

History of the Crusades.
Episode 178.
The Crusade Against the Cathars.
The Storming of The Wall.

Hello again. Last week we saw the Franciscan friar Bernard Delicieux take a stand against the Inquisition, traveling north to meet with the King of France in an attempt to get the French crown to rein in the Dominican Friars and their excessive Inquiries. King Philip IV did impose some restrictions on the Inquisitors, but to Bernard, he didn't go far enough, and at the conclusion of last week's episode we saw him encourage the citizens of Carcassonne themselves to rise up against the Inquisitors.

Now, astute listeners may have noticed that in last week's episode I wrongly referred to Bishop Castanet as the Bishop of Toulouse. Bishop Castanet was, of course, the Bishop of Albi, not the Bishop of Toulouse. So when I referred to the citizens of Toulouse making life difficult for Bishop Castanet, I should have said, of course, the citizens of Albi, not the citizens of Toulouse. Just again, so we're all clear, Bishop Castanet is definitely the Bishop of Albi. Okay, back to the narrative.

Now, in response to Bernard's call for action, the chief Inquisitor of Carcassonne, Geoffroy d'Ablis, raced back from Toulouse to Carcassonne, and informed the people of the town that he would provide a formal response to Bernard's sermon in one week's time in a speech of his own. Bernard used the intervening week well, speaking publicly not only in churches but in the streets, encouraging, empowering and comforting the people of Carcassonne, and dropping little hints to them in the form of parables. Parables such as informing his flock that they had to tend carefully to their gardens and pull out the offending weeds, roots and all. Bernard seemed to read the people's mood well. He didn't use incendiary language that would ignite them into immediate action. Instead, he kept them at a quiet simmer, formulating in their minds the idea of rising up against the Inquisition, maintaining the rage while carefully keeping that rage from boiling over, for the moment, at least.

In contrast Geoffroy d'Ablis didn't read the mood of the people well. It's safe to say that Geoffroy d'Ablis wasn't really a man of the people. Aside from the fact that he was the face of the Inquisition in Carcassonne, he was also a northern Frenchman and an intellectual. Raised in the town of Ablis, southwest of Paris. He had been educated at the esteemed school at Chartres, then had gone on to earn a master's degree in the field of theology.

His response to Bernard's fiery sermons to the people was to give them a lecture. Having consulted with his lawyers, Geoffroy's approach was to appeal to people's intellect and reason. He pointed out that the Citizen's Council of Carcassonne had signed an agreement with the Dominican Order back in 1299, and as such the Inquisition was based on a sound legal footing. The lecture didn't go down well. At first people listened in silence. Then someone started to quietly hiss. The hissing spread. Then people started to whistle and call out. One hardy individual yelled out to the chief Inquisitor that he wanted to look at the document itself. Then the jostling began, and the crowd surged forward. The chief Inquisitor and the Bishop of Carcassonne, who was supporting him, decided it might be time to leave, and they departed quickly via a door behind the stage.

And that was the last straw. A full blown riot erupted. The first target of the angry citizens were the houses of the men who had been counselors back in 1299, and who had signed

the accord with the Inquisition, creating the document now relied upon by Geoffroy d'Ablis. The wealthy houses of Carcassonne's most esteemed citizens had their windows smashed, then torches were thrown inside. As the flames of the destroyed houses lit up the hot August night, Bernard may well have smiled a small smile of satisfaction. The uprising he had called for had started.

In a wise move, the chief Inquisitor Geoffroy d'Ablis decided it might be a good time to leave Carcassonne temporarily, along with his staff and fellow Inquisitors. So they all upped and left for Toulouse. That left the remaining Dominican friars in the city as the main targets for the people's anger. They were jeered at and jostled in the streets, and a group of men broke into a Dominican church and vandalized it.

For Bernard though, this wasn't enough. The Inquisitors may have left Carcassonne, but only temporarily. Bernard knew they would return as soon as the people calmed down. For Bernard, the symbol of the terrors and injustices of the Inquisition in the city of Carcassonne was the despised prison, The Wall, and to Bernard, destroying the wall became his priority.

