



FROM ROME TO NAGASAKI
Session Four Summary
Martyrs of the Medieval Church

When the Church Confronted Kings

The medieval period introduced Christian martyrdom into a world quite different from that of the early Church. During the first centuries of Christianity, martyrdom frequently arose from confrontation between Christians and a Roman political and religious order that regarded Christian refusal to participate in traditional cultic practices as socially disruptive or politically suspect. By the Middle Ages, Christianity had become deeply embedded in European society. Kings were baptized, bishops exercised public authority, monasteries owned property and educated clergy, cathedrals shaped urban life, and Christian worship ordered the calendar of communities. The Church accompanied people from baptism through burial. Christian faith had become part of the institutional and cultural fabric of medieval Europe.

This transformation altered the circumstances in which Christian witness occurred. Conflict could now arise between people who professed the same faith and understood themselves as occupying offices established within a Christian social order. A king was responsible for justice, political stability, territorial security, and the administration of his kingdom. A bishop ordained clergy, supervised churches, taught the faith, exercised ecclesiastical discipline, and cared for the Christian life of his diocese. Bishops could also possess land, advise rulers, and participate in government. These responsibilities frequently existed alongside one another, although serious disagreements arose whenever king and bishop claimed authority over the same matter.

Questions concerning the trial of clergy, the appointment of bishops, and the moral accountability of rulers therefore became important issues within medieval Christianity. The Investiture Controversy of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries revealed the larger dimensions of the problem. Popes and emperors disputed who possessed authority to invest bishops with the symbols of their office, raising broader questions concerning the relationship between ecclesiastical and political authority. The conflict between Thomas Becket and Henry II belonged within this wider medieval discussion.

Understanding these disputes requires entering the conceptual world of medieval Christians. Modern distinctions between religion and politics, Church and state, and public and private life cannot simply be imposed upon medieval society. The people involved understood their responsibilities through categories belonging to their own historical setting. The task of historical study is therefore to listen carefully to that world before judging the people who inhabited it. This becomes especially important when studying martyrs because canonization and centuries of Christian devotion can make the eventual outcome of their lives appear inevitable. Thomas Becket illustrates how misleading that impression can be. His adult life did not begin with preparation for martyrdom. It began with remarkable success in royal government.

Thomas Becket: Chancellor, Archbishop, Exile, and Martyr

Henry II became king of England in 1154 at the age of twenty-one. England was emerging from the prolonged political instability associated with the reign of King Stephen, and Henry devoted considerable energy to restoring royal authority and strengthening the administration of justice. Such a project required capable administrators. Thomas Becket, born in London around 1120 into a prosperous merchant family, had entered the household of Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, where he acquired experience in administration, diplomacy, and ecclesiastical affairs. Theobald recognized his abilities and assisted his advancement.

Henry appointed Thomas royal chancellor in 1155. Thomas became deeply involved in the government of England, representing Henry diplomatically, administering royal business, and participating in court life. The relationship between king and chancellor developed into friendship. This personal history is indispensable for understanding their later conflict. Thomas knew royal government from within because he had helped administer it. He understood Henry's desire for political order and stronger royal authority because he had participated directly in those efforts.

The death of Archbishop Theobald in 1161 created a vacancy at Canterbury. Henry supported Thomas as his successor, presumably expecting the successful partnership between king and chancellor to continue. Thomas was ordained priest and consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury in 1162. His new office, however, placed him within a different sphere of responsibility. As chancellor he had served the king and strengthened royal government. As archbishop he assumed responsibility for the Church in England and for the ecclesiastical rights and liberties that he believed belonged to his office.

Thomas soon resigned the chancellorship, disappointing Henry and signaling a significant change in their relationship. He also adopted a more disciplined religious life. Contemporary accounts describe increasing attention to prayer, fasting, almsgiving, Scripture, and pastoral responsibility. These sources must be read with appropriate historical caution because some were written by admirers who participated in shaping the memory of Thomas after his martyrdom. They nevertheless portray a man whose understanding of himself was changing. Thomas increasingly regarded himself primarily as a bishop rather than as the king's principal servant.

