

You can see how heavy handed this pronouncement was and the claims appear a bit presumptuous. But they are definitive! Gregory saw a strong papacy as the key to ecclesiastical reform. The powers he asserts will be used against governments, rulers, and clerics who did disagree with Rome or deny the Papal benefit. Many popes will be unable to enforce the idealistic concepts on all the kings of Europe but several will try and some will have very good success. Some will call for the armies of other nations to a "holy war" on dissenting rulers in other lands. You will understand that the Dictatus gave rise to certain popular impressions of which the following were more common:

- local bishops related to the Pope as the other apostles did to Peter.
- The clergy in general constituted the "Divine Family" while the laity formed the "carnal family."
- The clergy were above the common court and only inner-court discipline could be used to secure their compliance with law.

Gregory's last years were hard. (his papacy was 1073-1085)...but he attempted reform, worked hard against simony and nepotism and immorality among the clergy.

You can sympathize with Gregory's aims although his theology is certainly not ours. A strong leader given to good principles with absolute and unquestioned authority could have reformed the church but he would have needed about 100 years. The major flaw in Gregory's scheme from a human point of view was simply that there was no way to guarantee a successor of equal merit...or of equal concern...or of anything! And that is one of the largest of the pitfalls in a totalitarian system.

The Papacy of Innocent III

Serving during the years 1198-1216, Innocent III represented the papacy at the very height of political power. It is unlikely that any pope before or after his rule enjoyed such personal power and prestige over national rulers and