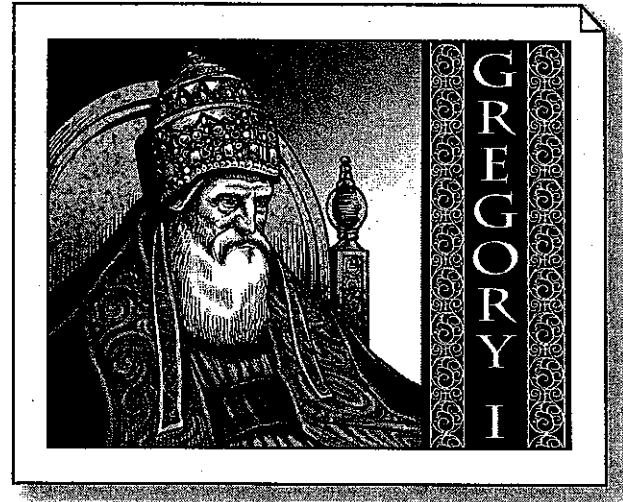




# The Church's Power Grows

In the centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire, the Roman Catholic Church became more organized and powerful. Throughout the Middle Ages, the Church played a huge role in the growth of European civilization.

By the fourth century, the Church had developed a system of organization. Local Christian communities were called parishes and were led by priests. A group of parishes was headed by a bishop. In early times, all bishops were thought to be equals. However, this changed over time. Gradually, the bishops from five of the most important cities gained power.



The bishops of Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Constantinople became the most powerful men in the Roman Catholic Church. Eventually, the bishop of Rome said that he should have authority over all the other bishops. He argued that Peter, one of the earliest leaders of Christianity, was the father of the Church and the first bishop of Rome. Therefore, the Roman bishop should have more power than other bishops. Although the other cities disagreed, the bishop of Rome became known as the Pope. "Pope" means "father" in Latin and Greek.

Western Christians accepted the Pope as head of the Roman Catholic Church. The Pope started as a religious leader but later gained political power, too. Because of Gregory I, the Church claimed political power as well as spiritual power. Gregory I served as Pope from 590 to 604. He was the head of the Church and leader of the city of Rome.

The Roman Catholic Church had influence over everything in Europe, from political events to the daily lives of peasants. Kings started wars in the name of Christianity. Missionaries spread their faith across Europe. The Church's power grew.

As the power of the Church multiplied, discipline weakened. Clergymen, like bishops and archbishops, were often noblemen who were given their positions by family members. Some did not care about their spiritual duties. Because churchmen were often the only educated people, they were given high government positions. Some Church officials became corrupt and worldly.

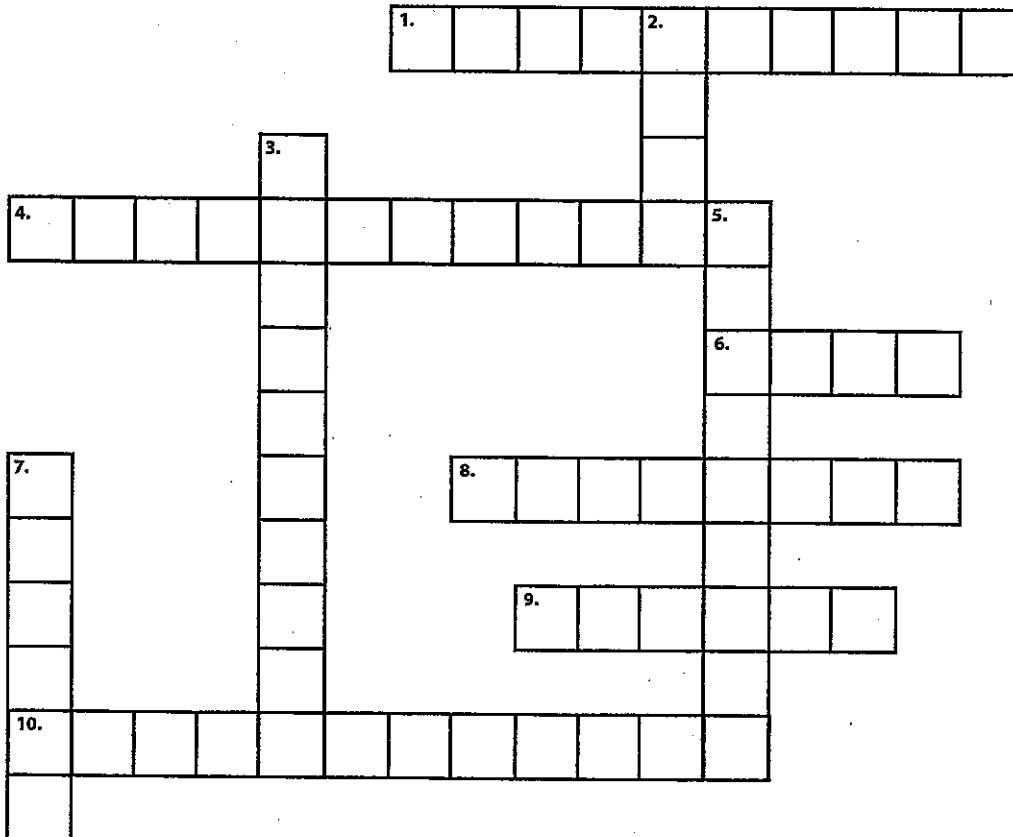
Church leaders thought that all of Europe should be brought together under the Roman Catholic Church. Medieval Popes claimed papal supremacy, or authority over all nonreligious rulers. Popes had ways to reverse decisions made by rulers of countries, such as the kings of France and England. By the Middle Ages, the Church was the most powerful force in Europe.



# The Church's Power Grows

## Crossword Puzzle

Write the best answer in each blank, and complete the crossword puzzle.



### ACROSS

1. Churchmen were often given high \_\_\_\_\_ positions.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ spread the Christian faith across Europe.
6. The bishop of Rome became known as the \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Clergymen, like bishops and archbishops, were usually \_\_\_\_\_.
9. In early times, all bishops were thought to be \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Kings started wars in the name of \_\_\_\_\_.

### DOWN

2. Gregory I was the head of the Church and the leader of the city of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. By the \_\_\_\_\_, the Church was the most powerful force in Europe.
5. Medieval Popes claimed papal \_\_\_\_\_, or authority over all nonreligious rulers.
7. The Roman Catholic \_\_\_\_\_ had influence over everything in Europe.