One of the most serious disputes concerned clergy accused of crimes. Clerics were ordinarily tried in ecclesiastical courts, whose penalties differed from those available to royal courts. Henry regarded this arrangement as a threat to consistent justice when clergy were accused of serious crimes. Thomas approached the matter through the Church's responsibility for the discipline of its clergy. The underlying issue concerned jurisdiction: who possessed authority to judge clergy, and where did royal authority end when it encountered the institutional authority of the Church?

By 1163 the disagreement had become increasingly public. Henry demanded recognition of what he considered the ancient customs governing relations between Crown and Church. Thomas hesitated to accept an undefined body of customs, and Henry consequently had them committed to writing. In January 1164, bishops and leading nobles assembled at Clarendon. The resulting sixteen provisions became known as the **Constitutions of Clarendon**. Among the disputed matters were clerical trials, appeals to Rome, and royal influence over ecclesiastical affairs.

Thomas initially offered some form of verbal assent under pressure but subsequently refused formal confirmation after considering the implications of the written provisions. He concluded that some provisions surrendered authority properly belonging to the Church. Henry interpreted Thomas's reversal quite differently, regarding the archbishop as resisting legitimate customs of the kingdom. Their disagreement had now become institutional as well as personal.

The conflict intensified at Northampton in October 1164, where Thomas appeared before the royal court. Charges included financial matters associated with his earlier service as chancellor. Thomas increasingly believed that the proceedings were intended to compel his submission or remove him from office. He appealed to the pope and rejected the royal court's authority over his position as archbishop. Even the English bishops found themselves under considerable pressure as the dispute escalated.

Thomas eventually concluded that remaining in England had become unsafe. In November 1164 he traveled in disguise to the coast, crossed the English Channel, and entered exile. He found refuge in France and lived for a time at the Cistercian abbey of Pontigny. The contrast with his earlier life was considerable. A man accustomed to the household of Archbishop Theobald and the royal court of Henry II now lived apart from Canterbury, dependent upon others for hospitality and unable to govern his church through the ordinary presence of its archbishop.

Exile did not resolve the dispute. Thomas continued his campaign through correspondence, appeals, negotiations, and ecclesiastical measures. Henry exerted pressure upon Thomas's supporters. Pope Alexander III became increasingly involved, supporting Thomas while seeking reconciliation between archbishop and king. Alexander had concerns extending beyond England and recognized the danger posed by a prolonged conflict between an important European monarch and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Nearly six years of exile are essential to understanding Thomas's development.

Concentrating only upon Clarendon and the murder at Canterbury compresses his story into its most dramatic events and overlooks the years during which he lived with the consequences of his decisions. He remained Archbishop of Canterbury while separated from Canterbury. He negotiated with a king who had once been his close political ally and depended upon a pope who supported him while urging reconciliation. Thomas could be difficult and determined, and some of his ecclesiastical actions intensified the conflict. Henry was equally determined to preserve what he understood to be the legitimate rights of the Crown.

Repeated attempts at reconciliation eventually led Henry and Thomas to meet near Fréteval in France in July 1170. The meeting went surprisingly well. They reached an agreement that allowed Thomas to return to England, and surviving accounts preserve indications of personal warmth between them. Something of their former friendship appears to have survived years of conflict. In December 1170 Thomas finally returned to England. He had been away for almost six years. His reception was mixed, and significant disputes remained unresolved. He would live for less than a month.

One unresolved dispute involved the coronation of Henry's eldest surviving son. During Thomas's exile, the Archbishop of York, assisted by other bishops, had performed the coronation. Canterbury traditionally claimed an important role in English royal coronations, and Thomas regarded the action as an infringement upon the rights of his office. Before returning to England he imposed ecclesiastical penalties upon several bishops involved.

