

# Belief and Devotion

1. The Role of Religion
2. The Church
3. Monastic Life





# 1. The Role of Religion

- Almost all Western Europeans were devoutly Christian
- Believed very strongly in the ultimate struggle between good and evil





- This battle was also very personal. Every person had to struggle between good and evil throughout their lives





- Everybody took for granted that good people went to heaven, and bad people suffered in hell for all eternity
- How could people avoid this fate?...





- Sins could be forgiven by participating in religious ceremonies, specifically those that took place in church





# God was everywhere!

- People found religious explanations for everything in their lives, whether good or bad





# For example...

- Why did we have such great weather this summer, giving us a great growing season?





- Why did we lose that battle?





- Why is the grass green and the sky blue?





## 2. The Church

- In the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church was the only religious institution in Europe
- Christians could practice their religion only through the Church, so the Church became extremely powerful



- One of the worst things that could happen to a person was to be excommunicated from the Church
- An excommunicated person could not participate in Church ceremonies





- Churches got their money from a tax on villagers called a *tithe*
- The *tithe* was about 10% of a person's wages and everybody was expected to pay



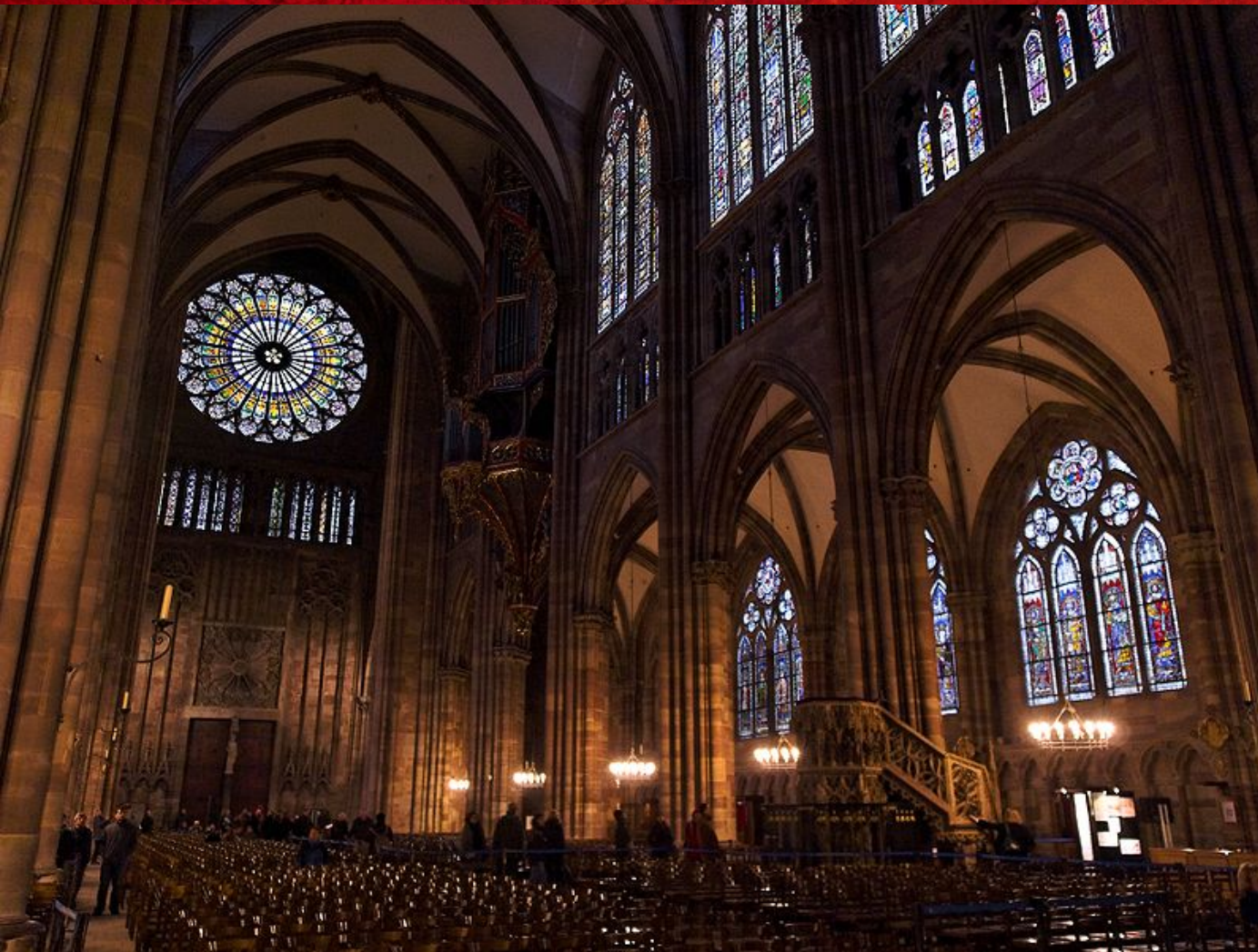


- Some churches became very rich because they owned land or collected tithes from wealthy towns and villages





- Some Church leaders even became rich by keeping the money for themselves





- The Church also supported people in need and performed marriages, burials, etc.





