

The Inquisitions



St. Dominic, the Albigensians, and the Rosary

St. Dominic in Prayer
(El Greco)

An Institution of Mercy

- The Medieval Inquisition (and the reformed Spanish Inquisition) saved thousands of people from getting lynched by mobs, and it gave them a chance to repent.

The Medieval Inquisition

- Religion was everything: science, philosophy, politics, identity, salvation. Heresy was treason: A threat to religion was a threat to the crown.
- Heretics (mostly Albigensians) were already getting rounded up and killed by secular rulers and mobs; the Church had to step in.
- 1184 – Pope Lucius III informally established the Inquisition to investigate the accused by inquiring and judging fairly.
- Accused heretics were given a fair trial and a chance to repent. Recalcitrant heretics were turned over to the secular authorities.



Pope Gregory IX (Raphael)

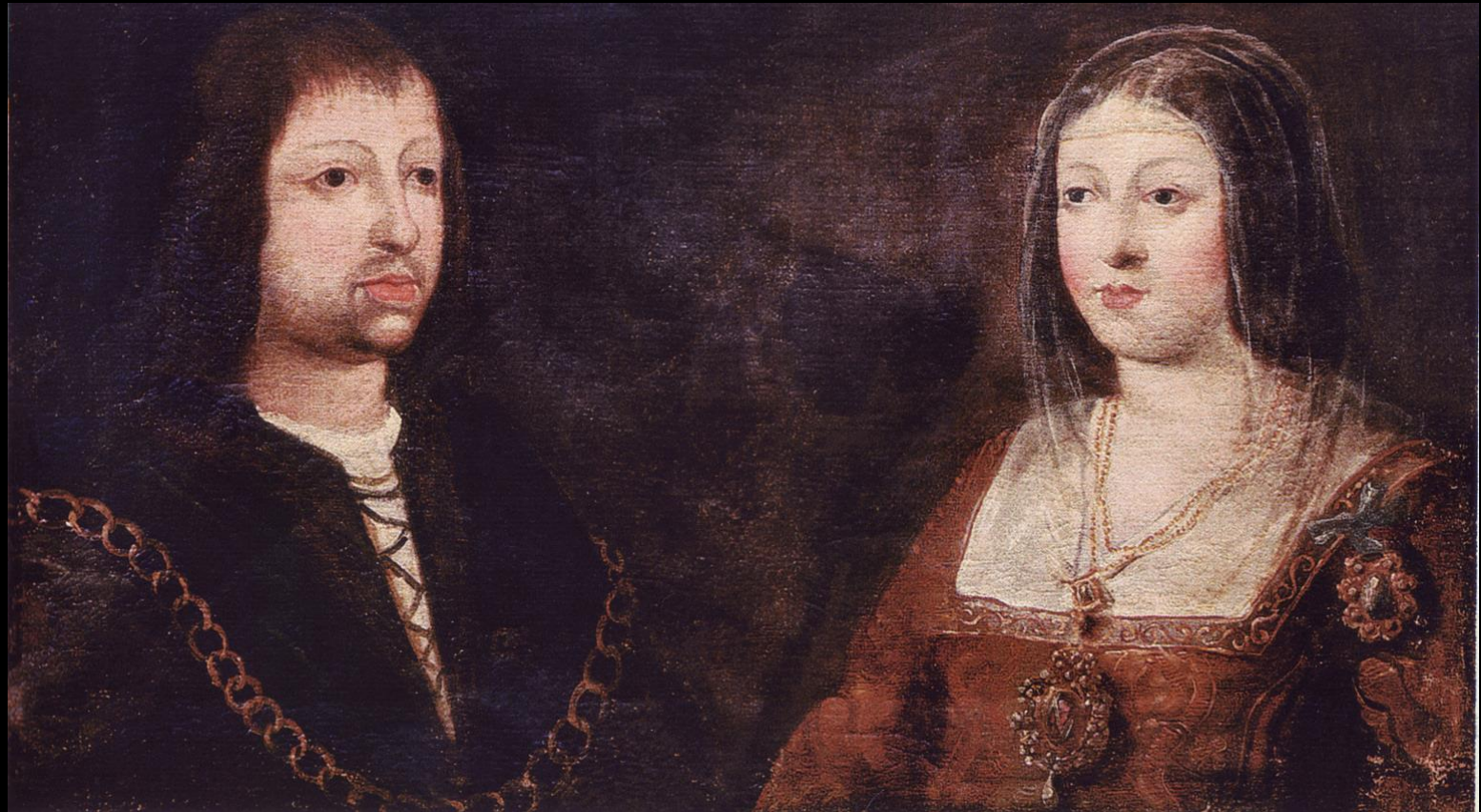
1231 – Pope Gregory IX formally established the Inquisition, recruiting Franciscans & Dominicans. These orders were ideal because they were well educated, they were mendicants not prone to bribery & corruption, and the Albigensians respected their ascetic lifestyle.