The bishops complained to Henry, who was then in France. Henry reacted angrily. Later chroniclers preserved different versions of his words. The famous sentence, **“Will no one rid me of this troublesome priest?”**, therefore should not be treated as a verbatim transcript. The historical point that can be stated with greater confidence is that Henry expressed intense anger concerning Thomas in the presence of members of his court.

Four knights, Reginald FitzUrse, Hugh de Morville, William de Tracy, and Richard le Breton, subsequently left the royal court, crossed the Channel, and traveled to Canterbury. The evidence does not establish that Henry formally ordered Thomas's murder. The knights apparently concluded that acting against the archbishop would serve their king. They arrived in Canterbury on December 29, 1170, confronted Thomas in his residence, and demanded action concerning the disciplined bishops and his opposition to royal authority. The confrontation deteriorated, and the knights departed to retrieve their weapons.

As evening approached, the monks were preparing for Vespers in Canterbury Cathedral. Thomas entered the cathedral. Members of his household attempted to secure the doors, but he ordered that they remain open. The armed knights entered, renewed their demands, and attacked him near the choir. Thomas Becket died on the floor of Canterbury Cathedral on December 29, 1170.

The murder immediately transformed the historical significance of the conflict. The Archbishop of Canterbury had been killed in his cathedral by men associated with the royal court during the Christmas season, only weeks after returning from exile. Pilgrims began visiting the tomb of Thomas, accounts of miracles and healings circulated, and devotion spread outside England. Pope Alexander III canonized Thomas in 1173. Canterbury subsequently became one of medieval Christianity's great pilgrimage destinations.

Henry denied having ordered the murder, and the surviving evidence does not demonstrate that he intended Thomas to be killed. His involvement in the larger conflict, however, could not be separated from the circumstances that produced the murder. In 1174 Henry traveled to Canterbury and performed public penance at the tomb of Thomas. The symbolism was extraordinary. The king who had selected Thomas as chancellor, trusted him as a friend, and supported his elevation to Canterbury now knelt as a penitent at the tomb of the man whose death had become permanently associated with their struggle.

Thomas's story consequently should not begin with his murder. Clarendon required him to consider the limits of royal authority over the Church. Northampton led to decisions that resulted in exile. Six years abroad required him to live with those decisions while continuing to defend his understanding of episcopal responsibility and negotiate for reconciliation. His final return brought him once again into the cathedral and Christian community entrusted to his care.

Seen from this perspective, martyrdom appears within a longer process of Christian formation and vocation. The violent death remains historically dramatic, but the formation preceding it unfolded through accumulated decisions, responsibilities, worship, relationships, conflicts, and choices. Thomas's final witness emerged from a vocation that had developed over years.

Stanislaus of Kraków: Bishop and King

Thomas Becket's conflict occurred within a Christian kingdom and involved a Christian king. This distinguishes his martyrdom from many early Christian accounts in which believers confronted Roman authorities demanding religious practices they could not accept. Medieval Christian witness could involve conflict among people who belonged to the same Church. Another example appears in the story of Stanislaus of Kraków, although the surviving historical evidence for Stanislaus is considerably thinner than that available for Thomas.

Christianity had become established in Poland following the baptism of Duke Mieszko I in 966. As Polish Christianity and the monarchy developed together, bishops acquired important roles in society. Stanislaus became Bishop of Kraków around 1072 during the reign of Bolesław II, known as Bolesław the Bold. A serious conflict eventually developed between bishop and king. The earliest evidence establishes that this conflict ended with the death of Stanislaus in 1079. Later Christian

tradition elaborated the story, portraying Stanislaus as confronting Bolesław concerning his conduct and imposing ecclesiastical discipline upon him.

