

## CHAPTER

## 11

## Section 3

## PRIMARY SOURCE

## Pope Urban II's Call for a Crusade

*In 1093 Byzantine emperor Alexius Comnenus wrote to Robert, Count of Flanders, appealing to him to help save the Byzantine Empire and its church from Seljuk Turks. Pope Urban II, who also read the letter, then launched the first Crusade, or holy war, in 1095. Calling on Christians to drive the Turks out of Anatolia and recover Jerusalem and the Holy Land, the Pope delivered a passionate speech in French before the Council of Clermont. As you read this portion of his speech, think about how the Pope persuaded Christians in France to join the First Crusade.*

Oh, race of Franks, . . . race beloved and chosen by God (as is clear from many of your works), set apart from all other nations by the situation of your country, as well as by your Catholic faith and the honor you render to the holy Church: to you our discourse is addressed. . . . We wish you to know what a serious matter has led us to your country, for it is the imminent peril threatening you and all the faithful that has brought us hither.

From the confines of Jerusalem and from the city of Constantinople a grievous report has gone forth . . . namely, that a race from the kingdom of the Persians, an accursed race, a race wholly alienated from God, . . . has violently invaded the lands of those Christians and has depopulated them by pillage and fire. . . . They have either destroyed the churches of God or appropriated them for the rites of their own religion. They destroy the altars, after having defiled them with their uncleanness . . . The kingdom of the Greeks [the Eastern Empire] is now dismembered by them and has been deprived of territory. . . .

On whom, therefore, rests the labor of avenging these wrongs and of recovering this territory, if not upon you—you, upon whom, above all other nations, God has conferred remarkable glory in arms, great courage, bodily activity, and strength to humble the heads of those who resist you? Let the deeds of your ancestors encourage you and incite your minds to manly achievements. . . . Let the holy sepulcher of our Lord and Saviour, which is possessed by the unclean nations, especially arouse you. . . . Oh most valiant soldiers and descendants of invincible ancestors, do not degenerate, but recall the valor of your ancestors.

But if you are hindered by love of children, parents, or wife, remember what the Lord says in the Gospel, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." . . . Let none of your

possessions restrain you, nor anxiety for your family affairs. For this land which you inhabit, shut in on all sides by the seas and surrounded by the mountain peaks, is too narrow for your large population. . . . Hence it is that you murder and devour one another, that you wage war, and that very many among you perish in civil strife. . . .

And we neither command nor advise that the old or feeble, or those incapable of bearing arms, undertake this journey. Nor ought women to set out at all without their husbands, or brothers, or legal guardians. . . . The priests and other clergy, whether secular or regular, are not to go without the consent of their bishop. . . . Also, it is not fitting that laymen should enter upon the pilgrimage without the blessing of their priests.

Whoever, therefore, shall decide upon this holy pilgrimage, and shall make his vow to God to that effect, . . . shall wear the sign of the cross of the Lord on his forehead or on his breast. When he shall return from his journey, having fulfilled his vow, let him place the cross on his back between his shoulders. Thus shall ye . . . fulfill the precept of the Lord, as He commands in the Gospel, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."

*from Milton Viorst, The Great Documents of Western Civilization (New York: Bantam, 1965), 36–38.*

## Discussion Questions

### Recognizing Facts and Details

1. What wrongs did the Pope accuse the Seljuk Turks of carrying out?
2. Which groups of Christians did the Pope exclude from his call for a crusade?
3. **Making Inferences** What appeals to emotions did the Pope use to persuade Christians to participate in the First Crusade?