

# The First Council of Lyons

1245

*Lyons I* mainly concerned a dispute between Pope Innocent IV and German King Frederick II over papal territory and control of the church. Frederick's successful military campaigns gave him control of Sicily and northern Italy, surrounding Rome and the Papal States, a central slice of about 20 percent of Italy extending from the northeast coast toward the central part of the west coast, including Rome. These campaigns threatened to put Frederick in control of not only the Papal States but the Church itself in the model of Constantine and Charlemagne. Innocent IV excommunicated Frederick who responded by seizing the Papal States. Innocent IV and the entire Papal court fled to Lyons, France and called the *Council of Lyons* to deal with Frederick.

The Papal States before the Napoleonic wars changed the face of Italy



The history of the papal States is quite convoluted and the following gives only some of the highlights. The church formally held no property until early in the 4<sup>th</sup> century when it received the Lateran Palace from Constantine I. Other donations followed but a significant increase in property and land holdings occurred when Frankish King Pepin defeated the Lombards in northern Italy and donated Ravenna, the Pentapolis, parts of the Duchy of Benevento, Tuscany, Corsica, Lombardy, and a number of cities to the church, forming the basis of the Papal States. Control of these states was frequently contested, often by German conquests of northern Italy. The Papal States grew during the Renaissance of the 14 – 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, then fell to Napoleon but were subsequently recovered with the collapse of the Napoleonic system only to fall again during the nationalist and liberal revolutions occurring throughout Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Papal States were officially renounced as property of the Church by Pope Pius XI in 1929 when the State of the Vatican City was created in Rome.

## The First Council of Lyons

Protected the church from control by Emperors, especially from that of Frederick II

Although the agenda included reform, help for the holy Land, liberation of the Holy Sepulcher, the Mongol invasions, the main business was dealing with Frederick II who was cited but did not appear.

Frederick II



Charged him: perjury, breach of the peace, sacrilege, and heresy.

Excommunicated and deposed him from being emperor.

His subjects were released from their allegiance to him.

The German Princes were invited to elect a new king.

Attendance was limited to approximately 150 delegates.

Lyons I is considered the 2<sup>nd</sup> least impressive Council, the 1<sup>st</sup> being Constantinople IV

### Result of Lyons I

Frederick challenged the pope's competence to depose an emperor. Innocent responded that Christ had invested Peter and his successors with absolute temporal as well as spiritual sovereignty. This power to depose may also be viewed as the reverse of the papal power for crowning of an emperor to indicate legitimacy. The dispute diminished in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century as the German empire faded.