The story raises an important question about medieval episcopal vocation: **What responsibility does a bishop have when the conduct of a Christian ruler becomes a pastoral concern?** Bolesław exercised royal authority, yet he was also a baptized Christian. Stanislaus possessed pastoral responsibility for a Christian community that included people of considerable political power. The imbalance between them was significant. The bishop possessed ecclesiastical authority; the king possessed the coercive power of government.

Later tradition remembered Stanislaus as confronting Bolesław and imposing Church discipline upon him. Their conflict culminated in the bishop's death in 1079, traditionally associated with the church of St. Michael on Skalka in Kraków. Later accounts remembered him as being killed, or killed at royal command, while celebrating Mass. The precise details cannot be reconstructed securely. The conflict nevertheless ended violently, and Bolesław soon lost his political position and left Poland.

The memory of Stanislaus became deeply rooted in Polish Christianity. Pope Innocent IV canonized him in 1253, his relics became associated with Wawel Cathedral, and he eventually became one of Poland's principal patron saints. Christian memory interpreted his death through the pastoral obligations of episcopal office. A bishop might possess considerable prestige in medieval society, yet that office also imposed responsibilities, including moral instruction and correction. Exercising those responsibilities before a powerful ruler could become dangerous.

The stories of Thomas and Stanislaus therefore reveal important dimensions of medieval martyrdom. Both lived within Christian societies. Their rulers professed Christianity. Their conflicts arose through differing understandings of responsibilities within that Christian order. Martyrdom had entered a setting in which Christian vocation could produce confrontation within Christendom itself.

Monasticism and the Expansion of Christian Mission

Medieval Christian witness also developed beyond the courts and cathedrals of established Christian kingdoms. Missionaries traveled beyond territories in which Christianity was securely established and entered Germanic, Slavic, and other regions possessing their own languages, political structures, customs, and religious traditions. Many of these missionaries had been formed within monasteries.

The Rule of St. Benedict became particularly influential in creating communities organized around prayer, Scripture, worship, work, and obedience. Monasteries also functioned as centers of education, manuscript preservation, clerical formation, hospitality, and transmission of the Christian faith. Their importance for medieval mission therefore extended beyond individual spirituality. They formed people capable of carrying Christianity into new regions and provided institutional patterns through which Christian communities could become stable.

Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England became important sources of missionary activity. Some monks embraced *peregrinatio*, leaving homeland and family in service to God elsewhere. Columbanus, for example, traveled from Ireland and established monastic communities in Gaul and northern Italy. Anglo-Saxon missionaries later followed comparable routes into Germanic territories.

The monastery offered more than preparation for missionaries. It provided a model for sustaining Christian life after initial evangelization. Preaching could initiate a mission, but a durable Christian community required teachers, clergy, worship, Scripture, books, and institutions capable of

transmitting the faith to subsequent generations. Monasteries could supply that continuity. They became centers from which clergy and missionaries traveled, books were copied, leaders educated, and Christian worship sustained.

Mission also involved encounters with cultures that already possessed religious traditions. Medieval missionaries did not enter societies devoid of beliefs. They encountered sacred places, rituals, inherited customs, and established ways of interpreting reality. Consequently, missionaries had to determine how the Christian Gospel would be communicated within existing cultural worlds.

Pope Gregory the Great provides an important example. In connection with the mission associated with Augustine of Canterbury among the Anglo-Saxons, Gregory advised that some pagan temples could be cleansed and adapted for Christian worship rather than destroyed. Idols would be removed, while buildings could be redirected toward Christian purposes. This approach recognized that conversion involved people whose communal lives were already connected to particular places and customs. Other missionary encounters were more confrontational. That becomes especially visible in the career of Boniface.

Boniface and the Missionary Road East

Boniface was born Wynfrith in the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex around 675. Entering monastic life while young, he became a priest, teacher, and scholar. In 716 he attempted missionary work in Frisia, in the region of the modern Netherlands and northwestern Germany. Political instability associated with conflict between the Frisian ruler Radbod and the Franks made his work unsustainable, and Wynfrith returned to England. His missionary career therefore began with failure.

