The Early Middle Ages
500 – 1000 CE
What empire continued in the East as the Western Roman Empire fell?

What was happening in Western Europe?
Barbarians have invaded and conquered throughout the West.
But one cultural characteristic unified Western Europe. What do you think it is?

Christianity

The Church became an example of moral authority at a time of chaos and lawlessness.
Power and Authority in Europe from 500-1000 CE

- The Church was the most powerful institution in the West
- It organized itself based on the structure of the Roman Empire
- It united the people of Europe during this difficult time
- It sought to revive the Roman Empire
The Church developed a structure and hierarchy based on the Roman Empire.

The Pope was so powerful that he had the power to anoint Emperors.
Medieval society was rooted in Christianity, the classical heritage of Rome and the customs of the Germanic tribes.

**Germanic Customs**

- The Germanic tribes had no written language—literacy declined. Most people in Europe at this time could neither read nor write.

- Germanic tribes were ruled by family and loyal friends rather than governments.
• Monasteries preserved Greco-Roman cultural achievements. The most important books, like Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, were preserved in monasteries.

• Missionaries carried Christianity and the Latin alphabet to Germanic tribes

• Parish priests served the social, religious and political needs of the people.
Monastery in Greece
Manasija Monastery, Serbia
Many historians refer to this period in history as The Age of Faith. Why? With your neighbor, make a list of reasons why.
The Germanic tribes continued to invade and conquer Europe. The Frankish kingdom was established by Clovis who was the first Germanic ruler to convert to Christianity.
• Frankish kings used military power to expand their territory
• The alliance between Frankish kings and the church reestablished Roman culture in Western Europe

One King in particular would unite all of the Frankish kingdoms into an Empire – his name was Charles the great or Charlemagne.
Charlemagne revived the idea of the Roman Empire:

- Charlemagne spread Christianity and forced conversion throughout Europe.
- Churches, roads and schools were built to unite the empire.
- Charlemagne expanded education to all.
On Christmas Day, 800 C.E., Charles was crowned Holy Roman Emperor by the Pope before cheering crowds.
After Charlemagne died, his kingdom was carved into three kingdoms and then it fell apart. At the same time, invasions from the north and west, left Europeans with no protection. It was during this time that the system of Feudalism developed.
• The Vikings came from Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden and Denmark) and invaded along the coasts and down the rivers into Russia.

• Angles and Saxons came from Denmark and Northern Germany and settled in England.

• The Magyars came from Central Asia and settled in Hungary.

• Muslims invaded from North Africa but were stopped by Charles Martel in 732 CE at the battle of Tours.
Feudalism Rises

- A system of landholding and governing
- It was based on an exchange of protection for other services
Lords give knights/vassals land (fief) in exchange for the knights’ promise to defend the lord and his land.
Feudal Society

- Rigid (strict) class structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fief</th>
<th>Land given to a Vassal from a Lord</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vassal</td>
<td>The person receiving the fief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serf</td>
<td>Peasants who work the land</td>
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The Medieval Manor
Manors with castles provided protection from invaders, reinforcing the feudal system.

Invasions disrupted trade, towns declined and the feudal system was strengthened.

Manors were self-contained – long distance trade would not develop with the east until after the crusades in 1096 CE.