Destroying a prison, however, was a serious move and would be no easy task. The building itself was the property of the French crown, and Bernard really needed to consult with the King's man in Carcassonne, Jean de Picquigny, before making his next move. Trouble was, Jean de Picquigny was still making his way back to Carcassonne from the Agenais. He was taking his time returning to the city, possibly not wishing to travel quickly in the hot summer weather, probably wanting to delay for as long as possible dealing with the mess that awaited him at Carcassonne. But eventually Jean de Picquigny did return to Carcassonne, and he had barely settled back into his lodgings when Bernard requested a meeting.

Bernard advised Jean that Carcassonne was a simmering cauldron of discontent, and that the city was on the verge of erupting into a full blown rebellion, a rebellion which may spread across southern France, taking the whole of Languedoc out of the control of the Kingdom of France. The only way to quench the flames of rebellion, said Bernard, was to satisfy the demands of the people. And what were the people demanding? Well, they were demanding that the prisoners inside The Wall all be released.

The situation was a total headache for Jean de Picquigny. While the prison was the property of the French crown, meaning that technically Jean had the authority to shut it down, it was run by the Dominican Friars, and they no doubt would oppose any move to release the people they had imprisoned. So closing the prison would bring Jean, as representative of Philip the Fair, in direct conflict with the Dominican Order, something King Philip would no doubt wish to avoid. However, King Philip would like losing the province of Languedoc even less. So Jean had a decision to make. By the time he had made his decision, the end of August 1303 was approaching. As summer was coming to a close, Jean informed Bernard of his momentous decision: it was time to shut down The Wall.

Quite appropriately, it was the citizens of Carcassonne who stormed The Wall one summer's morning in August 1303. Armed with sticks, clubs, swords, daggers, and really anything they could lay their hands on, they formed a group behind the man who had the authority to close the hated prison, Jean de Picquigny. Jean surrounded himself with a contingent of royal soldiers, and they marched to the outer gate of the wall, the rowdy and

aggressive bunch of citizens at their backs. Sensibly, the guards let the group through the outer gate, but when they reached the prison its doors, unsurprisingly, were locked and barred. Jean called out and ordered the doors to be opened. Nothing happened.

As the townsfolk grew restless and readied themselves to fight, a strange thing occurred. Pieces of parchment drifted down from a window above and landed at Jean's feet. Jean picked them up and read them. In typical Dominican style, the friars inside the prison had decided to document everything that was occurring. Not only were they busy noting everything down, they wanted Jean to know they were busily noting everything down. It was a signal from the Order to the King's representative that they would not be letting this matter rest. Jean gathered the documents and the prison door swung open. Jean went inside.

He emerged not long after, with groups of prisoners blinking in the sunlight, unable to believe their luck at being set free. A great cheer rose up from the gathered crowd, and it seemed that the citizens of Carcassonne, like the rams in the parable related by Bernard Delicieux in his infamous sermon of 4th of August, had driven the butcher Inquisitors back from their meadow.

Which would have been great, but they hadn't. The situation was actually a lot more complicated than that. Once again, Jean de Picquigny was in an awkward situation. He was there not to serve the people of Carcassonne or to carry out the wishes of Bernard Delicieux. No, he was there to preserve the interests of his King, Philip the Fair. At this point in time, in Italy, Philip the Fair was getting ready to effectively King-hit the Pope, and deal him a blow from which the Papacy itself would struggle to recover.