He nevertheless remained committed to missionary work. Traveling to Rome, he met Pope Gregory II, who commissioned him in 719 to preach among Germanic peoples east of the Rhine. This Roman connection became important to his mission. Boniface worked with papal authorization, later received episcopal consecration, and maintained strong connections with Rome. His mission belonged within the wider institutional life of the Church rather than functioning as an isolated personal enterprise.

The religious world Boniface encountered was complex. Some communities had already encountered Christianity, others retained Germanic religious traditions, and in some areas Christian and older practices existed together. Establishing Christian communities therefore involved more than converting isolated individuals. It required sustained engagement with inherited religious identities and social structures.

The famous episode involving the sacred tree at Geismar illustrates the confrontational dimension of Boniface's mission. An early account associates the tree with a Germanic deity identified in Latin as Jupiter, while later Christian tradition connected it especially with Thor. Boniface cut down the tree publicly. The action challenged the religious meaning attributed to the sacred site and enacted a theological claim concerning the God whom Boniface preached. According to the account, observers gathered to see what would happen. The tree fell and Boniface remained unharmed, allowing Christian interpreters to regard the event as a visible demonstration of the impotence of the power associated with the tree.

Yet the destruction of the tree represents only one moment within a much longer missionary career. Boniface preached and baptized while also establishing churches and monasteries, organizing dioceses, training clergy, obtaining books, corresponding with ecclesiastical leaders, and working

with political authorities. Anglo-Saxon religious women also participated in this missionary network by traveling to continental Europe, establishing communities, contributing to education, and helping form Christian life.

This broader network is essential for understanding medieval mission. Christianity became rooted when local communities acquired the institutions, leadership, worship, and education required to sustain Christian life after the missionary's departure. The monastery of Fulda, founded in 744 by one of Boniface's disciples, eventually became an important monastic center in medieval Germany. Fulda represented the kind of Christian community Boniface had spent decades trying to establish: one capable of continuing after its founding missionary was gone.

Near the end of his life Boniface returned to Frisia, the location of his unsuccessful first missionary attempt. By then he was probably in his seventies and had spent decades engaged in mission and ecclesiastical organization. In 754 Boniface and a group of companions were attacked and killed near Dokkum. His body was eventually taken to Fulda, and the Church remembered him as a martyr and traditionally as the "Apostle of the Germans."

Boniface's life reveals the breadth of missionary witness. His approach could be dramatic and confrontational, as at Geismar, while much of his enduring work consisted of teaching, negotiation, organization, ecclesiastical formation, and patient community building. His missionary achievement depended upon creating communities capable of carrying Christian life forward independently of the missionary who had first arrived.

Adalbert, Bruno, and the Eastern Missionary Frontier

The missionary movement continued beyond Boniface. More than two centuries later, **Adalbert of Prague**, born around 956 into a prominent Bohemian family, became Bishop of Prague. His episcopate proved difficult, and after periods away from his diocese he eventually undertook missionary work among the Prussians near the Baltic Sea. He was killed during that mission in 997 and canonized soon afterward. His cult became particularly important in Bohemia and Poland.

A few years later **Bruno of Querfurt**, a Saxon nobleman influenced by the missionary tradition associated with Adalbert, became a missionary archbishop. He traveled through the eastern borderlands of Christian Europe and was killed with companions during a mission in 1009. Together, Boniface, Adalbert, and Bruno illustrate the geographical movement of medieval Christianity. Boniface carried the narrative from Anglo-Saxon England into German territories; Adalbert and Bruno carried it farther east toward the Baltic and the frontiers of eastern Europe.

This geographical progression reveals an important feature of Christian expansion. Communities that had once received missionaries eventually produced missionaries themselves. The movement of Christianity therefore cannot be understood merely as a permanent flow from one Christian center toward passive recipients. As Christianity became rooted within new regions, those communities became participants in its further transmission.

