

The Cathars: Introduction



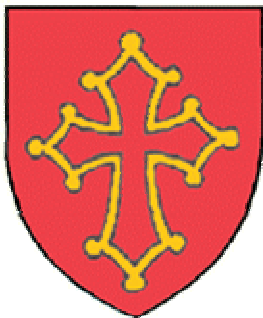
"It is a warm summer evening in the Great Hall of the Count of Toulouse, Raymond VI. A dozen people are chatting around a long oak table which is creaking under the weight of the finest summer fruits, and a wild boar is being slowly turned over open coals. Hanging on the wall behind the table is the flag of Toulouse: the gold outline of a Christian Cross on a red background.

Raymond sits in the centre of the table in his knight's armour, relaxed and happy. The harvest here in the South of France has been very good this year. To his right is a priest, who blesses the food

before he starts to eat. The other guests – a mixture of men, women and children, applaud as a pair of Troubadours (poet-musicians) make their entrance and start singing and reciting poetry. Raymond proudly looks around, aware that his court has the reputation of being the most cultured in all Europe.

Suddenly, the happy atmosphere is destroyed – a messenger comes rushing in - breathlessly announces that the Pope has declared a Crusade (Holy War) against the South of France - 10,000 heavily armed soldiers are making plans to destroy its major cities: Beziers –

Carcassonne – Toulouse - Albi – Montsegur! The music stops. Everyone falls silent. Raymond picks up his goblet and takes a deep gulp of blood-red wine. This is serious".



We do not know exactly what happened when Raymond of Toulouse heard that the Pope had declared a Crusade against Occitania, the area which today covers Southern France and parts of Northern Spain. What we do know is that this Crusade cost 500,000 lives, tore France into pieces, and seriously damaged the reputation of the Pope and the Catholic Church.

In this unit, you will form your own answers to these questions:

- Why did the Pope declare a Holy War against people who called themselves Christians?
- What were the main events of the Crusade? What do these tell us about the feelings of people who fought in them?
- What were the results of the Crusade for Southern France, for Europe, and for the Catholic Church?

Task 1

Produce a picture to illustrate the events described in the story at the start of this page. Your job is to include the people, clothes and objects described as accurately as you can.

For extra marks, label your drawing: e.g. the flag of Toulouse, Raymond, the Messenger, the Troubadours and so on.