Okay, this probably needs a bit of background. Let's take a look at the Pope, whose fate is about to be sealed by the French King. Pope Boniface VIII, or "Bonifacet" if you prefer the Italian pronunciation, is an interesting man, and one of only eight popes to make it into E. R. Chamberlin's book "The Bad Popes". Elected to the Papacy in 1294 after the forgettable reign of hopeless old Celestine V, Pope Boniface seemed to be made for the role. Like Pope Innocent III, Boniface had been an Italian lawyer and scholar and, like Pope Innocent, he believed the Pope to be the most powerful of all men, with Kings and other underlings lurking somewhere far below him in the hierarchy. Now Pope Boniface did have some good points. He established a university in Rome and re-established the Vatican Library. He also came up with the idea for the Jubilee which was held in the year 1300, which, in addition to being a wildly successful fundraiser, provided the means for the Authie brothers to travel incognito to Toulouse.

But he also had his bad points. He was arrogant, ambitious and 100% sure of his intellectual superiority over all other mortals. He indulged his family and engaged in open and rampant nepotism, using Church funds to enrich his relatives and also to batter down their traditional family rivals. It was safe to say that Pope Boniface was not really a Pope of the People, and he rubbed a lot of people the wrong way. The great poet of the 14th century, Dante Aligheri, was one person who absolutely loathed Pope Boniface, with some justification, as the Pope's actions indirectly led to Dante's exile from his home town of Florence. But Dante had his revenge. In his famous work "The Divine Comedy", Boniface is dragged through hell, through purgatory, and through paradise, before being brought before St Peter, who proceeds to give Boniface an earful. What does Dante's Saint Peter say to Boniface? Well, he condemns him with the following words, and I quote "He who usurps my place upon the earth, my place, my place, my place, has made of my cemetery

a sewer of blood and stench, whereby the evil one who fell from here, below there, is appeased." End quote. Ouch.

But Pope Boniface didn't just get the greatest writer of the age offside. No, it was Boniface's misfortune that one of the lowly Kings of Europe, who Boniface believed he was superior to, happened to be Philip the Fair. Now it's safe to say that Philip the Fair didn't agree with the Papal assessment about who was superior to who. In fact it was Philip the Fair's intention to grind to the office of the Papacy into the ground and make it do his bidding, because to Philip the Fair, he was the most powerful man in Europe and the Pope should do his bidding, not the other way around.

The first shot in the game of one-up-manship between the two men had been fired by Pope Boniface back in 1296, when he issued a Papal Bull forbidding Church property to be given away to any secular power. This was a direct challenge to the French crown, as King Philip had been taxing Church property to fund his military campaign against England. King Philip hit back instantly. Before the Papal Bull had even been promulgated, his lawyers enacted a decree forbidding the export of French money for any purpose whatsoever, and preventing foreigners from residing in France. So, in a double blow against Pope Boniface, not only had the lucrative sources of Papal revenue from French churches vanished, Papal officials in France were suddenly illegal residents who risked being expelled from the country. A stand-off between the two men followed. The Pope quietly penned a couple of documents reducing the impact of his Papal Bull, and King Philip didn't enforce his law regarding the export of French money.

But tensions between the two continued to simmer, waxing and waning over the next couple of years, until Pope Boniface broke first. In December 1301 he reactivated the Papal Bull which expressly forbade taxing the clergy, and he sent a written summons to the French Bishops demanding that they travel to Rome to, and I quote "take counsel touching the excesses, crimes, and acts of violence committed by the King of France and his officers on the Body of the Holy Church." End quote. The Bishops, not wanting to get into the bad books of their Pope or their King, were unsure how to respond, and sent letters to the Pope pleading with him to be a bit more reasonable.

It didn't work. A few weeks later, Pope Boniface issued another Papal Bull, declaring once and for all that he was the superior being and stating that the papacy held power over all, and to defy the Pope was to invite economic, social and spiritual death. Philip the Fair didn't appreciate this, and he sent a short response to the Bull back to Rome. What did the response say? Well, here it is in full, and I quote. "To Boniface who calls himself Pope, little or no greeting. Let your stupendous fatuity know that in temporal matters we are subject to no man." End quote. Pope Boniface's response was equally as short and insulting. It stated, and I quote "Our predecessors have deposed three Kings of France. Know we can depose you like a stable boy if it prove necessary." End quote.