Medieval Martyrdom and Christian Formation

Taken together, these stories broaden the meaning of Christian witness after the age of Roman persecution. Medieval martyrs lived within a social environment in which Christianity had become culturally and institutionally established. Kings professed the Christian faith, bishops exercised political and ecclesiastical influence, monasteries shaped communities, and worship permeated public life. Yet Christian witness continued to demand difficult decisions.

Thomas Becket's conflict with Henry II illustrates the complexities created when Christian vocation and institutional responsibility intersected with political authority. Their shared faith and former friendship intensified rather than simplified the dispute. Thomas gradually came to understand the responsibilities of his episcopal office in ways that could not be reconciled with Henry's understanding of royal government. His murder was the culmination of a conflict extending through Clarendon, Northampton, exile, negotiation, and return.

Stanislaus of Kraków illustrates a related dimension of episcopal responsibility. Christian leadership included moral and pastoral obligations toward powerful members of Christian society, including rulers. His memory preserved the conviction that pastoral office could require confronting political authority and accepting the consequences.

Boniface directs attention toward a different horizon. Mission required the crossing of linguistic, political, cultural, and religious boundaries. His career demonstrates that evangelization involved the patient establishment of communities capable of transmitting Christianity to another generation. Churches required organization, clergy required formation, books had to be supplied, worship had to become established, and Christians eventually had to become responsible for the continuing life of their own communities.

These lives also encourage a deeper understanding of martyrdom itself. Historical memory naturally gravitates toward dramatic deaths: the cathedral floor at Canterbury, the killing of Stanislaus, Boniface's death at Dokkum. Christian formation, however, occurred during the years preceding those moments. Thomas did not begin at Canterbury Cathedral, and Boniface did not begin at Dokkum. Their final witness belonged to lives already shaped through worship, community, responsibility, decisions made under pressure, and developing understandings of vocation.

Martyrdom viewed only at the moment of death can appear remote from ordinary Christian discipleship. Historical study restores the years that precede the final event. Before martyrs became figures commemorated by the Church, they lived as Christians within specific circumstances, responding to responsibilities placed before them. Their witness developed through lives shaped over time.

The medieval missionary movement adds another dimension. Christianity moved across political boundaries into new languages and cultures. Every such movement raised questions of translation, adaptation, authority, and cultural encounter. Missionaries entered societies possessing their own histories and religious traditions, which meant that the Christian Gospel had to be communicated among people whose assumptions had developed independently of Christianity.

This question provides the transition from medieval Europe toward the early modern missionary world. European maritime expansion eventually created routes across the Indian Ocean and into East Asia. Francis Xavier traveled along those routes and arrived in Japan in 1549. The medieval missionary question therefore remains alive in a new geographical and cultural setting: **What happens when the Gospel crosses into another culture?**

The significance of the medieval martyrs ultimately lies within this larger history of Christian vocation. Thomas Becket shows vocation being reshaped by episcopal responsibility and tested through conflict with a former friend and political sovereign. Stanislaus represents the pastoral obligations of a bishop toward a Christian ruler. Boniface demonstrates a vocation carried beyond the monastery into decades of missionary labor. Adalbert and Bruno extend that missionary movement toward new frontiers. Their historical circumstances vary considerably, and those differences should remain visible. What connects their stories is the formation of Christian lives over time through worship, community, responsibility, and vocation. †



