

First Council of Lyons (1245)

Innocent IV, threatened by Emperor Frederick II, arrived at Lyons 2 December, 1244, and early in 1245 summoned the bishops and princes to the council. The chronicle of St. Peter of Erfurt states that two hundred and fifty prelates responded; the annalist Mencon speaks of three patriarchs, three hundred bishops, and numerous prelates. The Abbé Martin without deciding between these figures has succeeded in recovering to a certainty the names of one hundred assistants, prelates or lords, of whom thirty-eight were from France, thirty from Italy, eleven from Germany or the countries of the North, eight from England, five from Spain, five from the Latin Orient. Baldwin II, Latin Emperor of Constantinople, Raymond VII, Count of Toulouse, Raymond Bérenger IV, Count of Provence, Albert Rezats, Latin Patriarch of Antioch, Berthold, Patriarch of Aquileia, Nicholas, Latin Patriarch of Constantinople, came to the council, which opened 28 June at St-Jean. After the “Veni Creator” and the litanies, Innocent IV preached his famous sermon on the five wounds of the Church from the text “Secundum multitudinem dolorum meorum in corde meo, consolationes tuae laetificaverunt animam meam”. He enumerated his five sorrows: (1) the bad conduct of prelates and faithful; (2) the insolence of the Saracens; (3) the Greek Schism; (4) the cruelties of the Tatars in Hungary; (5) the persecution of the Emperor Frederick; and he caused to be read the privilege granted to Pope Honorius III by Frederick when the latter was as yet only King of the Romans. Thaddeus of Suessa, Frederick’s ambassador, arose, attempted to make excuses for the emperor, and cited numerous plots against the emperor which, he said, had been instigated by the Church. On 29 June at the request of the procurators of the Kings of France and England, Innocent IV granted Thaddeus a delay of ten days for the arrival of the emperor.

At the second session (July 5) the bishop of Calvi and a Spanish archbishop attacked the emperor's manner of life and his plots against the Church; again Thaddeus spoke on his behalf and asked a delay for his arrival. Despite the advice of numerous prelates Innocent (9 July) decided to postpone the third session until the seventeenth. On the seventeenth Frederick had not come. Baldwin II, Raymond VII, and Berthold, Patriarch of Aquileia, interceded in vain for him; Thaddeus in his master's name appealed to a future pope and a more general council; Innocent pronounced the deposition of Frederick, caused it to be signed by one hundred and fifty bishops and charged the Dominicans and Franciscans with its publication everywhere. But the pope lacked the material means to execute this decree; the Count of Savoy refused to allow an army sent by the pope against the emperor to pass through his territory, and for a time it was feared that Frederick would attack Innocent at Lyons. The Council of Lyons took several other purely religious measures; it obliged the Cistercians to pay tithes, approved the Rule of the Order of Grandmont, decided the institution of the octave of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, prescribed that henceforth cardinals should wear a red hat, and lastly prepared thirty-eight constitutions which were later inserted by Boniface VIII in his Decretals, the most important of which, received with protests by the envoys of the English clergy, decreed a levy of a twentieth on every benefice for three years for the relief of the Holy Land (Constitution "Afflicti corde") and a levy for the benefit of the Latin Empire of Constantinople of half the revenue of benefices whose titulars did not reside therein for at least six months of the year (Constitution "Arduis mens occupata negotiis").