

## **An entry from the Xanten Annals**

*The following is the annual entry in the chronicle of the abbey at Xanten, in northwestern Germany, for the year 873 CE.*

In the year 873

Ludwig the German, the Eastern King, celebrated an imperial council of bishops and princes in Frankfurt. Two of his sons came, Ludwig and Karl the Fat, armed with evil plans against him. They were hiding violence behind their shields and wanted to disregard their earlier oaths, rob their father of his rule and take him prisoner. But "God, who is a righteous and patient judge" (Ps. 7:12) made a public miracle appear: A devil entered into Karl in full view of everyone and drove him to walk about making terrible noises. On that very day, the demon was driven out by the prayers and callings of different priests. At the sight of this terrible sign, the elder brother fell to his father's feet, confessed his guilt and begged for mercy. The kind father dealt with the problem with wise conciliation.

In the same winter the water swelled with the melting snow to flood all the banks of the Rhine. In the terrible flood many people and much property and foodstuffs were carried away.

In the summer of the same year, the same king held another imperial council in the Pfalz [a region in to the south]. When everything there had been dealt with appropriately, a blind cleric appeared, Karlmann, the son of his brother Karl the Bald, the west Frankonian king. His own father had blinded him and, threatening to do worse, stuck him in a monastery. Now he had come for protection. Rorik, the bile of Christendom, came to him as well. He came with hostages, which he offered the king, and pledged his eternal loyalty. Not long after this, Ruodold, the nephew of Wüterich, fell. He had caused terrible damage in many areas on the other side of the English Channel, in France, in the Western Empire and in all of Friesland. In this area, in the eastern region, he and five hundred of his men were quickly brought down and he ended his dog's life - despite his baptism that is what it was - with a deserved death.

Later, in the middle of August, the old plague of the Egyptians came to us from the East, an unending swarm of locusts, like bees out of a basket. As they flew through the air, they made a slight noise, like a small bird. And as soon as they took to the air, the sky was only visible as seen through a sieve. In many places the pastors and the entire clergy confronted them with relics and crosses and begged God's mercy, that He might save them from this plight. They didn't cause damage everywhere, but only regionally. Furthermore, from 1 November until 14 February there was snow over all the ground. With various plagues the Lord bombarded His people without interruption; He punished "with the rod their misdeeds and with blows their sins" (Ps. 88:33).

*The annals fail to mention that the floods described led to a famine that spring which killed even more people.*

*(This excerpt has been translated from German by Mark R. Hatlie. The original Latin was translated into German and published in Borst, Arno: Lebensformen im Mittelalter. Ullstein: Frankfurt und Wien, 1979, p. 109-110.)*