Prayer
Scripture: I Peter 2:11-25
Hymn: 349 "Before Jehovah's Awful Throne"

The massacre of the Protestant worshippers at Vassy on March 1, 1562, by the Catholic troops of the Duke of Guise was the signal for both Catholics and Protestants to prepare for war. The Catholics were led by the Triumvirate: The Duke of Guise, Marshal Saint-André and Montmorency. The Catholic side consisted of most of the upper nobility, government officials, the higher Catholic clergy, most of the peasants and the masses in most of the large urban centers. The Prince of Condé and Admiral Coligny led the Protestants. The Protestant cause was supported by the ambitious bourgeoisie class, converts from the lower Catholic clergy, and some of the nobles (especially the lesser nobles) who opposed the rising power of the king and his court favorites and the growing bureaucracy. These nobles wanted to preserve feudal rights and provincial autonomy. Huguenots were found throughout France but were especially strong in the South and West; they constituted a majority only in Dauphine and eastern Languedoc. The Regent, Catherine, and the king fled to Fontainebleau when the troops of the Duke of Guise marched into Paris. Catherine invited the Duke of Conde to protect her and her children. Condé chose to march to seize Orleans, missing the opportunity to make the Huguenots supporters and protectors of the throne. The Triumvirate marched on Fontainebleau and compelled the King and Queen Mother to return to Paris. The Regent believed the Protestants had abandoned her; she turned to the Romanists. The massacre at Vassy was followed by the slaughter of Protestants in Paris, Sens, Rouen, Toulouse and other cities and towns. Many Frenchmen were disgusted by the cruelties of the Romanists. The Huguenots retaliated by breaking into Catholic churches, destroying images and relics and defacing altars. The desecration of churches seemed to make a greater impression on Frenchmen than the slaughter of people. Sympathy for the persecuted Protestants was checked by Huguenot violence. Calvin pleased with his followers to avoid lawlessness and destruction, but once the war had begun he supported the Huguenots, and with good conscience since they were led by Princes of the Blood. The Catholics received substantial help from Philip II of Spain. The Protestants sought help from England but the help from England was too little and could not compare with the Spanish in quality.

THE FIRST WAR (1562-63):

The Huguenots did not fare well in the first war. They suffered defeats at Rouen and Dreux. Montmorency was captured by the Protestants and Condé was captured by the Catholics. Antoine de Bourbon (King of Navarre), who sided with the Catholics, and Marshal Saint-André both died during the war. The Duke of Guise was shot by a Huguenot and died six days later (February 24, 1563). Catherine was able to take over the lead of the Catholic cause. She arranged peace negotiations at Orleans that involved Montmorency and Condé. Condé asked for the restitution of the edict of January 17, 1561, that had given the Protestants limited
recognition. Catherine refused. Terms were agreed on March 7, 1563 and published on March 18 as the Edict of Amboise. Nobles were allowed to worship in the reformed manner in their own houses and one village in each governmental district could have a Protestant chapel. Coligny accused Condé of betraying poor Huguenots, saying that by signing the edict he had destroyed more Protestant churches than the Catholics had been able to destroy in ten years. The peace lasted almost five years.

THE SECOND WAR (1567-68):

The Huguenots became suspicious that Catherine was plotting with the Duke of Alva who was attempting to destroy Protestantism in the Low Countries. Catherine had been sending Alva provisions for his troops. The Huguenots broke the peace by attempting to seize the king. The attempt failed but launched the second war. Montmorency fell in the indecisive battle of Saint-Denis on November 10, 1567. The peace terms reaffirmed the Edict of Amboise.

THE THIRD WAR (1568-70):

Between the Second and Third Wars of Religion the Counter-Reformation, or Roman Revival, was becoming an increasingly powerful force in France, due principally to the tireless and determined efforts of the Jesuits. Other orders joined in the efforts and new orders sprang up. Catholic schools were greatly improved. The Jesuits sent eloquent and well trained preachers throughout France to arouse enthusiasm for the Catholic Church, to defend the church from the criticisms of the Protestants, and to emphasize the novelty of the Protestant movement. New brotherhoods were formed that enrolled men pledged to bear arms against heresy. Mob violence and assassinations of Protestants became common. Protestants were alarmed at the successes of the Duke of Alva in the Netherlands against Protestants and the executions that followed his victories. They feared Alva would give support to Catholics in France. Huguenots rushed to give aid to the Prince of Orange and his Protestants in the Netherlands.

