EUROPEAN MIDDLE AGES: THE CRUSADES

Toward the end of the 11th century (1000’s A.D), the Catholic Church began to authorize military expeditions, or Crusades, to expel Muslim “infidels” from the Holy Land!!!

Crusaders, who wore red crosses on their coats to advertise their status, believed that their service would guarantee the remission of their sins and ensure that they could spend all eternity in Heaven. (They also received more worldly rewards, such as papal protection of their property and forgiveness of some kinds of loan payments.) While the main reason for going was belief that the Pope spoke for God, and that ‘Deus Vult!’ or “God Wills It”, many crusaders also went in the hopes of securing money, land, or simply for adventure.

‘Papal’ = Relating to The Catholic Pope
(Catholic Pope Pictured Left <<<)

The Crusades began in 1095, when Pope Urban summoned a Christian army to fight its way to Jerusalem, and continued on and off until the end of the 15th century (1400’s A.D).
No one “won” the Crusades; in fact, many thousands of people from both sides lost their lives. They did make ordinary Catholics across Christendom feel like they had a common purpose, and they inspired waves of religious enthusiasm among people who might otherwise have felt alienated from the official Church. They also exposed Crusaders to Islamic literature, science and technology—exposure that would have a lasting effect on European intellectual life.

GET THE INFIDELS (Non-Muslims)!!!!

>>>>

<<“GET THE MUSLIMS!!!!”

**WHAT WERE THE CRUSADES?**

By the end of the 11th century, Western Europe had emerged as a significant power in its own right, though it still lagged behind other Mediterranean civilizations, such as that of the **Byzantine Empire** (formerly the eastern half of the **Roman Empire**) and Islamic Empires of the Middle East and North Africa.
However, The Eastern Roman Empire, also known as the ‘Byzantine Empire’, had lost considerable territory to the invading Seljuk Turks (Muslims). After years of chaos and civil war, the general Alexius Comnenus seized the Byzantine throne in 1081 and consolidated control over the remaining empire as Emperor Alexius I.

In 1095, Alexius sent envoys to Pope Urban II asking for mercenary troops from the West to help confront the Turkish (Muslim) threat. Though relations between Christians in the East and West had long been violent and aggressive, Alexius’s request came at a time when the situation was improving.
In November 1095, the Pope called on Western Christians to take up arms to aid the Byzantines and recapture the Holy Land from Muslim control. This marked the beginning of the Crusades!!

Pope Urban’s plea was met with a tremendous response, both among the military elite as well as ordinary citizens. Those who joined the armed pilgrimage wore a cross as a symbol of the Church.

(Pope Urban II Statue Left <<<>

The Crusades show us what can happen when religious belief is twisted into a justification, or reason, for violence. While it is very likely that many crusaders were only using the crusades as an excuse to steal and kill, it is undeniable that huge numbers of Christians and Muslims truly believed they were fighting for God.

Unintended Consequences of The Crusades...

Despite European Christian knights and warriors going to the Holy Land at the call of Roman Catholic Popes in the hopes of taking it back from Muslim rule, The Crusades had many other side effects as well! As thousands of Europeans traveled from their homes throughout Europe to ‘The Holy Land’ within The Middle East, they learned of new routes and goods for trade as well as new ideas on science, technology, literature, philosophy, and much more from interactions with the Islamic world.

As we have learned in this class already, Europe was slowly coming out of it’s Dark Age (476 - 1000 A.D) by the year 1050 A.D. Just the opposite, the Islamic world was within a ‘Golden Age’ of its own from about 750 A.D - 1250 A.D. European Crusaders that returned home after fighting in the Middle East brought back writings of Ancient Greek Philosophers
that Muslim scholars had translated into Arabic, and the writings of Islamic scientists and thinkers that before the crusades most Europeans had never been exposed to!
Critical Thinking Questions -- Strengthen Your Mind

1) Describe what the ‘Crusades' were in your own words! **Your own words!!!**

2) What did the pope promise Christian warriors would receive for fighting!? 

3) Who won the crusades?

4) What did the crusaders wear on their shields?

5) Describe two unintended consequences of the Crusades...