

The Second Council of Lateran

1139

Gaining free papal elections did not remove politics from the process. In spite of a somewhat nefarious election, Pope Honorius II (1124-1130) continued with Callistus II's efforts of moral and spiritual renewal. The papal election became more contentious when Honorius died. An eight year schism occurred when the younger cardinals elected Innocent II based on his emphasis on spiritual renewal and the older cardinals elected Anacletus II based on his emphasis on Gregory VII's approach to the papacy. Innocent II gained the favor of the rest of the Church and Anacletus II was labeled an anti-pope. The schism was not resolved until 1138 when Anacletus died. Antipope Victor IV was elected to succeed Anacletus but quickly resigned and his supporters transferred their loyalty to Innocent II. Innocent II called the Lateran II Council to resolve the papal issue as well as to implement other reforms.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux

A major force in the church during this period was St. Bernard, abbot of the monastery at Clairvaux, France. He founded 163 monasteries in different parts of Europe and provided leadership for many general church functions. The following reveals a little of Bernard's personality. In 1128, Pope Honorius II convened the Council of Troyes. The bishops at the council made Bernard secretary and charged him with drawing up the synodal statutes. After the council, the Bishop of Verdun was deposed. There then arose against Bernard unjust reproaches and he was denounced even in Rome, as a monk who meddled with matters that did not concern him. Cardinal Harmeric, on behalf of the pope, wrote Bernard a sharp letter of remonstrance in which he said: "It is not fitting that noisy and troublesome frogs should come out of their marshes to trouble the Holy See and the cardinals". Bernard answered the letter saying that he had assisted at the council because he had been dragged to it and added: "Now illustrious Harmeric, if you so wished, who would have been more capable of freeing me from the necessity of assisting at the council than yourself? Forbid those noisy troublesome frogs to come out of their holes, to leave their marshes. Then your friend will no longer be exposed to the accusations of pride and presumption".* This letter made a great impression upon the cardinal, and justified its author both in his eyes and Pope Honorius II! Bernard was canonized by Pope Alexander III in 1174 and Pope Pius VIII bestowed on him the title of Doctor of the Church.



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Resolved the papal issue and continued with other reforms:

- Papal Schism ➡ Declared Anacletus II invalid as well as all of his ordinations.
- Clerical Dress ➡ Admonished bishops and ecclesiastics to dress modestly.
- Morality ➡ Restated Lateran I's condemnation of immorality of clergy
- Support of Bishops ➡ Excommunicated laity who failed to pay tithes due to bishops.
- Military Activities ➡ Fixed the periods and the duration of the Truce of God.**
- Dangerous Games ➡ Prohibited jousts and tournaments which endangered life.
- Prayer ➡ Nuns were prohibited from singing the Divine office in the same choir as monks.

The above are the more interesting among the 30 canons that *Lateran II* enacted.

* Catholic Encyclopedia , St. Bernard of Clairvaux (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02498d.htm>).

** 'Truce of God' was fixing a day of the week during which there was a temporary suspension of all hostilities during military activities.