- The Inquisition used carefully written manuals, the best legal practices available, and detailed records. Bernard Gui, falsely portrayed as evil in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, wrote the most influential manual.
- Grace period, accusations, period of confinement (which rarely included torture), visits of repentant heretics, trial. False witnesses were rare: their punishment was severe.
- Judgment: bishop and inquisitors were required to seek the counsel of 30-80 *boni viri* for deciding the verdict and sentence.
- Punishment: penance, pilgrimage, good works, imprisonment, death (about 5%).

The Spanish Inquisition

- Since the early 8th century, Spain had been conquered by Islamic jihad. Although Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived in relative peace (*convivencia*), Spain fought long and hard for its liberation. By 1478, only Granada remained.
- Jews in Spain were resented for several reasons: a) they were successful; b) they were proud of their ethnicity; c) anti-Semitism had taken hold in western Europe; and d) people feared that the Jews, like the Muslims before them, would take over the country.
- 1391 – urban mobs rounded up Jews, forcing them to convert or die. Most of those who had been forced to convert (*los conversos*) chose to remain Catholic.

King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella I of Castille (artist unknown)



The Spanish Inquisition

- Local Spaniards (Christians and Jews) became jealous and suspicious of the *conversos*, starting rumors that the *conversos* were closet Jews who planned to conquer Spain.
- King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella asked Pope Sixtus IV for permission to form an inquisition, which he granted in 1478. The first inquisitors were not appointed until 1480.
- Important: the Spanish Inquisition was never under the direct control of the Church. In fact, Sixtus IV denounced the Inquisition in 1482, since it was being abused as a tool of the *conversos*' enemies.
- The Inquisition did NOT target practicing Jews and Muslims.

The Spanish Inquisition

- King Ferdinand ignored the Pope's pleas and appointed Fray Tomás de Torquemada as First Grand Inquisitor. The Pope confirmed the appointment, hoping it would bring order to the situation.
- Torquemada cleaned up the prisons and established better procedures: a 30-day grace period, a trial with defense attorneys, limited use of torture, and those proven guilty given a final chance to recant publicly. Many conversos fled or confessed during the grace period.
- Although this was an improvement, most Church leaders still opposed the Inquisition (not in principle, but in practice).

- 1492 – the last Muslim stronghold of Granada was defeated. In the same year, a royal edict which expelled all Jews from Spain, led to a huge increase in the number of *conversos* interrogated, because many Jews “converted” to avoid expulsion.
- 2,000 convicts were burned to death in the first 20 years of the Span. Inquisition: (1478-1498). Even so, an unknown number of these were burned only in effigy.
- 2,000 convicts were executed in all later years, (only 6/yr) thanks to reforms enacted by Card. Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros in 1498.
- Overall, only 2% of the accused were tortured and about 2% of convicts were killed.

- 4,000 executions from 1478-1834! The witch-hunts in Europe burned 60,000 in 300 years.
- No major court in Europe executed fewer people than the Spanish Inquisition. (To put it in perspective, damaging shrubs in a public garden in London was a capital offense.)
- Inquisition jails were the most humane in Europe. Some Spanish criminals in secular prisons even purposely blasphemed, in order to be transferred to prisons of the Inquisition.
- In 1530, the Spanish Inquisition shifted its focus to Protestant heretics, which helped create the “Black Legend.” Spain, the wealthiest and most powerful nation in Europe, had enemies.

Distortion of the Spanish Inquisition

- The “Black Legend” was an anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic smear campaign conducted by the now-Protestant English; it still affects our perception of the Spanish Inquisition and the conquistadors.

