

# Studying up on the Renaissance

Did you get a bookstore or Amazon gift certificate for Christmas? Have you resolved to dust off your library card in 2010? **Kim Wood**, resident scholar on the Ren Faire Planning Guild, offers the following reading list for anyone wanting to learn more about the period we're attempting to create this March.

***Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris* by Barbara Diefendorf**

Diefendorf closely examines popular religious fanaticism and religious hatred. She focuses on the roots and escalation of the conflicts, the propaganda of Catholic and Protestant preachers, popular religious beliefs and rituals, the role of the militia, and the underground activities of the Protestant community after the St. Bartholomew's Day massacres in 1572.

***Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy* by Lauro Martines**

The L.A. Times says this is "a brilliant study of the extraordinary explosion of expression in art and scholarship which made Italy the model for Europe."

***Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe* by Piero Camporesi**

The author makes the unexpected and fascinating claim that people lived in a state of almost permanent hallucination, drugged by their very hunger or by bread adulterated with hallucinogenic herbs. The use of opiate products, administered even to infants and

children, was widespread and was linked to a popular mythology in which herbalists and exorcists were important cultural figures.

***English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* by Christopher Haigh**

Haigh sets out to recreate the sixteenth century as a time of excitement and insecurity, with each new policy or ruler causing the reversal of earlier religious changes. He disproves any facile assumption that the triumph of Protestantism was inevitable.

***Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's Macbeth* by Gary Wills**

Wills's interpretation of Macbeth as both a play and a protagonist is marvelously convincing. He proves conclusively that Macbeth is a gunpowder plot play set in a satanically charged environment in which witches, Jesuits, and political conspiracy predominate.



Don't forget: The first-ever St. Francis Renaissance Faire will be Saturday, March 6, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The next day there will be an authentic Elizabethan Mass at 10 a.m. Invite everyone you know!

*Renaissance Faire*  
St. Francis Episcopal Church  
March 6<sup>th</sup> in the year of our Lord 2010



By the time you read this, Christmas Day will probably be past, and whatever we did or tried to do to maintain some level of environmental awareness during the holidays is a card laid and played. I started thinking of how I was doing and it led me to some questions to look up, which led me to more questions. I put up my small artificial tree that I have had for years and remembered that last year I considered getting a new one—this one is

starting to show its age. Then I came across an article that said real trees are environmentally better than artificial ones. Even better are potted trees that can be reused or donated to a park or other facility for their grounds after Christmas. I wondered what would happen if everyone decided to get a real tree instead of an artificial one. Wouldn't that change the environmental impact? Probably. I already have this tree and reusing it can't be a bad choice. These circular thought patterns were beginning to irritate me (as I'm sure they are you), but I'm just not going to be able to live without them anymore. In the end, I consider the awareness itself hopeful.

I certainly wasn't doing very well when it came to my usual travels since I have already flown to Dallas and plan to fly to Illinois to be with my family for Christmas. Did I consider another way? Yes, but it just wasn't going to work this year. Okay, where is my Christmas cheer?

I wanted just to end this article here. But I can't. There has to be something else. And there is. He is coming! He will be with us! There will be new possibilities, new life, despite my failings or yours.

Whether your tree will become mulch or not, I hope you all had a very merry Christmas and that you are looking forward to a new year full of hope and promise. ❖