Timeline: Martyrs and Mission in the Medieval Church | c. 675–1253

Date	Person / Event	Historical Significance
c. 675	Birth of Boniface (Wynfrith) in Wessex	Born into the Anglo-Saxon Christian world that would become an important center of missionary activity in continental Europe.
716	Boniface's first mission to Frisia	His first missionary effort was frustrated by political instability. He returned to England, then later resumed his missionary vocation.
719	Pope Gregory II commissions Boniface	Boniface received papal authorization to preach among the Germanic peoples east of the Rhine, linking his missionary work closely with Rome.
c. 723	Boniface and the sacred tree at Geismar	Boniface publicly challenged an established Germanic sacred tradition by cutting down a revered tree, remembered as one of the defining episodes of his missionary career.
744	Monastery of Fulda founded	Founded by one of Boniface's disciples, Fulda became an important center of medieval Christianity and embodied the lasting institutional dimension of Boniface's mission.
754	Martyrdom of Boniface near Dokkum	Boniface returned late in life to Frisia and was killed with companions while engaged in missionary work. His body was eventually taken to Fulda.

Date	Person / Event	Historical Significance
966	Baptism of Mieszko I of Poland	A foundational event in the Christianization of Poland. The Polish Church subsequently developed alongside the emerging monarchy.
c. 956	Birth of Adalbert of Prague	Adalbert later became Bishop of Prague and carried the missionary movement toward the Baltic frontier.
997	Martyrdom of Adalbert of Prague	Adalbert was killed while undertaking missionary work among the Prussians near the Baltic Sea and was canonized soon afterward.
1009	Martyrdom of Bruno of Querfurt	Bruno and several companions were killed during missionary work in the eastern borderlands of Christian Europe.
c. 1072	Stanislaus becomes Bishop of Kraków	Stanislaus exercised episcopal ministry during the reign of Bolesław II, within the developing Christian kingdom of Poland.
1079	Death of Stanislaus of Kraków	A serious conflict between bishop and king ended violently. Later Christian tradition remembered Stanislaus as a bishop who confronted royal misconduct and suffered death for fulfilling his pastoral responsibility.
c. 1120	Birth of Thomas Becket in London	Thomas was born into a prosperous merchant family and later entered the household of Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury.
1154	Henry II becomes King of England	Henry began restoring royal government following the political instability of King Stephen's reign.
1155	Thomas appointed royal chancellor	Thomas entered the center of royal government and developed a close political and personal relationship with Henry II.
1161	Death of Archbishop Theobald	The vacancy at Canterbury led Henry to support Thomas Becket as the next archbishop.
1162	Thomas becomes Archbishop of Canterbury	Thomas was ordained priest and consecrated archbishop. His new pastoral responsibilities began reshaping his relationship with Henry.
January 1164	Constitutions of Clarendon	Sixteen provisions concerning relations between Crown and Church brought the developing conflict between Henry and Thomas into the open.
October 1164	Thomas summoned to Northampton	Thomas appeared before the royal court and increasingly believed that the proceedings threatened his position as archbishop.
November 1164	Thomas enters exile	Traveling quietly and in disguise, Thomas crossed the Channel. He remained outside England for six years.
July 1170	Henry and Thomas meet near Fréteval	After years of negotiation, king and archbishop reached an agreement that opened the way for Thomas's return to England.

Date	Person / Event	Historical Significance
December 1170	Thomas returns to England	After nearly six years in exile, Thomas returned as Archbishop of Canterbury, although significant disputes remained unresolved.
December 29, 1170	Martyrdom of Thomas Becket	Four knights associated with Henry's court confronted Thomas and killed him inside Canterbury Cathedral as the community gathered for prayer.
1173	Thomas Becket canonized	Pope Alexander III canonized Thomas less than three years after his death. Canterbury became one of medieval Christianity's great pilgrimage destinations.
1174	Henry II performs public penance at the tomb of Thomas	Henry came to Canterbury as a penitent, giving powerful public expression to the consequences of the conflict that had culminated in Thomas's death.
1253	Stanislaus of Kraków canonized	Pope Innocent IV canonized Stanislaus. His cult became deeply associated with Polish Christianity, and he became one of Poland's principal patron saints.

Glossary: Medieval Church and Mission

Archbishop: A bishop with responsibility for an archdiocese and a position of leadership among the bishops of a larger region. Thomas Becket became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1162.

