**Objective 2:** Describe the role of religion in Medieval Europe

1. How the Catholic Church influenced medieval life in positive and negative ways.
2. The problems faced by Jews and Muslims in Europe.
3. The causes and effects of the Crusades.

**Vocabulary:**

1. Abbey: Home to monks or nuns
2. Anti-Semitism: Prejudice against Jews
3. Bishop: Leader of all Christians in a diocese, or region
4. Crusade: A war fought for a religious reason
5. Excommunication: Exclusion from the Catholic Church
6. Pope: Leader of all Roman Catholics
7. Tithe: A tax due to the Church equal to one-tenth of a person’s income.

**“Clergy in the Middle Ages” by Sharon Fabian**

The Middle Ages had kings, lords, knights, and serfs. At the same time, the Catholic Church, the only Christian church in the Middle Ages, had a similar hierarchy. The pope was the leader of the church. The archbishops and bishops ruled large areas under the direction of the pope. The priests were each in charge of their local parish under the direction of their bishop. The priests and the other church leaders together were known as the clergy. The parish was made up of all of the church members in the area, and in the Middle Ages, this was nearly everyone.

The church was very important to the people of the Middle Ages. It was definitely not just for Sundays. Medieval people believed in heaven and hell, and they believed that they must do whatever the clergy told them to do in order to get into heaven and to avoid the fires of hell.

One thing they were told to do was to pay taxes, called tithes, to the church. A tithe was one-tenth of a person's income. It could be paid in cash or in goods, such as crops or cattle. People in the Middle Ages also paid for certain church services such as marriages, baptisms, and burials. They were willing to pay because they believed that the Church would only allow them into heaven if they had been baptized, married in the church, and buried in holy ground.

If someone opposed a teaching of the church, the clergy could excommunicate him. That meant that the person was no longer a member of the church. Excommunication was the worst punishment that a person could get from the church - here on earth.

The pope had the final decision about all church matters. He was the leader in charge of all of the bishops, archbishops, priests, and people. In the Middle Ages, the pope was a powerful leader, almost like a king. The bishops and archbishops each ruled over their own area, called a diocese. They supervised the priests and also the monks and nuns in their area. They also conducted the church's business. Bishops were often from rich, noble families. They were not only leaders of the church; they also played a large role in the government. Bishops sometimes advised kings and often participated in politics.

A priest was in charge of each parish. He would say mass, conduct other religious services, minister to the sick, and give out alms, or charity, to the poor. Sometimes, if priests could read and write, they kept written records of important information in their town. These may have been the only records kept at that time. Priests also collected tithes from their parishioners. Priests in the Middle Ages were not usually from noble families, and they often had little education themselves. Even so, they often conducted classes to teach Latin and Bible lessons to the young people of the parish.

Priests also taught their parishioners the beliefs of the Catholic Church. They taught that the Pope was infallible, which means that anything he said about religious matters could not be wrong. They taught that the way to heaven was through the Catholic Church. They taught that clergy were more holy than ordinary people. They taught people what they must do to be saved.

The clergy were important leaders in the Middle Ages. They were respected and sometimes feared. Medieval people looked at their clergy as the bridge between God and men.

**“Monks and Nuns” by Sharon Fabian**

Monks and nuns in the Middle Ages lived in a world apart from the lords and ladies, knights, serfs, and all of the other medieval people. Their lifestyle kept them separate from the rest of the world. The place where they lived was arranged so that the monks or nuns didn't need to go outside of their own walls. Their communities were self-sufficient. They raised their own food and built their own buildings. The buildings where the monks lived were called monasteries. The nuns' buildings were called nunneries. Either one could also be called an abbey.

The typical day of a monk or nun was much different from the typical day of other medieval people. Keep reading to learn about the day of one medieval monk.

At 2:00 AM, our monk wakes to the sound of bells calling him to prayer. This prayer, called "Opus Dei" or "God's work," is the most important prayer of the day. He prays in Latin, along with the other monks at the monastery. After the long prayer, he naps for a few hours until he is awakened by the bells calling him to sunrise prayer. Again, he prays in Latin along with the other monks.

Throughout the day, bells will call our monk to prayer at three-hour intervals. All together, he will spend about five hours praying. In between the prayers, our monk attends to his other duties. One of his duties is meditation. When he meditates, he prays silently or thinks about spiritual things. He may study the Bible or other religious writings.

Another one of his duties is work on the farm. The monks at this monastery raise their own crops, and it takes many hours of work each day to get the farm chores done. Other monks might work on building a new building inside the monastery walls. Others might welcome a group of travelers who have no where else to stay.

