

What are the Middle Ages? Term from the Enlightenment to denote the period between the glory of the Classical world and the rebirth and rediscovery of the Renaissance – the middle period.

410 Rome sacked

455 Rome sacked

476 “Fall of the Roman Empire” – that is the last western emperor Romulus Augustulus is deposed and leaves the governance of Rome and the Empire to the Germanic tribes and their leaders

End date 1453 – Constantinople falls to the Turks the end of the Byzantine empire – their heirs to the Roman Empire

1453 – Gutenberg’s printing press – prints Luther theses and sparks Reformation

1492 Columbus sails – all world history

What do you think of when you think of the medieval church.

Medieval Society

The Three Orders: Church, Military, Peasants  
Cities vs. Rural Focus

Backup to Constantine

The Roman empire has become divided under Diocletian who found the vast empire ungovernable by one emperor – made himself eastern emperor and friend Maximian western emperor

Constantine succeeds Diocletian (persecutions against Christians 303-311 longest and bloodiest)

312 Battle of Milvian Bridge see vision of Chi Rho and is told *in hic signo vincit*, in this sign you will conquer Defeats rival Maxentius to rule Italy, Africa and entire western empire.

He issues Edict of Tolerance Xians no longer persecuted.

313 with Licinius Edict of Milan – restores confiscated property to Xians

324 defeats eastern ruler Licinius and rules the whole empire and moves capital to Constantinople (Byzantium)

Dies 327 – Divides kingdom between sons

Christian church becomes united to the ruling state. – steadily grows and spreads – most subsequent emperors are Xtian notable exception is Julian the Apostate 332-63 who tries to reinstate paganism as main religion.

We know Xtianity is spreading because about a century after Constantine's Edict a Roman writer expresses surprise at adult baptisms which means many if not most people are baptizing their infants.

Decline of Roman Empire:

- 1.No longer expanding frontiers – conquest, goods and slaves
2. Unfettered immigration- barbarian invasions – by the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> ½ the population of Roman not Roman 70,000,000 people –Most of army not Romans but Germans
3. 10,000 miles of frontier to defend
4. Declining birth rate
5. Pressure on “middle class” due to high taxes economic decline
6. Poor leadership

Vandals, Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Lombards, Suevi, Alans, Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Huns under Attila move into the Empire

Post-Roman world - Germanic tribes rural not city dwellers like the Romans. In this world the church becomes increasingly important – the “foster mother” of the new civilization

Spread of Xtianity

Missionaries to the Germanic Tribes

- 1.Martin of Tours – Monk and Missionary, Father of Monasticism in Gaul founded monastery at Poitier in France (362) soldier turned monk/hermit and eventually becomes bishop
2. Boniface – Apostle of the Germans established various bishoprics, worked for reform,
3. Ulfila – Visigoths – Arian but gives written language to Goths – first work of Gothic literature
4. King Clovis (480-511) – Queen Radegunda

Desert Fathers and Mothers 3<sup>rd</sup> c. Egypt fled temptations of cities to live solitary lives of prayer

Monastic ideal through Athanasius's Life of Anthony (251-356)

Council of Chalcedon (451) sets up rules for monastics – who can be admitted, vows are irrevocable and monasteries were not to be organized or left w/o bishop's permission

## Monasticism

Rule of St. Benedict – Benedict of Nursia (480-547)

Goes to study in Rome and disgusted by the city Retreats from world to become a monk  
– is asked to become abbot by other local monks and reluctantly agrees

Founds monastery at Monte Cassino 60 miles south of Rome

Little else known about his life – recorded by Pope Gregory the Great. Tradition holds he had a twin sister St. Scholastica.

1<sup>st</sup> written Rule and model for all subsequent Rules

Levels of literacy declined after the fall of Rome and the Church became the repository and keeper of not only the Gospels but other classical works.

How the Irish Saved Civilization? – this is what Thomas Cahill is talking about-  
civilization being preserved in the monasteries

## Celtic Christianity

Works of art

Lindisfarne Gospels 696-98

Book of Kells and Skellig

Early 9<sup>th</sup> c Viking raids

## Timeline

- 311 Constantine becomes Emperor
- 312 Edict of Tolerance
- 313 Edict of Milan
- 327 Constantine dies
- 410 Rome falls to Germanic invaders
- 455 Rome sacked
- 476 Last emperor of Rome deposed