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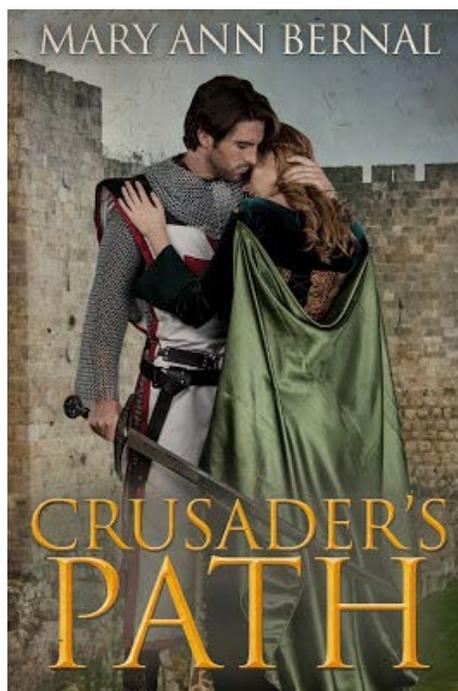
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4 June 2020

Blog Tour: Crusader's Path, By Mary Ann Bernal



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From the sweeping hills of Argences to the port city of Cologne overlooking the River Rhine, Etienne and Avielle find themselves drawn by the need for redemption against the backdrop of the First Crusade



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Understanding the Mindset of the Times

Religion played a pivotal role in daily life. There would be no salvation without the Church. To avoid eternal damnation in Hell, one must confess one's sins, satisfy a given penance, and receive absolution by a priest. Many a penitent embarked on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, seeking the Lord's forgiveness.

Until the arrival of the Seljuk Turks in the region, the Islamic State had no problems with Christians and Jews living among their people, nor did they interfere with the pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem. The revenue boosted the Islamic economy, after all.

The Class System

Affluent people have a better standard of living than their inferior counterparts. The nobility craved power and wealth at the expense of the common people. Famine, contagion, and violence, affected everyone, but it was the peasant class who suffered the most. However, their unshakeable belief in salvation promised a better life in God's kingdom.

One must not forget the Eleventh Century was a violent era, without an organized governing body. Members of the nobility argued among themselves, brother fighting against brother to sit on a throne. Conquerors subjected the conquered to tyrannical rule. Mercenaries wreaked havoc upon the countryside. Something needed to be done, and the Lord's people looked towards the Church for assistance.

The Latin West

Pope Urban II succeeded Pope Gregory VII, whose clashes with the mighty Holy Roman Emperor, Henry IV, created the installation of the Antipope, Clement III. Pope Urban, unable to sit on the Chair of St. Peter in Rome, traveled the countryside, fulfilling papal duties while in exile, taking it upon himself to implement his predecessor's changes. Pope Urban convened a synod at Clermont in the Duchy of Aquitaine to discuss Cluniac reforms.

The Greek East

Byzantine Emperor Alexios I had been fighting the Seljuk Turks for several years. He sent envoys to Pope Urban, requesting his aid to push back the Seljuk invaders and reclaim the city of Nicaea.

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The Tudor Trilogy

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The Great Announcement

The charismatic Pope Urban, an astute politician and skilled orator, piqued curiosity when foretelling of a “great announcement,” given on the very last day of the synod before everyone returned home. Notices were nailed to church doors, and priests spoke of the upcoming speech from the pulpit. No one knew what the man of God would say. Expectations were high. The Pope spoke for God, and soon they would hear the Lord’s words.

While standing on an elevated platform, Pope Urban’s spellbinding sermon called for a Holy War to free the Holy Land from the infidel. Such wickedness must not prevail. His cunning words vilified the Seljuk Turks, repeating exaggerated tales of Muslim barbarism against the Christian Pilgrims in the Holy Land.

Pope Urban appealed to the crowd to take up the Cross as Soldiers of Christ. Christ’s warriors were to regain control of the Holy Sepulcher and return Christian rule over Jerusalem. The Vicar of Christ offered the atonement for their sins, whether they died on the journey or in battle. Salvation was guaranteed. They would spend eternity in Paradise.

The frenzied multitude, caught up in the emotional hype with adrenalin pumping, rose to the occasion. Someone shouted Deus Vult (God wills it), immortalizing a rallying cry that has transcended the ages.

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Expectations

Pope Urban sought to reunite the Latin West and Greek East, whose division stemmed during the ebbing days of the Roman Empire. By channeling the aggressive thirst for fighting against a common enemy, Pope Urban curbed the pillaging of the European countryside. However, a successful campaign would strengthen the Papacy, heightening dominance over the rule of kings.

Alexios I, the Byzantine Emperor, never expected such a vast Army to invade his lands. Alexios wanted an elite force of knights, a few hundred men, to fight with his warriors against the Seljuk Turks. Alexios demanded fealty from the Princes, which was honored after the fall of Nicaea. But the Princes retained control of the remaining cities, including Antioch, refuting their sworn oaths of allegiance.

The nobility took up the Cross for the honor and prestige of fighting for Christ, elevating their influence, commanding awe and respect. The promise of great riches beckoned the second and third sons of wealthy nobles who would not receive an inheritance under the current laws. These knights had no reason to remain in Europe, intent on plunder and glory. Aside from material gains, they needed salvation and what better way to satisfy bloodlust without fearing eternal damnation. The Sixth Commandment was ignored, killing the infidel because they believed “God wills it.”

Thousands of men, women, families, and entire villages took vows to join the campaign to save their souls. If one did not have the financial means, Pope Urban declared Divine Mercy would provide. The earthly journey was their ticket to Heaven. Unfortunately, Peter the Hermit led the Peasants’ Army. He was a spiritual leader, not a military one. Constant bickering, lack of provisions, and little leadership had the pilgrims pillaging the land, committing atrocities along the way, blackening a cause the Soldiers of



#130 in World List 2018

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[The Tudors' Road to Bosworth Part 1: The Tudors Escape to Brittany](#)

As part of the research for my Tudor trilogy, I decided to follow the journey of Jasper Tudor and his young nephew Henry from Tenby in ...

Christ believed to be just.

Mary Ann Bernal

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About the Author



Mary Ann Bernal attended Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, NY, where she received a degree in Business Administration. Her literary aspirations were ultimately realized when the first book of The Briton and the Dane novels was published in 2009. In addition to writing historical fiction, Mary Ann has also authored a collection of contemporary short stories in the Scribbler Tales series and a science

fiction/fantasy novel entitled Planetary Wars Rise of an Empire. Mary Ann is a passionate supporter of the United States military, having been involved with letter-writing campaigns and other support programs since Operation Desert Storm. She has appeared on The Morning Blend television show hosted by KMTV, the CBS television affiliate in Omaha, and was interviewed by the Omaha World-Herald for her volunteer work. She has been a featured author on various reader blogs and promotional sites. Mary Ann currently resides in Elkhorn, Nebraska. Find out more at her website <http://www.maryannbernal.com/> and find her on Twitter [@BritonandDane](https://twitter.com/BritonandDane)



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