

History of the Crusades.
Episode 82
The Fifth Crusade I.

Hello again. Last week we examined the Children's Crusade. This week, thankfully, we will be restricting ourselves to Crusading adults, as we start a series of episodes on the Fifth Crusade.

Now, as we've seen from previous episodes, Pope Innocent is an ambitious man. He's not only ambitious, he has the drive and determination to see his plans through to the end. For this energetic and intelligent man, there is one theme that drives his Papacy and all his talents and verve are focused on this one theme. Can you guess what this theme is? It could be summarized in one word, a word of seven letters, beginning with "C". That's right, "Crusade".

In 1213, the year following the disastrous Children's Crusade, let's see how this theme is panning out for Pope Innocent. He's already been the instigator of one major Crusade, the Fourth Crusade, which disappointingly for Pope Innocent did not result in the recovery of Jerusalem, but instead resulted in the sacking of the magnificent Christian city of Constantinople. Seemingly undeterred, Pope Innocent, and his adherents have been whipping up Crusading fever across Europe since the end of the Fourth Crusade. This sparked not only the Children's Crusade, but the Crusade against the Cathars in southern France and a Crusade against the Muslims in southern Spain. So in 1213 Pope Innocent is surrounded by Crusades, but it's not enough.

For Pope Innocent, a successful Crusade is one which recovers Jerusalem for the Latin Christians. None of his Crusades, however, have made it to the Middle East. In 1213 Pope Innocent decided that this has to change. He was going to seize on the sentiment he had whipped up across Europe and use all his administrative, logistical, and persuasive skills to call for a massive European Crusade, and this Crusade would have one destination, the Holy Land.

Pope Innocent decided on a two-pronged approach in his call for Crusade. The first prong on his Crusading fork was a Papal encyclical called "Quia maior", which he issued in April 1213, and the second prong involved Pope Innocent arranging a massive Church Council called the Fourth Lateran Council, which due to its size took years to organize. Pope Innocent scheduled this Council to meet in the year 1215. The Papal encyclical "Quia maior" is described by Jonathan Phillips in his book "Holy Warriors" as, and I quote "one of the most powerful and forceful Crusade appeals of all time" end quote. Pope Innocent's zeal for Crusading blazed forth in this encyclical, as he outlined the crisis threatening the Holy Land and demanded action to recover its holy places for Christendom. He stated that God could have returned Jerusalem to the Church at any time, but chose instead to test the faith of European Christians. Now was the time for salvation, the time to rise up and assist the Holy Land in her time of need.

To achieve this goal, Pope Innocent outlined a range of practical measures in his encyclical. Perhaps taking on board the need for action felt by non-combatants in Europe, as shown by the instigation of the Children's Crusade, the Pope broadened the Crusade beyond just fighters. Whereas during his call for the Fourth Crusade, Pope Innocent had done all he could to restrict participation in the Crusade to those with fighting skills, this

time he extended the invitation to everyone. Even those who were sick, elderly, or poor, or otherwise incapable of making the arduous journey to the Middle East, were not left out. To ensure as wide a participation as possible, Pope Innocent stated that the full remission of sins offered to those actually participating in the Crusade would apply to those who sent a proxy in their place. That is, if you paid a soldier to go on Crusade on your behalf, then not only would the sins of that soldier be forgiven, your sins would also be remitted. This was a radical idea, but unfortunately for Pope Innocent, it set a dangerous precedent. The idea of payment for the remission of sins sent the Catholic Church down a slippery slope, which eventually resulted in the development of indulgences, a widely criticized system of payment for sins in late medieval Europe, which was one of the key causes of the backlash against the Church in the Reformation.

While the encyclical called for a new Crusade, now Pope Innocent had to ensure that this call stayed focused in the minds of the clergy of Europe until the massive Crusade could be arranged. Pope Innocent knew that the scale of the campaign he had in mind meant that it would take years to organize, and in the meanwhile he had to maintain Crusading momentum. With this in mind, he summoned a general Council of the Church to meet in 1215. With the Crusade firmly on its agenda, this was to be a meeting of Church leaders and secular leaders from across Europe. In fact, it would end up being the largest gathering of its kind in the medieval period. It presented Pope Innocent with an unprecedented opportunity to talk directly to those who would be leading the Crusade, to ensure that they are aware of his plans and his vision for the expedition.

The two year period between the issuing of the "Quia Maior" and the meeting of the Church Council in 1215 was, of course, put to good use by Pope Innocent. He appointed Legates in France and Scandinavia, and authorized Bishops across Europe to preach the Cross. Determined to keep a degree of control over both the message and the actions resulting from it, Pope Innocent instructed the clergy to use the "Quia maior" as the basis of their sermons. He also ordered the clergy to keep written records of those whom they had recruited to the Crusading cause, and to send records of any financial donations made to the Crusade back to Rome, so that the Pope could keep an eye on how his plans were progressing.

