

The catholic monarchs: isabel and fernando essay sample

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King Ferdinand and Queen Isabel are considered one of the most triumphant and victorious leaders in all of history and one of the most successful of the Catholic Monarchs. Their might and power also stemmed from the fact that they both held individual control of their own lands while working in complete harmony with each other as a King and Queen. Rare has been seen an alliance in history where the King and Queen have ruled with such display of harmony in marriage, faith and politics as Ferdinand and Isabella. (Catholic Monarchs)

Queen Isabella is also known as Isabella of Castile and Aragon and Isabella the Catholic. Born in 1451, she was the daughter of John II, King of Castile and Isabella of Portugal. Upon her father's death in 1454 Isabella's half brother, Henry IV became the King of Castile and her younger brother Alfonso was the expected heir. Isabella was raised by her mother until 1457 when she and her brother were brought to court by Henry IV to protect them from the opposition nobles. (Lewis)

Henry's first marriage had ended in divorce and his second wife bore a daughter, Juana in 1462 who was soon claimed to be in reality the daughter of the duke of Albuquerque. The opposition thus attempted to replace Henry with Alfonso but did not succeed. When Alfonso died of poison in 1468, Isabella was offered the crown by the nobles but she refused. At this point Henry was willing to reach a compromise with the nobles in accepting Isabella as his heiress in September 1469. (Lewis)

Isabella married Ferdinand of Portugal in October 1469 without Henry's consent hence causing him to withdraw his prior recognition for Isabella and

again named Juana as his heir. A war of succession ensued upon Henry's death in 1474 with Alfonso V of Portugal, prospective husband of Isabella's rival Juana. The war was finally settled in 1479 with Isabella recognized as the Queen of Castile. By this time Ferdinand had become the King of Aragon. (Lewis)

Ferdinand V (1452-1516) was the son of King John II of Aragon. He is also known as Ferdinand the Catholic, King of Castile, as Ferdinand II, King of Sicily and Aragon and as Ferdinand III, the King of Naples. His father gave him Sicily during his lifetime leaving Aragon for him when he died. Through his marriage to Isabella, Ferdinand had hoped to acquire the Castilian crown for himself but he later realized that his politically astute wife had no such intentions and continued to firmly retain sovereign authority in her own monarchy. (Ferdinand V)

Isabella and Ferdinand decided to yield the ' Union of Crowns' equal in theory if not in actual fact. Castile was the larger and more powerful of the two nations and hence would dominate the foreign policy of both but Ferdinand was still a full partner with his queen. The Kingdoms' political, social and economic institutions remained autonomous from each other opting for a loose confederation between them. The new monarchy was reformed with a strong centralized government supported by a single judicial system under the control of the crown. (Isabella and Ferdinand)

Isabella and her husband were known together as the Catholic Kings and the union of their two main Spanish kingdoms was the foundation of Spain's

greatness to come. All of Spain except for the Moorish (Muslim) kingdom of Granada had become united. Isabella and Ferdinand instigated the Inquisition in Spain in 1490 to bolster religious and political unity. This was part of the many changes to the Church's role instituted by the monarchs. (Lewis)

The Inquisition was specially formulated for Portugal, Spain and their colonies. It was, though reluctantly, endorsed by Pope Sixtus IV upon the insistence of the monarchs who dreamt to expand their religion to the maximum. The creation of this independent Spanish Inquisition was presided over by a high council and grand inquisitor, the first of who was Tomas de Torquemada. Torquemada goes down in history as a symbol of the ultimate cruelty, bigotry, intolerance and religious fanaticism. (Inquisition)

The Spanish Inquisition was particularly severe, strict but also efficient due to its strong ties with the crown. The major targets were the Marranos (converts from Judaism) and the Moriscos (converts from Islam), who were suspected of still secretly practicing their original faiths. In recognition of these efforts in 'purifying the faith' Isabella and Ferdinand were given the name 'The Catholic' by the Pope. Isabella's religious interests also included taking a special interest in the order of the nuns, the Poor Clares. (Lewis)

With their government strengthened at home, The Catholic Kings now set out with ruthless determination to complete the remaining unification of Spain by the conquest of Granada. This reconquest had been at a standstill

since the time of Alfonso XI. The war began with the conquest of Alhama in March 1482. The Christians were favored by the internal conflicts in Granada due to the party of the Emir Muley Hassan and his son Boabdil. After the death of the former the conflict was continued by the supporters of his uncle Abdallah el Zagal. Isabella took a prominent part in the war by not only attending to the government of the kingdom while Ferdinand battled at the head but she also repeatedly visiting the camps to encourage the troops by her presence. Granada surrendered on 2 January, 1492 thus establishing the territorial unity of the Spanish monarchy. (Isabella I)

In the same year Ferdinand and Isabella took the fateful step of ruthlessly expelling from their kingdoms all Jews who refused to accept Christianity (170, 000 to 180, 000). One of the major effects of this step was to deprive Spain of a valuable cultural and economic community as the majority of Jews were highly educated and master craftsmen. The expulsion of the Moors (Muslims) had less of the same impact for many more Moors than Jews chose to pretend to accept Christianity in order to remain in Spain. (Ferdinand II)

Their reign is also critical in world history and Spain as it was under their patronage that Christopher Columbus set sail to discover the new world in 1492. It was during the war with Granada that Columbus presented himself to the monarchs and Isabella was quick to appreciate the genius who had been rejected at Genoa, Venice or Portugal. With the means procured for him by the King and Queen he fitted out the three famous caravels with which he discovered the first of the Bahamas Islands on October 12, 1492. (Isabella I)

Isabella was a great patron of artists and scholars and established educational institutions and large collection of art works. She knew Latin, was widely read and educated both her sons and daughters. Though a very successful monarch, she was extremely unhappy and unlucky with her children. Prince John died in youth, Catherine of Aragon was eventually repudiated by Henry VIII and Joan, the heiress, went insane. The only writing that she left is her will, a fascinating document summarizing her achievements as Queen and her wishes for her kingdom in the future.

(Isabella I)

After the death of Isabella in 1506, Ferdinand assumed the regency of Castile. Joining the League of Cambrai against Venice in 1508, he conquered Oran and Tripoli in North Africa in 1509. He annexed the kingdom of Navarre in 1512 and succeeded in the further extension of the Spanish borders from the Pyrenees to the Rock of Gibraltar. The reign of Ferdinand and his wife was characterized by an insatiable thirst for power and a greater Spain and they can be termed both cruel and perfidious in achieving this end. When Ferdinand died he left his successor, his grandson Charles, later Holy Roman Emperor Charles the V, a united Spain, Naples, Sicily, Sardinia and an overseas empire. (Ferdinand V)

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