

History of the Crusades.
Episode 123.
The Crusade Against The Cathars.
Reversals of Fortune.

Hello again. Last week we saw Simon de Montfort do his best to subdue his two new Viscounties prior to the departure of the Crusader army. He was then left with only a handful of knights with which to maintain his rule. As the winter of 1209 approaches, we find more and more of Simon de Montfort's territory slipping through his fingers, as previously conquered castles, strongholds, and fortified towns change sides following the departure of the Crusader army. But we will leave Simon de Montfort for the moment and return to his troubles later in this episode. For now, let's see what's happening with our old friend, Count Raymond VI of Toulouse.

Last week we saw Count Raymond returned to his citadel in Toulouse, no doubt congratulating himself on having saved his land and people from harm by his surprise move to join the Crusade. But his self congratulatory mood is about to be shattered by the arrival in Toulouse of the Papal Legates Arnold Amaury and Milo, who will be asking the by now very familiar, question, that question being: Why are there still heretics in Toulouse? Interestingly, the Papal Legates don't pose this question to Count Raymond, but to the counselors of Toulouse.

Now, Toulouse is a very interesting city. It's home to around 20,000 people at this point in time, and despite being the seat of power of the Count of Toulouse, the city itself is not actually under the control of the Count. Why? Because over the centuries, the noblemen and chief artisans of the city decided they wanted some say in how their city was run, so the citizens of Toulouse elected some of their fellow city-dwellers to make decisions on their behalf. Over the years this council turned into a pretty powerful body. No longer the domain of noblemen, it now consists mainly of leading citizens and merchants. It raises taxes; it provides services to the citizens of the city; and by the early thirteenth century, it even had enough power to raise a small army and embark on a military campaign in the wider region of Toulouse. Mark Pegg, in his book, "A Most Holy War", reports that between the years of 1202 and 1204, the council of Toulouse waged 23 small wars throughout wider Toulouse, hoping to extend their influence and power beyond the walls of the region's largest city. Count Raymond had no direct control all over this council, and only a small section of the city of Toulouse was governed by him rather than the council. So, ironically, the Count of Toulouse exercised very little power in his own city.

Perhaps realizing this, it was to the counselors of Toulouse, and not the Count of Toulouse, that the Papal Legates made their approach. Waving a list of names of heretics believed to be residing within the city, the Legates demanded that the council surrender the citizens named in the list, and their property, to the Church. The council responded by denying that there were any heretics whatsoever within Toulouse. On the contrary, they explained to the Papal Legates, the people listed were all good Catholics of the utmost orthodoxy and devotion. Did the Papal Legates accept the word of the council on this matter? No they didn't.

Instead, they laid an interdict upon the city. Then they went further. After presiding over a council at Avignon, they excommunicated Count Raymond and extended the interdict across his entire domain. Why did they excommunicate Count Raymond? Well, there are

no prizes for guessing the reasons: because he had done nothing to persecute the heretics living within his territory, and he was still employing Jews, and using mercenaries.

Now, this probably didn't come as a surprise to Count Raymond. There had been murmurings of disquiet about the fact that he had joined the Crusade, and those murmurings had grown louder since the fall of Carcassonne. Count Raymond had seen first-hand the perils which could befall a city or Count who ended up on the wrong side of an argument with the Church. He had after all, been present at the sack of Beziers. His counterpart Viscount Raymond Roger Trencavel, who had attracted the wrath of the Church, was in the dungeon of his own citadel, and unbeknownst to Raymond would soon be dead.

For Raymond, it was imperative that he keep the Church on his side. He pleaded his case to the Legates, pointing out that only three months had passed since he last promised to fix the heresy problem at Saint-Gilles, and during most of that time he had been on Crusade. The Legates weren't moved. They gave him until the 1st of November to carry out the promises he had made at Saint-Gilles, otherwise, his entire domain would be confiscated by the Church. Realizing he had little hope of finding all the heretics within the county of Toulouse, and expelling or executing them before the 1st of November, Count Raymond decided to appeal directly to Pope Innocent for clemency. Count Raymond decided to travel to Rome and seek a personal audience with the Pope to plead his case.