The Spanish Inquisition

Waterboarding

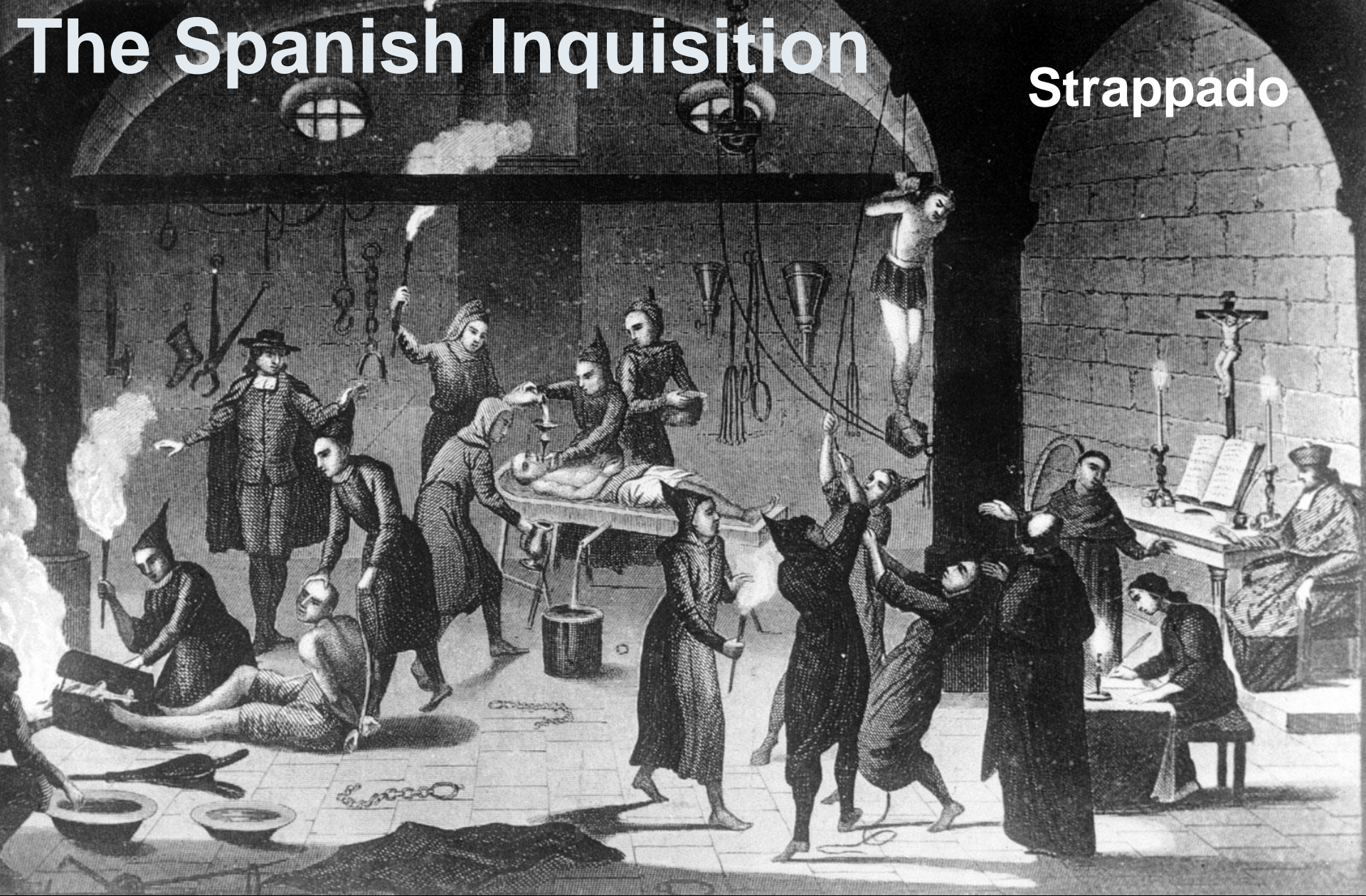


The Spanish Inquisition



The
Wheel

Strappado



How Can the Church Justify the Inquisitions?

- Heresy was considered treason, a capital offense.
- The Medieval Inquisition saved far more people than it killed.
- The Spanish Inquisition had little to do with the Church, and even so, it was still much better than the Black Legend has misled people to believe.
- Torture and execution: who at that time DIDN'T do it? Not only were torture and execution rare, but they were performed by secular authorities.
- The initial cruelty of the Spanish Inquisition must be understood in its historical context; after its reform, its procedures were exceptionally humane and saved far more people than it condemned.