Catherine refused to publish the decrees of the Council of Trent in France and in this she had the support of most French Catholics except the Jesuits. The French feared Roman interference with the liberties of the French church. In an effort to reduce the power and influence of nobles on both Catholic and Protestant sides, Catherine selected "a flying squadron" of twenty-four beautiful young ladies to seduce the troublesome nobles. Men on both sides fell for her trick. Condé became so infatuated with one of the sirens that he forgot wife, party, and religion.

Huguenot leaders knew that Catherine's spies watched every move. Fear grew that she was about to have them executed as Alva was executing Protestant leaders in the Netherlands--Alva had executed Counts Egmont and Horn. Coligny and the disgraced Condé fled to La Rochelle on the Atlantic coast, a Protestant center that had successfully asserted municipal freedom almost to the
point of independence. It became a rallying point for Protestants. Armed privateers preyed on the commericy of Catholic powers. Jeanne d'Albret, widow of the late King of Navarre, and her fifteen year old son, Henry of Navarre, gathered troops. At La Rochelle she did much to raise the courage of the Huguenots. She sent a letter to Catherine demanding for the Protestants liberty of worship and all the rights and privileges of ordinary French citizens. She threatened war if these demands were not granted.

At the battle of Jarnac the Huguenots were defeated. When Condé surrendered he was shot in cold blood. The Queen of Navarre rallied the Protestant troops and presented to them as new leaders young Henry of Navarre and his cousin of the same age, Henry of Condé. The war went on. The Protestants sought in vain for help from England and Germany. They did receive some aid from the Netherlands. The Catholics received greater aid from Philip II of Spain. In the Battle of Moncontour the Protestants suffered the worst defeat they had met. Catherine offered harsh terms that denied Protestants the right to worship. The Queen of Navarre and Henry announced that their names would never appear on such a treaty. They, with Coligny, who became the real leader of the Protestants, gathered such a Protestant force that the Catholics were willing for an armistice to be arranged. The Edict of Saint-Germain (August 8, 1570) contained peace terms that gave the Protestants the most favorable arrangements they had enjoyed. Freedom of conscience was guaranteed throughout France. Public worship was permitted in all places where it had existed before the war. It was allowed on the estates of all nobles. Public worship was to be allowed at least two towns in every government district. Four strongly fortified towns—La Rochelle, Montauban, Cognac, and La Charité—were to be held by the Protestants as pledges. The king withdrew from the Spanish alliance and the international policy of suppression of Protestants. Protestants agreed to the restoration of Catholicism in places where they had suppressed it.

Coligny became the guardian for the two young Bourbon Princes, Henry of Navarre and Henry of Condé. As leader of the Huguenots he devoted himself to seeing that the peace terms were observed. The Catholics, led by the Guises, were determined to regain influence at the court and to undo this formal recognition of Protestants. New armed "Brotherhoods of the Holy Spirit" were formed to combat organizations of the Huguenots.

THE MASSACRE OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW (August 24, 1572):

