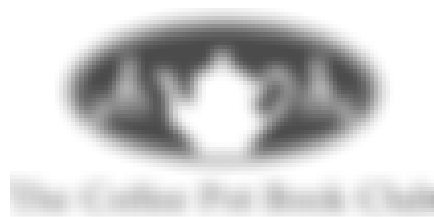


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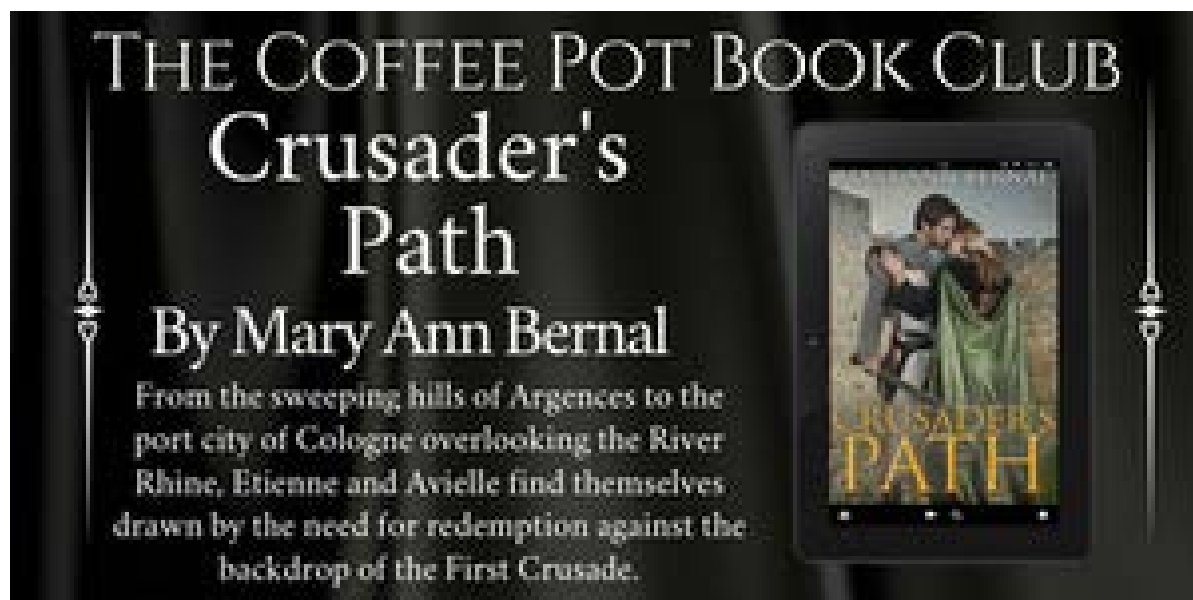
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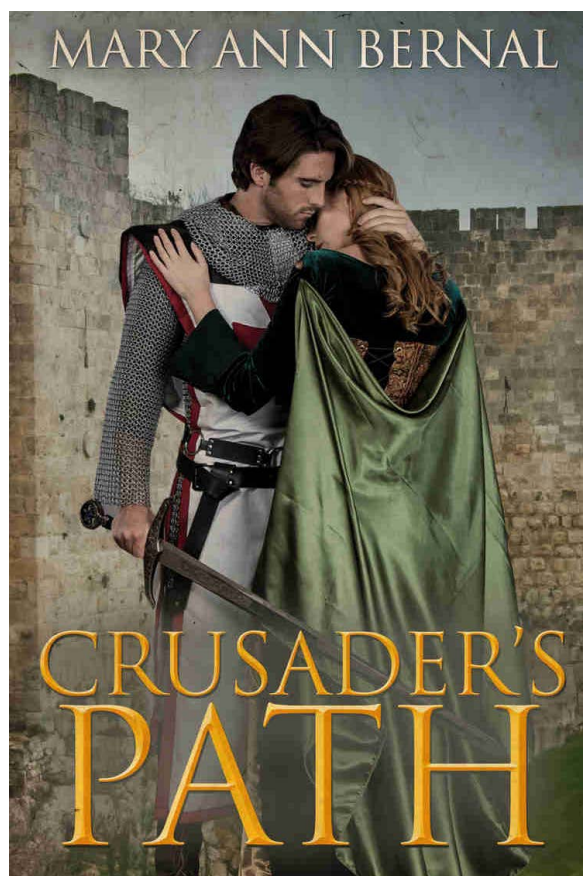
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Setting the stage for the First Crusade1096-1099 by Mary Ann Bernal @BritonandDane

Please give a warm Coffee Pot welcome to Historical Fiction author, Mary Ann Bernal. Mary Ann is talking about the First Crusade, but before we get to that let's check out Mary Ann's fabulous novel...!



Crusader's Path
By Mary Ann Bernal



Publication Date: 12th April 2020

Publisher: Whispering Legends Press

Page Length: 224 Pages (Hardcover)

Genre: Historical Fiction / Historical Romance

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.

Heeding the call of His Holiness, Urban II, to free the Holy Land from the infidel, Etienne follows Duke Robert of Normandy across the treacherous miles, braving sweltering heat and snow-covered mountain passes while en route to the Byzantine Empire.

Moved by Peter of Amiens' charismatic rhetoric in the streets of the Holy Roman Empire, Avielle joins the humble army of pilgrims. Upon arrival in Mentz, the peasant Crusaders do the unthinkable, destroying the Jewish Community. Consumed with guilt, Avielle is determined to die fighting for Christ, assuring her place in Heaven.

