



The Emperor and the Saint: Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, Francis of Assisi, and Journeys to Medieval Places

Richard F. Cassady

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The Emperor and the Saint is a vivid place-by-place telling of the life and times of the most enlightened, creative, and dynamic ruler of Medieval Europe, Frederick II of Hohenstaufen. St. Francis, who shared with Frederick a love of the natural world and was baptized in the same cathedral in Assisi, is a parallel and contrasting presence. Cassady enthusiastically guides the reader through the history and legends, pausing to describe the architecture of a cathedral, to marvel at the atmosphere of a town, to recommend the best place for a quiet picnic of local fare.

Frederick's mother, Constance, was the daughter of the Norman Sicilian king, Roger II; Frederick's father, Henry VI, was the scion of the German imperial family, son of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. When three-year-old Frederick was orphaned in 1198 he came under the guardianship of Pope Innocent III, marking the beginning of a conflict with the Papacy that was to last for the rest of his life—he was excommunicated twice. As a young boy he wandered freely through the streets of Palermo, a crossroad of Eastern and Western cultures. A man of insatiable curiosity, Frederick spent hours developing his knowledge of science and religion, art and philosophy. He traveled the length and breadth of Europe, even going to the Holy Land where, as commander of a Crusade, he negotiated a treaty with Sultan al-Kamil of Egypt, nephew of the great Saladin. Both respected and reviled, Frederick achieved great heights and faced grave disappointments. One failure was his dream to bring Italy and Sicily together in a united empire with a capital at Rome. When Frederick died in December 1250, he was robed in the white habit of a Cistercian monk to demonstrate his connection to both personal/political and religious worlds.

This engaging book is richly illustrated with photographs. Armchair historians, general readers of popular biography, and fans of travel literature will delight in Cassady's lively presentation.

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