This alarmed the Legates. Having a legal background, Pope Innocent was a stickler for rules and legalities, and the Legates were concerned that they may have overstepped their authority. They decided to send an embassy to Rome as well to explain their side of the story. This was bad news for Count Raymond, who had decided to travel to Rome via Paris so he could first seek assistance from the King of France. Having representatives from the Legates get to Pope Innocent before he could put his point of view across was clearly not in his best interests, so Count Raymond appointed his own embassy and sent it off down the road to Rome, hot on the heels of the embassy from the Legates, hoping that at least his arguments could counter those of the Legates, until he arrived in Rome in person to persuade Pope Innocent of his point of view.

So, while the two embassies raced to Rome, trying desperately to reach Pope Innocent first, Count Raymond headed north to Paris. Unfortunately for Count Raymond, he really shouldn't have bothered. Count Raymond regaled the King with the fact that the Papal Legates had overstepped their authority, and as a result had placed his lands in peril, but it all fell on deaf ears. Instead of obtaining the support of his overlord for his upcoming meeting with Pope Innocent, all Count Raymond received from his King were some vague murmurings of sympathy. Angry at himself for having wasted two months journeying north for a pointless meeting with his King, Count Raymond started on the long journey from Paris to Rome.

Now, by this time, two things of note had happened. Both embassies had reached the Pope. The embassy from the Legates carried a letter penned by the Legates stating, and I quote, "if it should happen that the Count of Toulouse, that enemy of peace and justice, should come before Your Holiness, take care that you not be deceived by his lying tongue." End quote. The letter went on to list all of Count Raymond's misdemeanors and to justify the action the Legates had taken against him. The second event of note was the death of the Papal Legate Milo. So by the time the frazzled Count Raymond arrived in Rome just after Christmas, Pope Innocent had received the letter from the Legates, and

even worse for Raymond, had also been regaled by the Bishop of Agen, who had traveled to Rome to complain about treatment he had received from Count Raymond. It must have been with a gloomy feeling of foreboding that Count Raymond finally managed to have his audience with Pope Innocent.

No one knows for sure what went on at the meeting between the two men. Some sources have Pope Innocent treating the Count coldly, as an enemy of the Cross, while others have him being super friendly, giving the Count gifts, showing him around the Vatican, and even offering him a private viewing of a famous relic, the Napkin of Saint Veronica. One thing however, is certain, and that is the outcome of the meeting.

In a move that must have rocked Arnold Amaury to the core, Pope Innocent rejected the arguments of the Legates, and instead supported the former enemy of the Church, Count Raymond. Why? Well, no one really knows. Perhaps Pope Innocent was swayed by Count Raymond's argument that he had already managed to expel some heretics from individual villages but just hadn't been able to carry out his promises to their full extent because he had been away on Crusade. Perhaps he persuaded Pope Innocent that he was a loyal Catholic, who didn't deserve to have his lands confiscated by the Church. Perhaps he was able to argue that the Legates didn't have the legal authority to excommunicate him. Or maybe Pope Innocent, having heard of the atrocities carried out during the Crusade under Arnold Amaury's watch, was less enamored of his Legate than he had been previously.

Whatever the reason, the victory by Count Raymond was complete. In January 1210, the Pope revoked Count Raymond's excommunication. He appointed Thedisius as co-Legate following the death of Milo, and indicated that Thedisius and not Arnold Amaury should deal with Count Raymond in the future. He ordered Thedisius to call a Church Council in three months time, at which any person could provide evidence against the Count, either relating to matters of heresy or the murder of Peter of Castelnau. But if no credible evidence were to be produced at the meeting, then the Count was to be considered a loyal member of the Church and was to be left in peace. Even if evidence was presented at the council, Thedisius was not to pass judgment himself, but was required to forward the evidence to Rome where Pope Innocent would personally judge the matter.

Pope Innocent further ordered that both Legates were to travel immediately to the city of Toulouse, and lift the interdict over the city. Individual citizens who defied the authority of the Church could be excommunicated, but only under a joint decision made by both Legates. Arnold Amaury could no longer act alone, excommunicating people at will. In one move, Arnold Amaury went from excommunicating the Count and confiscating the entire County of Toulouse on behalf of the Church, to having the excommunication lifted, having the County of Toulouse and the city of Toulouse back within Church favour, and having his own powers severely curtailed. It's safe to say that, for Arnold Amaury, the year 1210 had not started at all well.