Determined to ensure that this Crusade was financed primarily by the Church, Pope Innocent legislated that the clergy should donate one twentieth of their annual income to the Crusade. Unsurprisingly, this didn't go down too well with the clergy. If the Cardinals and those higher up the ecclesiastical ladder sniggered when they heard of this, well their turn was about to come. Pope Innocent calmed the discontented elements of the clergy down by telling them that the cardinals, and even he himself, would lead the way by donating one tenth of their income to the cause, twice as much as he was requesting from the clergy.

Pope Innocent also spent three years between the "Quia maior" and the meeting of the Church Council doing some behind-the-scenes work on the diplomatic front. The Pope knew that if the Kings of Europe took up the Cross, then a whole wave of aristocrats and noblemen would be obliged to do the same. Perhaps learning from his failure to secure the presence of any Kings on the Fourth Crusade, Pope Innocent set about obtaining their support. Despite having more than enough troubles of their own on the domestic front, Pope Innocent was largely successful on his regal recruitment drive.

One of his key recruits was the young ruler of Germany, Frederick II, who took up the Cross during his coronation ceremony at Aachen in 1215. Frederick II was the grandson of Frederick Barbarossa and had only been a baby when his father, Henry VI, died. Frederick spent his childhood at the Imperial court in Sicily. He was crowned King of Sicily when he came of age in 1208, but his claim to the German crown was in dispute, with other contenders taking full advantage of his absence from Germany to press their claim. With the support of Pope Innocent, however, Frederick prevailed, and was crowned King of Germany in 1215, relinquishing his Sicilian crown, at Pope Innocent's request, to his infant son Henry.

Pope Innocent at this stage, most likely believes that he has a compliant, obedient Papal puppet on the German throne, but young Frederick is a monarch who has his own ideas about how his reign should proceed. In fact, he will eventually become known as "Stupor Mundi", the "Wonder of the world", and will ... No, I don't want to give you any spoilers. All I can say is that we'll be seeing quite a lot of Frederick in future episodes. For now, however, he is a young King, newly crowned, and is willing to do the bidding of the man who raised him to the throne, Pope Innocent III.

The year 1215 also saw another European King take up the Cross, King John of England. Remember Richard the Lionheart's annoying little brother John? Well, he's now King of England, and things really aren't going that well for him. There was one thing that King John seemed to be really good at, and that was making enemies. He had been under a Papal edict since 1208, after he refused to appoint Pope Innocent's nominee for the Archbishop of Canterbury, and by the time the year 1215 rolled around he had uncovered a plot to assassinate him, and was facing the possibility of a French invasion and a civil war on the home front. Some of his many enemies in England had taken the Cross, and in an attempt both to appease them and to settle his differences with a Pope, King John also took up the Cross on Ash Wednesday 1215, prompting a fresh wave of English recruits.

Further to the east, Leopold VI of Austria, and King Andrew of Hungary had already vowed to join the Crusade. Determined to recruit as many Europeans as possible to the Crusading cause, Pope Innocent even appealed to the Venetians to fulfill the Crusading vows they had made during the Fourth Crusade, to proceed to the Holy Land and liberate it from the Muslims.

So, by 1215 Pope Innocent had done an impressive job of drumming up support for his Crusade. His successful recruitment drive culminated in the massive Church Council which was held in November 1215 at the Lateran Palace in Rome. This huge council was made up of around 1300 delegates from across Latin Christendom. It included more than 400 Bishops, Archbishops, Patriarchs, and Cardinals, including the Latin Patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem, and the Archbishop of Alexandria, plus representatives from the secular rulers of Europe, the rulers of France, Germany, Hungary, the Crusader states, and Cyprus. The new Crusade was firmly on the agenda of the Council meeting, and after several days of debate and discussion, the Council largely endorsed Pope Innocent's "Quia maior".

Having spent the past two years leading a massive Crusading recruitment drive, Pope Innocent must have been gratified when the Council set a date and place for the departure of the Crusade. The Council decreed that Pope Innocent's Crusade would leave from Brindisi in southern Italy, which formed part of Frederick II's Sicilian territory. The date for departure was set for June 1217, giving Pope Innocent another 18 or so months to drum

up even more support for the campaign, and giving those who had taken up the Cross time to settle their affairs prior to departure.

