with God. But in addition to living as witnesses to Christ in the world, the friars also committed themselves to being well educated in their faith. They understood, explained,



“Sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor.”

(Luke 18:22)

began at this time were the Franciscans and the Dominicans.

Activity Reflect on Jesus' invitation to "sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor" (Luke 18:22). How would accepting this invitation change your life?



Saint Thomas Aquinas

Theology

The word **theology** comes from *theos*, the Greek word for "god." It **literally means "the study of God."** **Theology is a way of using our human reason to reflect on the mystery of God and understand the teachings of our faith.**

This helps us to live our faith. In

the later Middle Ages, theology became an important area of study. **The greatest theologian, or scholar studying theology, at this time was Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).**

As a young boy in Italy, Thomas **earned the nickname "the dumb ox" because he was large for his age and quiet as well.** But after becoming a **Dominican friar, he went on to become a great scholar and a professor at the University of Paris.** Thomas, convinced that all truth was based in God, was not afraid to study the works of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle and other pagan authors. Using these writers' ancient logical arguments and his own powerful gift of reason, he defended the Christian faith and helped people to gain a better understanding of it. His best-known work is called, in Latin, ***Summa Theologica*—the most important points of theology.**

Today, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith examines the teachings of Catholic theologians, encouraging faithfulness to the Tradition of the Church, which includes the teachings of Saint Thomas Aquinas. Find out about this congregation's recent work for the Church.

CATHOLIC IDENTITY

RESPONDING...

Recognizing Our Faith

Recall the question at the beginning of this chapter: *Do I welcome change, or do I fear it?* Make a list of notable changes in your life or in the world around you during the past year. How did you feel about each of these changes? How did God help you through each one?

Living Our Faith

Make a decision to rely on your relationship with God through all the changes you encounter in life.

Saints Francis and Dominic



Saint Francis of Assisi (1181–1226) and Saint Dominic de Guzman (1170–1221) are saints whose lives as mendicant friars in the Middle Ages continue to have a powerful influence on the Church today. Francis, the son of a wealthy merchant in Assisi, Italy, chose to live a holy life in absolute

Partners in FAITH

poverty as a mendicant friar. He never intended to found a religious order, but he soon realized that many people wanted to follow him and share his way of life. He gradually developed a rule to guide his followers in living simple, holy lives. He called his followers the Order of Friars Minor, better known as the Franciscans.

Dominic was born in Spain. As a priest he worked hard to combat a spreading heresy that claimed that the material world and the human body were, by nature, evil. To discourage this heresy, he established an order of nuns, and then an order of mendicant friars to travel far and wide to preach the Gospel. He called his community the Order of Preachers, better known as the Dominicans. They became famous for teaching the Christian faith. Saint Dominic is also believed to have contributed to the development of the rosary.

What can you learn from Saints Francis and Dominic about being unafraid of change?

@ For additional ideas and activities, visit www.weliveourfaith.com.

Putting Faith to Work

Talk about what you have learned in this chapter:



We recognize the ways that Christians in the High Middle Ages sought to live and spread the Gospel message.



We appreciate the great contributions that Christians of the High Middle Ages made to the life of the Church.



We live Christ's message of peace as we work to share his Gospel.

Decide on ways to live out what you have learned.

ENCOUNTERING GOD'S WORD



In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught:

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God”

(Matthew 5:9).

- ➔ **READ** the quotation from Scripture.
- ➔ **REFLECT** on the following:
By sharing the peace that comes from loving God, our Father, and trusting in his will, we can change the world. As peacemakers, we can bring joy where there is sorrow, pardon where there is injury, and love where there is hatred.
- ➔ **SHARE** your reflections with a partner.
- ➔ **DECIDE** on one way you will try, in the coming week, to change the world by living as an instrument of God's peace.

Write *True* or *False* next to the following sentences. On a separate sheet of paper, change the false sentences to make them true.

1. False Pope Gregory VII encouraged simony—the buying and selling of spiritual things, spiritual services, or Church offices. **Pope Gregory VII banned simony...**
2. True The word *excommunication* refers to a severe penalty imposed by the Church for serious sins against the Catholic religion; it brings exclusion from participation in the sacramental life of the Church.
3. True During the High Middle Ages, many peasants relocated from farms to towns, which resulted in an increase in the number of poor people in the cities.
4. False In 1231 Pope Gregory IX set up an official court called the Inquisition to “take back the cross” and free the Holy Land and its sacred sites. ...called the Inquisition to investigate people who were accused of heresy.

Short Answers Pope Gregory VIII forbade lay investiture and banned all forms of simony, the buying and selling of spiritual things, spiritual services, or Church offices. Also, he insisted on celibacy for priests in the Roman Catholic Church. (p.109)

5. Name two reforms that were made by Pope Gregory VII. _____

6. Write a brief description of a friar. _____
Friars worked directly with and among the poor and would travel from town to town, preaching the Gospel depending entirely on the generosity of others for their daily needs. (p.111)

7. What does the term *Christendom* refer to? _____
The cultural and political atmosphere that came into existence during this period in Europe when nearly everyone was Catholic and Catholicism influenced every aspect of people's lives.

8. Name a Church ruling that was made in 1215 by the Fourth Lateran Council. _____

Catholics must receive Holy Communion at least once a year. Transubstantiation is the term used to describe the changing of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ that takes place at Mass during the consecration, by the power of the Holy Spirit and through the words and actions of the priest. (p.110)

- 9–10. **ESSAY:** Use what you have learned in this chapter to explain this statement: *People forgot that Jesus' message is one of love for all people, not violence.*

Many crusaders used their religious commitment as an excuse to kill Muslims, Jews, or others not considered followers of Christianity. Over time, many of those who supported or fought the Crusades somehow forgot that using force to spread the Gospel is contrary to everything for which Christianity stands. (p.108)

Leaders of the Inquisition acted out of fear as well as faith. Fear and other vices, both personal and communal, steered those in power to give in to unjust and even inhuman practices that were common in that period of history. All of this gave rise to unjust situations and conditions that had a negative impact on society and its institutions, including the Church. (p.110)