

In what ways did the Catholic Reformation work to revitalize the church in the sixteenth century?

The Catholic Counter Reformation did help to revitalize the Catholic Church in a number of ways in the 16th century. First of all, with the formation of the Jesuit order, under the leadership of Ignatius Loyola, there was a new wave of devoted, disciplined, educated preachers attempting to affect people in society. The Jesuits were different than other monastic orders in that they did not withdraw from society, but were actively engaged in making an impact on society. They established schools in which to educate others and spoke out strongly about following Christ under direction of the pope and the Catholic Church.

Along with this came the reform of abuses taking place in other monastic orders and the creation of new orders that would go out and care for people. These new orders impacted society in a positive way by helping to feed the poor and care for the homeless and needy.

Another revitalization that happened with the Catholic Church was in the area of doctrinal statements and clarity of beliefs. Mainly coming out to the Council of Trent, the Church clarified its doctrines by confirming many of its existing beliefs and practices. It strongly confirmed such things as Tradition and Scripture, Purgatory and Indulgences, salvation by faith and works, the seven sacraments, veneration of the Saints, and auricular confession being necessary of salvation.

Shortly after the council, Pope Pius IV issued the Tridentine Creed (Confession) which summarized the outcome of the Council of Trent in a creed form so that it could be said by individuals in showing their allegiance to the Church. The summary creed helped make Catholics aware of what they believed and revitalized their faith and zeal.

However, this Catholic Counter Reformation was also a negative force in many ways. First of all, rather than helping to work toward a reconciliation with the Protestants, who were protesting against the negative things in the church and wanting to reform the church back to how it was before the dark ages, the clear statements made by the Council of Trent helped to solidify this breach. Rather than being opened to the positive reforms that were being spoken of by the Reformers, the Roman Catholic Church chose to arrogantly shut the door to any change in doctrine that had strayed from the truth set down by Christ and His Apostles.

Furthermore, one of the most tragic things that happened at this time was the re-instatement of the Inquisition in places where the Church had enough popularity among the people. In an effort to stamp out heresy, both doctrinal heresy and supposed witchcraft, the Roman Church was responsible of killing hundreds of thousands of people. For instance, in Italy any remnant of the Reformation was wiped out in ten years by a bloody massacre.

Not only was there killing of individuals because of the Inquisition, the Catholic Church also encouraged wars to happen in order to forcibly take back land they had lost to the Protestants. In some cases this was successful in winning the land back, and in others instances it was not. For instance, the Spanish Armada sailing against England was motivated by the Pope wanting to win back England to Catholicism.