The initial crusades were started on November 27th, 1095 when Pope Urban II gave a speech at the Council of Clermont calling for people willing to march to the aid of the Byzantine Emperor against the Turks. This simple speech kicked off hundreds of years of conflict there would forever change the landscape of europe. The lecture given by Steven Bednarski explains that the crusades had many lasting impacts on the catholic church including the establishment of the Doctrine of the Treasury of the Church, and worsening relations between the Eastern and Western churches. Even though it was a very religion centered event, the crusades also heavily impacted europe in a secular fashion by introducing it to large scale warfare and colonization learned during the establishment of the outremer, as as well as bring europe in contact with the muslim empires and the vast knowledge they had acquired including the lost works of Aristotle.

In his speech to the Council of Clermont, Pope Urban addresses all present and describes the actions taken by those devout in their faith and chastises those that wrong the church by corruption, theft, negligence, and other acts. Once everyone there agreed with them he requested aid for the crusades, claiming that is a moral obligation. He also established the reward of indulgences for those that go, saying “All who die by the way, whether by land or by sea, or in battle against the pagans, shall have immediate remission of sins.” as quoted in the given readings.

The historical and technological changes in europe brought about by the crusades are some of the more well known effects, but the effects the crusades had on the shape and direction of the church are less known, particularly by those raised in a secular environment. Its interesting to see how these series of battles fought with a foreign foe could lead to a further divide of the church into Eastern and Western spheres. One would normally think this a uniting event. The crusades were started, after all, by the Western Church coming to the aid of the Eastern Church when facing a common enemy..

Indulgences given out by the church give the crusades an economical quality and seem to monetize divine forgiveness, giving a quantitative quality to what outsiders would understand as an emotional connection to god. The exact details of these transactions were not laid out in the initial speech at the Council of Clermont, but would later be established by various salesmen for the crusades. For a religion that relies very heavily on penitence the quick and easy forgiveness seems like it would undercut some of the core beliefs of the church. Why bother following the commandments if you can just easily earn indulgences from the church by just doing as they ask? This seemed to also not sit well with members of the church as it would eventually lead to the Protestant Reformation and a time of reflection for sections of the church.