Three Periods of the Middle Ages:

The Early Middle Ages 476-1000 CE
The High Middle Ages 1000-1300 CE
The Late Middle Ages 1300-1450 CE

The Early Middle Ages 476 – 1000

The Western Roman Empire fell in 476. Barbaric invaders:

- Huns
- Franks
- Goths
- Angles
- Vandals
- Saxons

- Because of these invasions, all lands became battlefields.
- 5th, 6th, and 7th centuries: period of great migration of people in Europe and the Mediterranean region (“domino effect”).
- The Huns pushed the Goths to move west and south: (Ostrogoths to Italy and Visigoth to Spain).
- The Angles, Saxons, and Jutes moved to eastern Britain from Scandinavia and Germany, pushing Britons (the native Celtic tribes of the Britain) to Wales and Ireland.
- Most people struggled for basic survival.
- The Early Middle Ages are also called “The Dark Ages” (ca.500-1000) because “the light of civilization” went out. We do not have a lot of information about this period (not many primary sources survived to this day).
- The main conflicts during this period - fighting for land and struggle for power at 2 levels: **Political** and **Religious**
- This was the time of strong religious influence.
- **Churches** grew to be very powerful in the Middle Ages

**Why:** People could not read or write, however people in the church could.

- The Church held knowledge = power.
- People of the lower classes respected the Church leaders and obeyed faithfully.
- People believed the Church leaders protected them from evil and helped in time of need.
- The Church provided what the government could not.
- This period is sometimes called **The Age of Faith**.
6th Century Europe

Christians in Europe and around Mediterranean Sea developed different versions of Christianity:

- **Roman Catholicism** (*katholikos* – “universal” in Greek); Germanic tribes like the Burgundians and the Franks converted into Catholicism;
- **Arianism** (followers of teachings of Arius); Visigoths and many other Germanic tribes had converted to the Arian form of Christianity;
- **Orthodoxy** (*orthos* – “right” and *doxa* – “opinion” in Greek); most people of the Eastern Roman Empire followed the Orthodox Christianity;

**The Franks**

Clovis, king of the Franks (481 C.E. one of the Germanic tribes), was worshiping his native gods. This pagan king married a Christian woman - Clotilda. In 510, Clovis converted to Christianity. His army and the Frankish people were also baptized. The Franks became Roman Catholic Christians.

King Clovis established the **Merovingian dynasty** (named after a mythical ancestor Meroweg). The Merovingians ruled the territory of the **modern day France**. After Clovis died in 511, the Merovingian kingdom in France was divided among his sons.
- defeated last of the Romans
- spread Christianity

**Charlemagne** (Charles the Great)
- leader of the Franks 768 - 814 C.E.)
- encouraged education
- unified Christian Europe
- helped by Pope Leo III (support of the church = "God is on my side")
  - Leo needed military support
  - Charlemagne provided it
  - Leo crowned Charlemagne king.

this was the start of the idea of feudalism.

**9th - 10th Centuries** (800's - 900's)

Western Europe was threatened by 3 groups
- Muslims (religion of Islam) - near east, N. Africa , part of Spain
- Magyars - Central Asia
- Vikings - (from the north) Norway and Denmark
  - terrifying raids on towns and property

Needed ways to protect themselves and their property = **FEUDALISM**
- protection and safety by establishing a stable social order which bound people to one another through loyalty.