The year 1210 was not going well for Viscount Simon de Montfort either. It had all started going wrong back in September, when the Duke of Burgundy departed with the remainder of the Crusader army. You might remember from last week's episode that in November 1209, Pope Innocent had written two letters to Simon. In one of these letters, he confirmed Simon's position as the Viscount of Carcassonne and Beziers, and indicated that he would write to the Kings of the region, including King Peter II of Aragon, to request their assistance and support. Simon needed King Peter to accept him as his vassal, and as the new Viscount, to be fully secure in his position.

In late November 1209, the two men met at Montpellier. Now it would have made sense at this stage for King Peter to have accepted Simon as his vassal and to have confirmed his position as the valid Viscount of Carcassonne and Beziers. King Peter, you might remember, had pledged his realm to the Papacy and was a loyal vassal of the Church. Also, Pope Innocent had written to him requesting that he support the new Viscount. Supporting the new Viscount would mean that King Peter's landholdings in southern France would be more secure, with the Viscounties of Carcassonne and Beziers providing a link between Aragon and the County of Montpellier and Provence. Pleasing Pope Innocent was something that King Peter wanted to do, as he was hoping that the Pope might grant him a dissolution of his marriage. So for all these reasons really, King Peter just needed to accept Simon de Montfort as his vassal. But the outcome of the meeting between the two men at Montpellier must have come as quite a shock to Simon, because contrary to common sense and contrary to his own interests, King Peter refused to accept Simon de Montfort, both as his vassal and as the Viscount of Carcassonne and Beziers.

Why did King Peter do this? Well, we don't know for sure. It might have been because the true Viscount, Raymond Roger Trencavel, had recently died in Simon's custody, and King Peter may have harbored suspicions about his death. Or it might have been because King Peter was angry with the Church and the outcome of its Crusade, and had no desire to accede to the wishes of the Church. Or it might have been because he had taken a strong personal dislike to Simon de Montfort. Or it might have been a combination of all of these factors. We just don't know. Whatever the reason, the result was clear.

After fifteen days of talks at Montpellier, Simon de Montfort returned to Carcassonne without King Peter as his overlord. And things just got worse from there. Across his newly acquired domain, his subjects were rebelling. Towns, castles, and villages which had pledged their loyalty to him under the threatening presence of the Crusader army were changing their minds and withdrawing their support, now that the threatening presence of the Crusader army had vanished. When he was traveling back to Carcassonne, Simon tried to rescue two of his knights, who had been captured and were being held in a castle near Carcassonne. His way to the castle however, was blocked by a river in flood, so he was forced to arrive back at Carcassonne empty-handed.

The news he received at Carcassonne was not good. The first piece of bad news concerned the rebel stronghold at Cabaret. Now you might remember from last week's episode that Cabaret was located only fourteen kilometers from Carcassonne in the Black Mountains, and its three castles, built in a line on top of a ridge, were so inaccessible that the Crusader army had taken one look at Cabaret and left it alone. Well, while Simon was in Montpellier, one of his most loyal knights, who also happened to be his wife's cousin, a man called Bouchard of Marly, decided that he could succeed where the massive army had failed. Taking with him one other knight and only fifty men, he rode out to attack the stronghold, but was ambushed before he got there by around one hundred men from the well-manned garrison at Cabaret. A fight ensued, during which the knight accompanying Bouchard was killed. Bouchard himself was captured and taken to Cabaret, where he spent the next fifteen months languishing in captivity.

Now this, of course, is terrible news as far as Simon is concerned. He didn't have many knights to start with, somewhere between fifteen and thirty is the best estimate, and now four of them have been taken out of the equation. And the bad news just kept coming. The next person to withdraw his loyalty was Guiraud of Pepieux, lord of a small stronghold

twenty six kilometers northeast of Carcassonne. Why had he suddenly rebelled? Well, because a Crusader had killed his uncle. The Crusader was apparently still in the area, so to resolve the issue, Simon decided to mete out some rough justice. He ordered the uncle-slaying northern Frenchman to be buried alive.

Now, we've already seen Cathars being burned to death for their beliefs, and now we have an alleged killer being buried alive. Unfortunately, things aren't about to get any better on this front. In fact, on both sides of the conflict between Simon de Montfort and his unruly new subjects is about to descend to levels of brutality and cruelty never before seen in Europe. Join me next week, if you dare, as the southern rebels and Simon de Montfort try to outdo each other in a race to see who can reach the lowest depths of stomach-churning depravity. Until next week, bye for now.

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