During another break between prayers, our monk walks to the scriptorium where he uses his quill pen and ink to copy a page from an ancient book. Every day, he picks up where he left off and copies another page or two. By the middle of next year, he should have this book finished. Other monks paint the illuminations, the colorful, decorated capital letters that begin many of the pages. The finished book will be kept in the monastery's library, the only library in the town.

Since this is summer, and the monks work hard on the farm, their day is interrupted twice for meals. In the winter, only one meal is served each day. The monks all look alike lined up at their long dining tables, each one wearing the same long, black, woolen robe. The black color indicates that these are Benedictine monks, followers of the rules of Saint Benedict.

Saint Benedict's rules are very strict. By following his rules, our monk makes sure that he complies with his religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. All of the monks have already promised to keep these vows. So, they cannot earn money or buy things, they cannot get married, and they must follow all of the rules every day without question.

Our monk follows the rules today, as he does every day. He alternates work sessions with prayer sessions until midnight. Then he sleeps for a few short hours until 2:00 AM, when the bells will awaken him for tomorrow morning's prayers.

**“The First Crusade” by Sharon Fabian**

Palestine, sometimes called the Holy Land, has seen more than its share of troubles. It has been at the center of many fights over the centuries. In the Middle Ages, it was the scene of the First Crusade.

The First Crusade began in 1095 when Pope Urban II made a speech in France. In his speech, he described attacks by Turkish Muslims on Christians of the Byzantine Empire. He called on European Christians to rush to defend the Holy Land from the Turks.

The offer of a papal indulgence, or forgiveness of all of a person's sins, encouraged many people to join the crusade. Serfs were allowed to leave the land they worked on to join the crusade. Crusaders were also excused from paying taxes. People from all walks of life, and from several nations, joined for a variety of reasons. Some people joined because of religious enthusiasm. Some joined with the hope of gaining land, wealth, or power.

Soon, thousands of crusaders had joined, each wearing the red crusader's cross and shouting the battle cry, "God wills it!" While the official armies were forming, an unofficial army of crusaders was growing larger and larger too. This throng was led by Peter the Hermit, a monk who had the gift of persuasive speech that could stir up a crowd to follow him. His group of unofficial peasant crusaders included men, women, and children. It became known as "the people's crusade" and eventually grew to a force of more than 10,000. The official troops, commanded by Godfrey of Bouillon and other leaders, also included thousands of soldiers.

Both groups marched toward Palestine. Along the way, some of the crusaders decided that they should begin fighting the enemies of Christianity closer to home. They attacked Muslims and Jews along the way. Many people died in these bloody fights.

By 1097, the armies arrived in the Holy Land, on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea. They recaptured Nicaea, which had fallen to the Turks ten years earlier. The crusaders also prevailed in Antioch after a long blockade. Eventually, they arrived at Jerusalem, a large and well-fortified city. There, the crusaders set up like knights preparing to attack a castle. They built medieval siege equipment including siege towers for breaking through the city's walls and catapults for firing over them.

In an unusual move, the crusaders also marched in a solemn parade around the city's walls, possible hoping that it would crumble like the walls of Jericho in the Bible story. It didn't.

The siege of Jerusalem wasn't meeting with much success either, until another unusual event inspired the crusaders. The inspiring event was the discovery of a lance, supposedly the very lance used to stab Christ on the cross. The discovery gave the crusaders renewed energy. They fought on, crying, "God wills it!" and were eventually victorious. Jerusalem surrendered, and most of the crusaders went home. Others stayed and ruled lands that became known as the four Latin states of Edessa, Tripoli, Antioch, and Jerusalem.

The First Crusade was just one in a long, long series of wars in the Middle East. People all over the world are still affected by these conflicts today.

**Objective 2 Homework Assignment**

Directions: Read the articles “The Clergy in the Middle Ages,” “Monks and Nuns,” and “The First Crusade.” Then answer the questions below in complete sentences on a separate piece of paper:

1. Describe the hierarchy, or ranking of officials, of the medieval Church. Who was in charge of the Church? Who was below him?
2. Why did most medieval people obey the Catholic Church?
3. What were the responsibilities of a parish priest?
4. What was daily life like for a monk? Identify at least three things that a monk had to do each day.
5. What were the three vows that monks had to take?
6. Why did Pope Urban II call the First Crusade?
7. Why did people choose to fight in the Crusades? Name at least two reasons.