

it into a bastion of Catholic orthodoxy, stemming the advance of heresy from Calvin's Geneva, across the mountains. The transfer of the Holy Shroud to Turin can be seen as an important element in this program, sanctifying the city and its rulers, and furnishing them with a potent weapon in defense of orthodoxy. With such powerful backing, the Counter-Reformation soon triumphed at Turin. Heresy was easily vanquished, but that victory was only the first stage in a process that aimed to transform and discipline the religious beliefs and practices of the entire citizen body.

In many ways, the arrival of the Jesuit Order can be taken to mark the onset of the Counter-Reformation at Turin. The Society of Jesus was founded by St Ignatius Loyola, and recognized by Pope Paul III in 1540. It quickly became the spearhead of the Catholic counter-offensive against the Protestants. In 1560 Duke Emanuel Filibert and Archbishop Girolamo della Rovere invited the celebrated Jesuit preacher Antonio Possevino to Turin, to lead the fight against the Protestants who were actively preaching there. The Protestants were quickly silenced or expelled. Other Jesuits soon arrived in Turin, and within a few years the Order had established itself in donated premises, and had founded a college to educate the sons of the nobility. Much of the Jesuits' rapid success was attributable to the support they attracted from influential donors. The most important of these was Aleramo Beccuti, the last of his line, who died childless in 1574 and bequeathed his family's extensive property to the Jesuits. Aided by this bequest, the Order embarked on the construction of a new church, dedicated to Turin's earliest Christian martyrs. The foundation stone of their church of the Santi Martiri was laid in 1577. It was designed by the Milanese architect Pellegrino Tebaldi with a spacious interior designed for preaching to large congregations, and a façade in the Mannerist style – an architectural innovation in the Turinese context.

The Jesuits were only one – though the most influential – among a number of religious orders that established themselves in Turin. The influx would continue down to the end of the seventeenth century; by then more than a dozen new orders had founded houses in Turin. Some of them were contemplative, avoiding engagement with the world, like the Sisters of the Visitation from Annecy, invited to the city in 1638 by Duchess Marie-Christine; others embraced the active life and devoted themselves to preaching and education, or to caring for the sick and the poor. Such were St Vincent de Paul's Fathers of the Mission, called to the city in 1655 to dispense relief during a famine, or the Fathers of St Joseph, called in during the famine of 1677 for the same pur-