

## The Age of Faith

During the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church was the single most powerful organization in Western Europe. There were many reasons for its power. First, people during the Middle Ages were very religious. They believed that the Roman Catholic Church represented God on Earth and held the power to send a person to Heaven or Hell. In addition, many nobles left land to the Church when they died hoping to gain entry into heaven. Therefore, the Church became Western Europe's largest landowner. Church wealth also increased through tithes or church taxes which all Catholics were required to pay. Finally, the Church was the main center of learning. Church officials were usually the only people who could read and write. Rulers often relied on Church officials, since they were the most educated people during the Middle Ages. While Western Europeans were divided into small kingdoms, the one institution that united people during the Middle Ages was the Roman Catholic Church.

Questions:

- 1- What was the single most powerful organization in Western Europe during the Middle Ages?  
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- 2- Why was the Roman Catholic Church the most powerful institution in Western Europe during the Middle Ages?  
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- 3- Why was the Roman Catholic Church the largest landowner during the Middle Ages?  
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- 4- What is a tithe and how did tithes increase Church wealth?  
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- 5- Why did rulers rely on Church officials?  
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- 6- Why did the Roman Catholic Church unite people during the Middle Ages?  
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During the Middle Ages, monks and nuns copied books from the past to make more copies. They did this by hand because no one in Europe had

invented a machine to copy words. They decorated these books with bright colors and pictures. Over time, the largest monasteries (a place where monks live together) and convents (a place where nuns live together) became centers of learning. The monks and nuns kept alive learning from the past.

Even though the central government collapsed with the fall of the Roman Empire, the Roman Catholic Church remained strong. Barbarians had converted to Catholicism. The Roman Catholic Church always had a tradition of the monastic life or a person devoting his or her life to the Church by forsaking marriage and family. Monks and nuns promised to never marry, to never own property, and to never disobey their superiors in the Church. They spent their lives praying, studying, and working. So, as education outside of the Church declined due to the dangers of travel, education within the Church remained strong as monks and nuns preserved some of the knowledge of the past. In addition, in the Byzantine Empire, the preservation of Greek and Roman ideas occurred. It is important to remember that the Barbarians destroyed Rome and that many of the great Greek and Roman works were destroyed in Rome. However, the Byzantine Empire was the former Eastern Roman Empire and it was able to preserve or keep many of the great Greek and Roman works.

Questions:

7- What did monks and nuns do that greatly benefited the people of Western Europe?

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8- What did monks and nuns promise to do?

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9- Why did the Roman Catholic Church remain strong after the fall of Rome?

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10- Who else was responsible for the preservation of Greek and Roman ideas after the fall of Rome? Why?

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The Roman Catholic Church was the single, largest unifying institution in medieval Europe. It touched everyone's life, no matter what their rank or

class or where they lived. With the exception of a small number of Jews, everyone in Europe was a Roman Catholic Christian during the Middle Ages from the richest king down to the lowest serf.

From the moment of its baptism a few days after birth, a child entered into a life of service to God and God's Church. As a child grew, it would be taught basic prayers, would go to church every week barring illness, and would learn of its responsibilities to the Church. Every person was required to live by the Church's laws and to pay heavy taxes to support the Church. In return for this, they were shown the way to everlasting life and happiness after lives that were often short and hard.

The head of the Church was called the Pope. As God's representative on Earth, the Pope had a great amount of power to influence kings and their advisors. If someone went against the Church, the Pope had the power to excommunicate them. This meant that the person could not attend any church services or receive the sacraments and would go straight to hell when they died. At a time when everyone believed in heaven and hell and all belonged to the Church, this was an awful punishment.

Questions:

11- Why was the Roman Catholic Church so powerful during the Middle Ages?

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12- Who was the head of the Roman Catholic Church and why was he so powerful during the Middle Ages?

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13- What was excommunication and why was it a powerful punishment during the Middle Ages?

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Is religion a powerful force in the world today? Explain your answer.

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“All things were under its domain...its power was such that no one could hope to escape its scrutiny.”

Which European institution during the Middle Ages is best described by this statement?

1. the Guild
2. Knighthood
3. the Church
4. the nation-state

The Middle Ages in Western Europe was characterized by

1. the manor system and the importance of land ownership
2. absolute monarchies and strong central governments
3. decreased emphasis on religion in daily life
4. extensive trade with Asia and the Middle East

Feudal societies are generally characterized by

1. an emphasis on social order
2. a representative government
3. many economic opportunities
4. the protection of political rights

The art, music, and philosophy of the medieval period in Europe generally dealt with

1. human scientific achievements
2. religious themes
3. materialism
4. classic Greek and Roman subjects

In Europe during the Middle Ages, the force that provided unification and stability was the

1. central government in Rome
2. military alliance between France and Germany
3. federation of the craft guilds
4. Roman Catholic Church

Which is a characteristic of a feudal society?

1. rapid social change
2. high literacy rate
3. industrial-based economy
4. rigid class structure