Etienne and Avielle cross paths in Constantinople, where they commiserate over past misdeeds. A spark becomes a flame, but when Avielle contracts leprosy, Etienne makes a promise to God, offering to take the priest cowl in exchange for ridding Avielle of her affliction.

Will Etienne be true to his word if Avielle is cleansed of the contagion, or will he risk eternal damnation to be with the woman he loves?

Setting the stage for the First Crusade

1096-1099

By Mary Ann Bernal

During the Eleventh Century, the Roman Catholic Church held considerable influence throughout Christendom, despite the East-West Schism of 1054 caused by political and theological differences between the Latin West and Greek Eastern Orthodox Church.

Violence, lawlessness, famine, and poverty existed across the European continent. Peasants were at the mercy of the warring nobles craving wealth and power. A significant disparity prevailed in a social hierarchy where landowners set the rules, giving little hope for commoners to rise above their station.



The authority of the Pope, also known as the Bishop of Rome, had waned over the years. Henry IV, the Holy Roman Emperor, clashed with Pope Gregory VII over papal authority. Pope Urban's predecessor, Pope Gregory, excommunicated the errant Emperor. Military clashes ensued, and the victorious Henry installed the Antipope, Clement III, as the Bishop of Rome.



Alexios I, the Byzantine Emperor, needed help in thwarting the Seljuk Turks harassing his kingdom. Fearing the fall of his capital city, Constantinople, Alexios requested Pope Urban's assistance in vanquishing the infidel.



The Call to Arms

Pope Urban saw the request from Alexios as a means to reunite the Latin West and Greek East. Additionally, by channeling the violent knights' and mercenaries' thirst for fighting towards a common enemy, the followers of Islam, Pope Urban kept unchivalrous warriors from pillaging the European countryside. Besides, a successful campaign would strengthen the Papacy, enhancing political power and dominance over kingly rule. And freeing Jerusalem from Muslim control would secure his place in history.

Pope Urban II was a charismatic and intriguing man. In all probability, he was calculating and manipulative, necessary traits to retain control of the Papacy, defeating his enemies with skillful finesse.

The Council at Claremont had been called to address abuses within the Catholic Church. The assembly decided many canons, renewed earlier legislation, and settled lawsuits at its conclusion. However, Pope Urban piqued the curiosity of the religious elite and common people when mentioning a great speech on the day before the attendees' departure.

In an open field, the eloquent preacher spoke of atrocities committed upon Christians by the Muslims. Pope Urban maligned the Saracens oppressing Christians, his speech cleverly fashioned to incite the crowd. He offered salvation, giving hope to the hopeless, calling upon rich and poor alike to embark on a righteous war. Pope Urban promised a full remission of sins if they died during the journey or on the battlefield. The chant *Deus Vult, God wills it*, echoed throughout the crowd.

Pope Urban's successful oration created the armies of the First Crusade. Although religion was the driving force, the nobility and lowly knights sought land and wealth. They would give no quarter since the

Church condoned killing.



The Armies

Peter of Amiens took Pope Urban at his word, leaving without paying heed to logistics – a coordinated campaign, led by princes and noblemen, acquiring manpower, provisions and money, a lot of money to pay the soldiers, and purchase supplies along the route.

Known as Peter the Hermit, the lowly monk preached to the peasants from Claremont to Amiens before setting out to Cologne, following the Rivers Rhine and Danube, reaching Constantinople before Pope Urban's officially sanctioned army. Known as the People's Crusade or the Peasants' Crusade, the ill-fated collection of Pilgrims failed to reach the Holy Land, most perishing on the road to Nicaea.

The peasants risked everything to reclaim the Holy Land for God, proudly wearing the Cross. They were ill-equipped, mostly farmers, men, women, and children. They left behind land they did not own, carrying meager possessions with them, believing Pope Urban's words, attaining salvation, their sins forgiven.

Peter could not control the unruly mob who ravished the land with such ferocity that sent chills down the spine of the Turkish people when word reached their ears of the rabble's murderous deeds.

The Princes' Crusade consisted of four main armies, leaving Europe in August 1096, the planned departure date, and several months after Peter's Army of Peasants.

To the aristocracy, fighting for Christ was an honor, elevating their standing within the hierarchy, commanding respect and awe from the masses. While saving souls was the catalyst, attaining wealth in

a land flowing with milk and honey, controlling centers of trade satisfied their ambition.



Aftermath

The First Crusade was a holy war that had the blessing of God, according to Pope Urban. The Commandment, *thou shall not kill*, was ignored when fighting the infidel. In retaliation, the Muslims raged a Holy War against the Christians. The apoplectic war of the two faiths continues to this day.

The First Crusade saw the establishment of the Crusader States and the Knights Templar and Knights Hospitaller military orders.

The role of the Roman Popes progressed in secular affairs.

Alliances deteriorated between the Latin West and Greek East.

Subsequent crusades failed to keep Jerusalem under Christian control.

I could not help but wonder if Pope Urban would have condoned a Holy War if he knew the ramifications of his deeds. Just as I wonder if Catherine of Aragon would have given Henry VIII a divorce if she had

known Henry would become the Church of England. Who in history has ever considered the consequences before acting? Just thoughts to ponder.

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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. Her recent work includes Crusader's Path, a redemption story set against the backdrop of the First Crusade, and Forgiving Nero, a novel of Ancient Rome.

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