



Life and miracles of Saint Louis

An impressive jewel of the Grande Réserve of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, it is one of the richest and most sumptuous manuscripts left to us by the Middle Ages. Original on fine vellum.

Manuscript intended for the Duchess of Bourbon, one of the three wives of John II, Duke of Bourbon and brother of the Cardinal of Lyon, Charles of Bourbon, who commissioned the codex.



Compilation of deeds from the extraordinary life of Saint Louis, King of France, son of Blanche of Castile and cousin of Ferdinand III the Saint, himself King of Castile and father of Alfonso X the Wise.

The ruling tandem of Blanche of Castile and her son Louis IX is one of the most fruitful and exceptional in the history of France and Europe.

Their reign took up the central part of the 13th century and brought about a reversal, sometimes almost definitively, of the great famines and many of the plagues that ravaged Europe. During this period, cities progressed as never before and, even in the midst of a monarchical model, parliamentarism acquired unusual strength.

Saint Louis undertook the Seventh and Eighth Crusades, dying of typhus at the gates of Tunis on his return from the latter.

The mark left by his reign is still alive and well in the 21st century, when all the European monarchies that still survive have blood ties and are related to Saint Louis, from the Capets and the Queen of England to the Valois, the Orange and, of course, the Bourbons of Spain.

The manuscript of his *Life and Miracles* is exceptional, of unparalleled visual impact and, in its solemnity and beauty, is unprecedented in the history of miniatures.

History buffs, literature lovers and all discerning bibliophiles will find solace and special delight in Siloam's perfect replica of this great treasure.



He was the ideal king, a unique king, according to the great historian Jacques Le Goff.

Indeed, Jacques Le Goff, in his extraordinary biography of Saint Louis, recognised as the great reference of this distinguished monarch, tells us that the king built a considerable amount of hospitals, an incipient Social Security system, supervised by the king himself, which reached all the needy of the kingdom, so that his reign was a great improvement in the condition of peasants and artisans.

St. Louis was the only political figure in history to merit Voltaire's sincere and fiery praise. According to him, St. Louis was the only head of state who knew how to combine profound politics with exact justice, and he is perhaps the only sovereign who deserves this praise.

Saint Louis is the most important political figure of the entire 13th century in the Christian West. His reign occupied the central part of the 13th century and he was able to take advantage of the advantageous heritage and prestige of the three dynasties and the three key figures on

which his reign was based, namely Clovis, Charlemagne and his grandfather Philip Augustus.

At that time, moreover, Gothic art was at its height, the University of Paris was at the forefront on the continent and, at the same time, the French language was in vogue and gaining in prestige. In this environment, it is not surprising that Saint Louis came to represent the unequalled essence of the French monarchy and, as Le Goff continues to remind us, ended up being the characteristic figure of a century comparable to the famous century of Pericles in antiquity.





It is said of Saint Louis that he did not insult or do violence to anyone and that he knew how to impart sovereign justice.

Before him, never before had a king, a prince or a potentate been forced to correct and repair the abuses and injustices caused to the poor by the arrogance of barons and provosts during the reigns of his ancestors. And what is unique in the history of mankind is that he wanted to hear the voice of those to whom no one listened.

He married Marguerite de Provence, with whom he had 11 children. He founded many hospitals and monasteries, helped to build the abbey of Royaumont and the basilica of Saint-Denis, where he was buried. He had the beautiful Sainte Chapelle built in Paris, where he placed the relics –mainly the crown of thorns– of Christ that he himself had acquired. He participated in the foundation of the Sorbonne University, and his reign was a period of considerable cultural, intellectual and theological evolution. He closely followed the final work on the construction of Notre-Dame Cathedral. And finally, he undertook the Seventh and Eighth Crusades.



A child of his time, of that 13th century plagued by wars and confrontations, he never gave up his indefatigable desire for justice, *he wanted the values of heaven to come down to earth*, and he was the great peacemaker of his time and arbiter of the conflicts of Christendom. This is why many consider him to be the first true European, and one of the first missionaries, for his crusades and his incursions into Jewish and Muslim territories were guided more by his desire for conversion than for conquest. He wanted justice to reign on earth because in his spirit *everything was dictated by the great love that dominated him*.

It is remarkable that, in the course of one of his crusades, when the Sultan of Egypt captured him, his goodness and virtues were so conspicuous that he won not only the respect but even the affection of the Muslims themselves who wanted to name him sultan and who, with tears in their eyes, came to say of him that *he was the fair man who had worked hardest for the advent of peace in the world*.



Le Goff even tells us that for the first time in human history St. Louis put into practice the organic theory of society, taught by his friend St. Thomas Aquinas, which made the king the head of an organic political structure that was well-structured and well-administered. He persecuted usury in all its forms. He fought for a stable and strong currency as an important instrument of economic prosperity. Indeed, what was to remain in the collective memory of his reign is that era of great material prosperity, without monetary changes, without inflation and without famine. It was to be an era of justice, peace and abundance, of a perfect political regime, of an exemplary Christian monarchy.