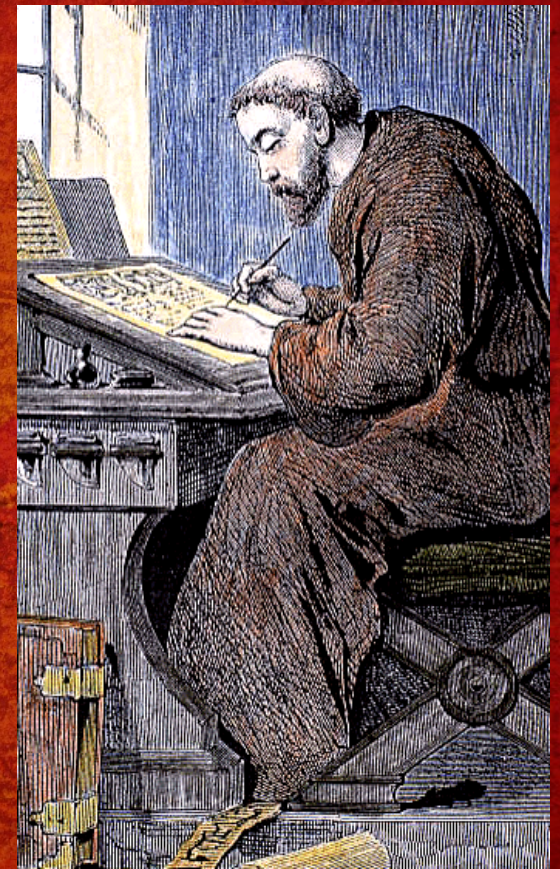
# 3. Monastic Life

- Many men and women became monks and nuns
- Monks lived in monasteries and women lived in convents





- Monks and nuns lived a life of work and prayer
- They often took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience





- They were also often separated from the rest of society



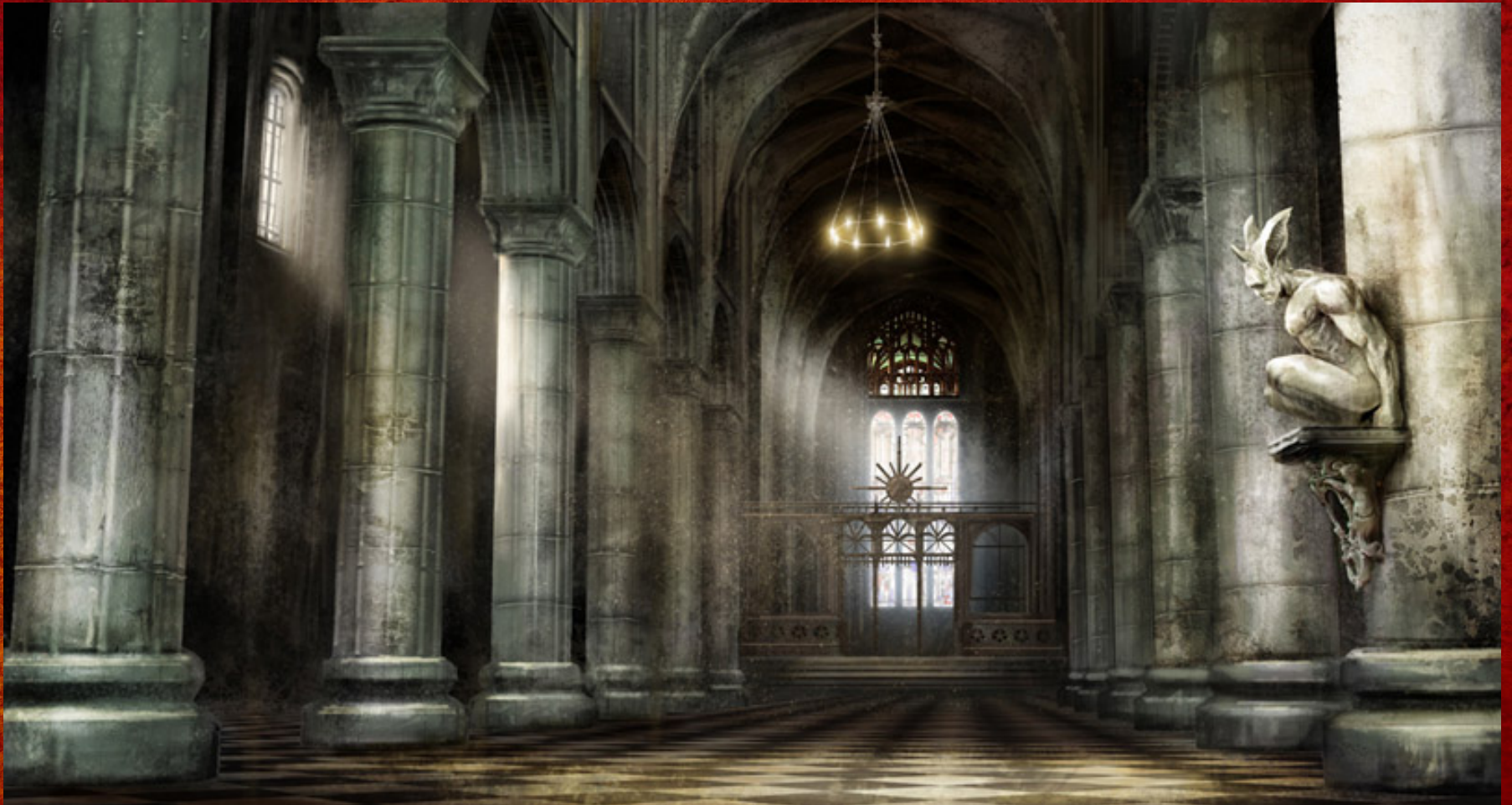


- Nuns and monks had to pray several times a day, including waking up in the middle of the night to pray
- There were few comforts for these monks and nuns





- Nevertheless, there were never a shortage of applicants to monasteries and convents





# Homework

- We know that it was very hard work being a monk or nun, and the rewards were very few. Why do you think so many people chose to live in monasteries and convents?