As it happens, Pope Innocent wasn't present at Brindisi to see his recruits depart on Crusade. In April 1216, more than a year before the Crusade was due to leave Europe, Pope Innocent was at the town of Orvieto in southern Italy. He had preached the Cross to an enthusiastic crowd, and he stayed to personally affix a cloth Cross to every person present who had taken the Crusading vow, despite the fact that it was pouring with rain. After his drenching, the Pope came down with a cold, but despite this he traveled on to another town, where his condition worsened. He became seriously ill, and died on the 16th of July 1216. His body was laid out in the local cathedral, but was left unguarded. The following day, his supporters were horrified to discover that his corpse had been stripped of any clothes or ornaments of any value, and he lay half naked, alone in the cathedral, his corpse already beginning to putrefy in the summer heat.

The figure of Pope Innocent looms large in the history of the Crusades. As the head of the Latin Christian Church, Pope Innocent threw himself energetically into the Crusading cause, but with mixed results. In his book "The Crusades", Thomas Asbridge just sums up Pope Innocent's legacy nicely as follows, and I quote "Throughout his pontificate, he had embraced Holy War, and although the campaigns waged at his behest achieved only limited success, Innocent's willingness to support and amend the Crusading movement did much to reinvigorate a cause that might otherwise have faltered. In many respects, he shaped Crusading into a form it would hold through the coming century and beyond. It is also true, however, that Innocent's monumental ambitions far outstripped the reality of Papal authority, and that his attempts to assert direct ecclesiastical control over Crusading expeditions were ill conceived and unrealistic." End quote.

So, following Pope Innocent's unexpected death, did the Crusade he was so heavily promoting stumble and fall? No. A new Pope, Honorius III, was quickly elected, and the Crusading momentum rolled on, apparently unaffected by Pope Innocent's absence.

There is still nearly a year to go before the Crusade is due to depart, and there is one region which Pope Innocent was not able to reach during his lifetime, and which has not yet experienced the fervor of a Papal recruitment drive, the Middle East. However, that's about to change. The French cleric James of Vitry had recently been elected to take up the position of the Bishop of Acre in the Crusader states. James of Vitry was a very persuasive speaker, and an enthusiastic supporter of Pope Innocent's Crusade. His preaching of the Cross at venues across Europe had stirred up support for the Crusade against the Cathars, and had possibly sparked the disastrous Children's Crusade.

By the year 1216 he was in his early fifties and still going strong, traveling around France, drumming up support for Pope Innocent's new Crusade. Before he could travel to the Middle East to take up his new role in the city of Acre, James needed Papal confirmation and consecration. Accordingly, he had traveled to Italy to meet with Pope Innocent. Unfortunately, he arrived too late. James of Vitry was in fact the person who discovered Pope Innocent's half naked corpse alone in the cathedral at Perugia. James patiently waited for the new Pope to be appointed, and duly received his confirmation from Pope Honorius. In the autumn, he set sail from Genoa to the Holy Land, and apparently his five week long journey was marked by storms so severe that none of the passengers on board the ship were able to eat or drink for fear of death. He must have been relieved indeed to set foot on dry land. He arrived in Acre in November 1216, and immediately set out on a

tour of his new domain, preaching the Cross and doing his best to garner support for the forthcoming Crusade.

So the stage is set. Thousands of Europeans, some Kings amongst them, have taken up the Cross and are waiting to depart on Crusade, and the Latin Christians in the Crusader states are preparing for their arrival and eagerly awaiting the liberation of Jerusalem and the recovery of the True Cross. Join me next week as we set out on the expedition known as the Fifth Crusade.

Now, just before we go this week, I thought I'd take an opportunity to remind you of the Podcast's on-line presence. You can follow the Podcast on Twitter, @HistoryCrusades. If you do so, you'll receive a tweet when the next episode is ready to download, and I will also re-tweet anything I find on Twitter of relevance to the Crusades. There also seems to be something going on on Twitter to do with Lego Crusades. I'm not sure what that's about, but you can find out if you follow us on Twitter.

There's also Facebook. You can find us if you do a search on Facebook for "History of Crusades Podcast". If you like the page, you will also be notified each time an episode is available to download. Facebookers will also be first to know about things like equipment failure, and other conversations about stuff relevant to the Podcast.

The Podcast also has its own page on the Internet, and you can find it at HistoryOfTheCrusades.webs.com. The page has links to all the episodes, and also the all-important Donation button, which you can press should you want to throw some money my way. Every little bit of money, of course, is always gratefully received. You can also find links to episodes on the Podcast's hosting site, which you can find at www.HistoryOfTheCrusades.podomatic.com.

And that's about it for our online presence. Just thought I'd let you know. Until next week, bye for now.

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