Europe After the Fall of Rome

Previously, the magnificent roads built by the Roman Army offered merchants, officials, and other traveler’s safe journeys throughout the vast Empire. Because the Army was on permanent guard along the Empire’s borders, town-dwellers could sleep safely at night, secure from sudden invasions by would-be invaders from the “uncivilized” world outside Roman territory.

Food and other provisions and equipment were able to move safely between towns and farms. Water supplies could flow free from the danger of destruction along the aqueducts that were also built by the Army.

**FAST FORWARD A FEW HUNDRED YEARS ABOUT 500 A.D.**

Rome has fallen, Huns and Goths have sacked Rome, and the place that once was one of the greatest empires the world has ever known is now a dangerous place to live. The protection of the army disappeared once the Roman army ceased to be the powerful disciplined force which had once conquered a great empire. Instead, the Army became weak, torn by rivalries among its officers.

In Western Europe, the dark ages had begun. Life in Western Europe became miserable. There was no sanitation, no advances in medicine, and no towns. There was only war, constant unending war, as one kingdom fought another. There was no government or authority to keep order. Bandits and outlaws were common and traveling on the road was risky.

Not only was Europe dangerous but it was very difficult for the people that lived there as well. Families were starving and disease was running rapid. Because of all the wars, the aqueducts that carried fresh water to different villages ran dry. Villagers began digging wells for water, but often they were not safe to drink because disease infested animals got into the water supply. Families switched back to subsistence farming meaning they only grew enough food for them to survive; they were not growing food to sell. In order to gain any type of extra money families would try to have more kids in order to help with farming. On average a family would have approximately 10 children and by time the children reached 7 years of age only 4 of the children would have survived. The average life expectancy dropped over ten years. For the children that did survive, there was no point in being educated as an administrator, since there was no central government for them to serve, nor in training them to be artists, for there was no one to buy beautiful sculptures or paintings. There was not even much point in teaching them to read and write. What they needed to know was how to fight, how to forge and use weapons, grow food or hunt for it, build huts, dig wells and construct defenses.

As a consequence of subsistence farming, the need to grow food for your family’s survival caused people in Europe to stop building beautiful works of art and focus primarily on the day to day struggles.

People needed a beacon of hope, that beacon came in the form of a religion; **Christianity.**

**This is time period is what became known as, the Dark Ages.**