Okay, so the gloves are now off. Both men are now intent on destroying the other bloke and squashing and exterminating him like the bug that he is. Pope Boniface put his pieces into play first. He reiterated his demand that the French Bishops come to Rome to answer for their King, but raised the stakes, threatening to excommunicate every last one of them if they failed to comply with the order. King Philip responded in a move that deserves points for both originality and imagination. He called a council to effectively examine the crimes of Pope Boniface and lay them bare for all of Europe to see. What were the crimes

that Philip the Fair accused the Pope of? Well, sodomy, simony, parricide, nepotism, and, wait for it, heresy.

The clerics of France were caught between a rock and a hard place, but being forced to choose between two massive and powerful egos, most of them chose to throw their lot in with their King. Consequently, across France sermons rang out deploring the sins of the Pope and praising the fabulous Philip the Fair.

Now, at this stage around the year 1302, both sides were shoring up their support and trying to get as many powerful players as possible in their corners. The Dominican Friars of France were no doubt powerful men, men who Philip the Fair wanted firmly on his side. He was doing his best to appease the friars and tempt them to his side, when Pope Boniface launched a missile in France's direction in the form of his famous, or possibly infamous Papal Bull "Unam Sanctam".

"Unam Sanctam" stated explicitly and in unambiguous terms, the Papal position by declaring, and I quote, "It is necessary for salvation that all human creatures should be subject to the Roman Pontiff." End quote. To Pope Boniface it was the final word. The battle was over. He was the supreme operator, and he had won.

But the Pope had underestimated his opponent. In February 1303 a rising star amongst the King's advisors, a man called Guillaume de Nogaret, was consulting with King Philip and formulating a plan of action.

Now in the future, Guillaume de Nogaret will rise to be King Philip's right-hand man, and will do some absolutely stomach-churning things in service of his King. In fact, I'm sure modern day psychiatrists and psychologists would have a field-day analyzing Guillaume de Nogaret, because not only were his family from southern France, they were Cathars. Both his parents had been Cathars and one of his relatives had been burned alive as a heretic. However, Guillaume de Nogaret has renounced his Cathar heritage and is now happy to pursue other heretics, with a zeal that is difficult to comprehend.

Anyway, around the same time as Jean de Picquigny is storming the wall on behalf of the French crown, Guillaume de Nogaret is in Tuscany on behalf of the French crown, about to deliver King Philip's knock-out blow to Pope Boniface. Pope Boniface has armed himself by drafting a document excommunicating King Philip, but he won't have a chance to put it into effect, because on the 6th of September, in a week or so's time, Nogaret, along with a group of armed men, will storm the palace where Pope Boniface is currently residing. They will rough him up and effectively imprison him for three days. No one knows exactly what went on during those three days, but Boniface will emerge a broken man, and will die not long after. The next Pope will be a Dominican, but he won't last very long, and the Pope after him will be French. He will move the Papal seat to Avignon in France and will do Philip the Fair's bidding. In the epic battle of French King versus Pope, King Philip will emerge the victor.

But, as Jean de Picquigny is removing prisoners from the despised prison in Carcassonne, Nogaret hasn't yet delivered King Philip's knockout punch. He is still in Tuscany, putting the final flourishes on his plan. So with the Dominican Friars being powerful players in the Catholic Church, Jean, as the King's representative, can't afford to overtly antagonize them. So, much to the disappointment and probably horror of Bernard Delicieux, while Jean de Picquigny does remove the Dominican prisoners from The Wall, he doesn't

release them. Instead, he removes them into royal custody, where they will be treated more humanely, but will still be prisoners. As such, the King's man has not accused the Inquisitors of falsely charging or imprisoning the men. Instead, he has limited the concerns of the French crown to the conditions of the men's detention. Therefore, Jean has managed to tread the very fine line between addressing the concerns of the people of Carcassonne, while not setting the Dominicans against the French King.

How will Bernard react to this? Well, you'll have to tune in next week to find out. Until next week, bye for now.

End