Canonization: The formal recognition of a deceased Christian as a saint by the Church. Thomas Becket was canonized by Pope Alexander III in 1173; Stanislaus of Kraków was canonized by Pope Innocent IV in 1253.

Clarendon / Constitutions of Clarendon: A set of sixteen provisions issued following a royal assembly at Clarendon in 1164. They addressed the relationship between royal and Church authority in England, including clerical trials, appeals to Rome, and royal influence over ecclesiastical affairs. Thomas Becket's refusal to confirm them became a decisive stage in his conflict with Henry II.

Church Courts: Ecclesiastical courts exercising jurisdiction over clergy and certain matters governed by Church law. The question of whether clergy accused of serious crimes should ultimately be subject to royal punishment became a major source of conflict between Henry II and Thomas Becket.

Episcopal: Pertaining to a bishop or the office of bishop. In medieval Christianity, episcopal responsibility included teaching the faith, supervising clergy and churches, exercising discipline, and providing pastoral care.

Excommunication / Church Discipline: Ecclesiastical penalties imposed upon Christians for serious offenses or disobedience to Church authority. The possibility of such discipline gave medieval bishops considerable spiritual authority, including in their relationships with Christian rulers. The lecture discusses this particularly in connection with Stanislaus and the bishops disciplined by Becket.

Investiture: The formal conferral of the signs and authority associated with an office. In medieval disputes, the central question concerned who possessed the authority to invest bishops and how political and ecclesiastical authority should relate.

Investiture Controversy: The major eleventh- and early twelfth-century struggle between popes and secular rulers over the appointment and investiture of bishops. It provides important background for understanding the later conflict between Henry II and Thomas Becket.

Martyr: From the Greek *martys*, meaning “witness.” In Christian usage, a person whose fidelity to Christ ultimately results in death. Medieval martyrdom could arise within Christian societies, as the stories of Thomas Becket and Stanislaus illustrate.

Monastery: A religious community organized around a disciplined life of prayer, worship, Scripture, work, and communal obedience. Medieval monasteries also became important centers for education, manuscripts, clerical formation, hospitality, and missionary activity.

Peregrinatio: Latin for a journey, pilgrimage, or life lived away from one's homeland. Within early medieval monasticism, *peregrinatio* could describe leaving one's homeland and familiar community in order to serve God elsewhere. It became an important feature of Irish and Anglo-Saxon missionary spirituality.

Royal Chancellor: A senior official serving the king in the administration of royal government. Thomas Becket became Henry II's royal chancellor in 1155, placing him at the center of English political life before he became Archbishop of Canterbury.

Vespers: The Church's evening office of prayer. The monks of Canterbury Cathedral were gathering for Vespers when Becket entered the cathedral shortly before his murder on December 29, 1170.

Vocation: From Latin *vocatio*, “calling.” In Christian theology, a calling from God expressed through a person's life and responsibilities. The lecture uses vocation as an important interpretive category for martyrdom: Thomas's final witness emerged from years of learning what his calling as archbishop required.

Selected Bibliography

The bibliography below is supplementary to the teaching summary. The summary does not contain its own bibliography, so these works provide a scholarly foundation for further study of the principal persons, institutions, and historical developments covered in the session.

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Primary Sources

For a more formal academic handout or eventual book chapter, the bibliography would benefit especially from primary sources connected with the figures in the lecture: the letters of Thomas Becket, contemporary Becket vitae, the *Constitutions of Clarendon*, William of Newburgh and other twelfth-century chroniclers, the early *Life of Boniface* by Willibald, Boniface's surviving correspondence, and medieval Polish sources concerning Stanislaus. The manuscript itself appropriately distinguishes the comparatively abundant evidence for Thomas from the much thinner evidence surrounding Stanislaus, an important historiographical qualification that should remain explicit in any published version.

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