

1 **The Church in the Early Middle Ages**

2 **The Church and the Collapse of Rome**

- As the Western Roman Empire disintegrated, the church assumed much of the Empire's former role as provider of stability, unity, and authority.
- During the 300s and 400s, the Western Empire was greatly weakened and was finally overcome by invasions of Germanic ("barbarian") tribes.
 - In 476, the last Roman emperor was removed by a Germanic king.
 - The former empire was divided among feuding Germanic tribes as Roman society broke down.

3

- Arian or pagan at the time of the invasions, the Germanic tribes converted to the Catholicism of the Roman church over time.
- The Roman Catholic Church was the only institution enjoying widespread respect and authority in western Europe.

4

- The bishop of Rome—the pope—began to exercise supremacy.
 - Originally, the bishops of several major cities such as Carthage, Antioch, and Alexandria had status equal to the bishop of Rome.
 - The pope claimed supremacy as the bishop of the leading city of the old empire.
 - The pope also claimed to have inherited special authority from Peter (Matt. 16:17–19), who was held to be the first bishop of Rome.
- The church, especially in the monasteries, also preserved what little was left of Roman learning and culture.

5 **The rise of Islam in the 600s posed a new threat to the church in both east and west.**

- In the east, Muslims greatly reduced the size of the Byzantine empire, and eventually conquered it in 1453.
- In the west, Muslims conquered the Germanic kingdoms of North Africa and Spain.