



IDAHO KNIGHTLY NEWS

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Editor's Note

If anyone would like to submit an article for the Idaho Knightly News, please email me your article using Microsoft Word. Keep it between 1 page and 1.5 pages.

Upcoming Events:

Idaho Falls Commandery OVJun 10
Idaho Commandery OVJun 13
Salmon Commandery OVJun 19

Chivalry, Part 3

By Barry E. Newell

Charles Martel's descendants would over the next several centuries transform Europe and one would become Emperor and be called the Father of Europe. Christmas Day, 800 AD, at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Charlemagne is crowned as Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Not since the fall of Rome had so much of Europe been under the command of one man. Charlemagne worked on increasing education and raising Europe from the darkness. He also sought to conquer

more land and spread Christianity. He accomplished this with not only infantry, but also by experienced horsemen.

To control this ever-increasing empire, he divided it up into hundreds of counties where a Count was put in charge who answered directly to Charlemagne. He kept a close eye on them and didn't shut himself away, but visited them often. In his travels, he tried to rekindle an age of learning and innovation; even he learned to read and write. He ruled for 14 years as Emperor. In this time as Emperor, when Europe seemed to be coming out of the darkness, he would face a terrible force - the men from the North.

Bands of Vikings, starting in Britain, started invading and plundering villages and cities. Many of these early victims were far enough North that they did not fear too many invaders from the sea so they were unprepared for this force of men who cared nothing for the sanctity of the church and its property. These Vikings left Scandinavia due to overpopulation and the monasteries looked like easy victims just asking to be attacked. Their boats were not only sea-worthy, but could ford up the rivers due to their shallow draft, which made their appearance unexpected. They soon expanded their

attacks from just the British Isles, but to the heart of the Holy Roman Empire itself.

Even bribes couldn't hold back these men and their attacks occurred decades after the death of Charlemagne in 814 AD. In 866 AD, it wasn't just a band, but an army of Vikings that came ashore in Britain to not just plunder, but to take the land. The great city of York fell to the Viking conquest. It wasn't until Alfred the Great that the Viking incursions were pushed back and defeated. He had studied them and realized that with their love of quick plunders they hated attacking fortresses, so that is what he built. The Vikings did not have the siege technology to attack them. Alfred the Great just let the Vikings wear themselves out. Over 25 years of fighting, he pushed them back, but not all of them entirely. Many of the Vikings picked up and moved elsewhere in search of victims, but some stayed and assimilated. At this same time in France, the Carolingian Empire, after the death of Charlemagne, was being divided and fought over by the Lords who helped run this dynasty. The incursions of the Vikings didn't help the situation any further, which would eventually lead to the downfall of this empire where it was nothing more than hundreds of counties and lordships.

Now, through all of these past centuries of battles came the establishment of professional fighting forces. With innovations such as the stirrup for horse riding, mounted soldiers were expensive and usually attached to a Lord or men of wealth. These men were not necessarily the knights we think of today, many of them were just men who were required to pay a service to their Lord. They cared more about the coin and could easily be compared to a mercenary. They were hired thugs often to invade

another Lord's land and force them under the Lord who had hired them. The knights we think of today wouldn't come about til around and after the Crusades, nor did the synonymous belief of knights being from nobility come until the Crusades.

After the abatement of the Viking invasions, many soldiers were unwilling to put down the sword. The Viking invasions had militarized Europe and there were many Lords who were willing to buy their sword to form an army to force their will upon the peasants.

This savagery led the Church to establish rules that these knights must live by or face ex-communication. Part of this policy relied on the superstition of saintly relics. The Church would often say if the knights would not follow the rules the saints associated with the relics would come after the knights and punish them. The Church issued two proclamations on God's position on war and fighting. They were called the Peace of God and the Truce of God.

Pax Dei (Peace of God) proclaimed that certain individuals, particularly the defenseless (peasants and clergy), should not be attacked by knights. Treuga Dei (Truce of God) proclaimed that certain times should be void of fighting by knights (such as the Sabbath Day). The Truce of God seemed particularly to focus on preventing Christian knights from fighting each other. These helped the Church redirect the knights' fighting energy and stem the violence of private wars in a Feudal society. This redirection would soon be pointed towards the Middle East when a call for help came from the Byzantine Emperor and eventually what we now refer to as the Crusades.