

Call for Papers

Catholic Church, Papal Administration, and Local Societies in the Middle Ages

Bergen, Norway | 31 May - 1 June 2027

The medieval Catholic Church possessed a remarkably extensive administrative network. Through its sophisticated central institutions, the Church was able to reach every part of Western Christendom, exercising influence not only over ecclesiastical affairs but also over many aspects of the daily lives of individual Christians.

The conference *Catholic Church, Papal Administration, and Local Societies in the Middle Ages* seeks to explore the impact of papal administration on local communities and individuals across medieval Europe. Particular attention will be paid to the ways in which decisions and interventions originating from the papal curia affected the local societies and individual Christians.

Among the most important institutions of papal government was the **Apostolic Penitentiary**, which granted absolutions, dispensations, licences, and declarations concerning matters of canon law and conscience. Other central offices likewise played significant roles: officials acting on behalf of the **Apostolic Camera** were responsible for financial administration, including the collection of revenues and indulgences, while the **Apostolic Chancery** issued privileges, graces, and ecclesiastical benefices to petitioners throughout Christendom. Through these and other channels, papal authority reached deeply into local societies.

The conference will feature two keynote lectures, by **Professor Peter D. Clarke (University of Southampton)** and **Chargée de recherche Elisabeth Lusset (University of Paris 1 - Sorbonne)**. In addition, up to fifteen papers will be selected from submitted proposals. Each presentation will be allocated 20 minutes, followed by 10 minutes discussion.

Topics

We invite papers examining papal interventions in local societies or the lives of individual Christians during the Middle Ages. Comparative, methodological, and case-study approaches are all welcome. Possible themes include, but are not limited to:

- The influence of papal decisions, privileges, and graces on individuals and local communities.
- The survival, preservation, and use of papal documentation in local contexts (*in partibus*).
- The application and implementation of ecclesiastical norms and canon law in local societies.
- Relations between papal administrative institutions and local churches, monasteries, and religious communities.
- Communication between the papal curia and local actors.
- The reception, interpretation, and practical consequences of papal interventions at the local level.

Submission of Abstracts

Please submit to: kirsi.salonen@uib.no and ingrid.kibsgard@uib.no

- an abstract of no more than **300 words** and
- a short biographical note.

Important Dates

- **Submission deadline:** 15 January 2027
- **Notification of acceptance:** by 31 January 2027

Practical Information

Unfortunately, we are unable to cover travel or accommodation expenses for the participants, but coffee and meals will be provided free of charge. The conference will take place in the premises of the University of Bergen, Norway.

Contact

For further information, please contact the organisers

Ingrid Kibsgård

Kirsi Salonen