Catherine, thinking of ways to strengthen herself at home and abroad, began trying to arrange matrimonial alliances. She wanted to marry one of her sons, either the Duke of Anjou or the Duke of Alencon, to Elizabeth, Queen of England. Elizabeth would not consider seriously an alliance with the French. The Duke of Anjou was betrothed to the princess of Poland who was favorable toward Protestants. She wanted to marry her daughter, Marguerite to the young king of Navarre. Such plans required that she show herself favorable toward the Huguenots. At first Coligny and Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre were cool to her approaches.
The young King, Charles IX, had come of age and began to take his position more seriously. He had been reared surrounded by the girls of the "flying squadron" and was notoriously devoted to pleasure. He resented Philip II's trying to dominate the policy of all Catholic Europe. When Pope Pius V recognized Cosmo de' Medici as ruler of Florence and made him a Grand Duke, Philip of Spain and Maximilian of Austria protested. Cosmo sought an alliance with German Protestants against Maximilian and backed Dutch Protestants against Philip II. Charles IX saw an opportunity to settle his grudge against Philip. His mother's marriage alliances also called for a break with Spain. Coligny saw in all this an opportunity to help fellow Calvinists in the Netherlands with money from Italy and troops from France. He began to respond to the advances of Catherine, was made a member of the Council, received from her large gifts and a lucrative appointment. Catherine began listening to the grievances of Protestants and acted to correct abuses, exasperating Romanists. Jeanne d'Albret finally went to Paris to complete the marriage plans. She became ill and died before the wedding—a great loss to the Protestants. Henry became the King of Navarre.

Coligny quickly gained great influence over King Charles IX. He was recognized as the greatest statesman in France. He was hated by the Guises. Coligny was using his influence to get the king to send French troops into the Netherlands against the Spanish. When Elizabeth refused marriage with the French, Catherine became concerned that France might have to fight Spain alone. She resented the growing influence of Coligny over her son. She decided that the break with Spain must be prevented. Coligny was in her way. She held secret conferences with the Duchess de Nemours, the mother of the Guises (July 23, 1572). Nothing should be allowed to interfere with the wedding of Henry, King of Navarre and Marguerite.

The wedding took place on August 18, 1572, in Paris outside the Cathedral of Notre Dame. The wedding was attended by Huguenot and Catholic nobles from all over France. On Friday, August 22, between ten and eleven o'clock, as Coligny was returning from the Louvre, the headquarters for the family and guests of the King of Navarre, an assassin in the employ of the Guises, who was concealed at a grated window by a curtain, in a house owned by a retainer of the Guises, was waiting for Admiral Coligny to pass. As Coligny walked slowly by, reading a letter, a shot rang out, blowing off the index finger of his right hand and wounding his left arm. Coligny pointed to the window but his servants found only a smoking arquebus.

The King, Charles IX, was on the tennis court when he heard the news of the attempted assassination. The King called his own physician to treat Coligny. Coligny asked to see the King. Catherine would not let him go alone. They were accompanied by the Duke of Guise and the Duke of Anjou. Catherine had revealed the plot to the Duke of Anjou. Protestant nobles rushed to Coligny. The King of Navarre and Henry de Conde demanded that the King investigate the crime and see that justice was done. The king
appointed a commission to conduct the investigation.

The Guises feared an investigation would reveal their part in the plot. They threatened to reveal Catherine's part. Catherine saw that the only way to save herself was a prompt and thorough massacre of the Huguenots who were growing restless and violent. She summoned a council on August 23 that decided on the massacre. The council felt it could depend on the fanatical mob of Paris to join the act. To get Charles IX to consent to and give orders for the massacre Catherine and the Guises persuaded him that the Huguenots were planning to assassinate him.

The signal for the massacre to begin was given by the ringing of a church bell at two o'clock in the morning, August 24, 1572, St. Bartholomew's Day. The Duke of Guise took the responsibility for the murder of Coligny. His men broke into Coligny's room, ran a pike through him, and tossed his body out of the window to the waiting Duke. Coligny's body was mutilated beyond recognition. At the Louvre the King of Navarre and Condé, the Bourbon princes, were arrested, taken to the King, and given the choice between death and becoming Catholics. Both renounced Protestantism and became Catholics. Catholic troops hunted down and executed the Protestant nobles who had come to Paris for the wedding. The troops were joined by fanatical mobs who searched the city for Huguenots to murder. Women and children were not spared. By the end of Saint Bartholomew's Day Protestants estimated 8,000 had been killed.

Orders were given by the King for the massacre to be carried out in the provinces. The slaughter was carried on throughout France but was especially bloody in Meaux, Toreyes, Rouen, Lyons, Toulouse, and Bordeaux. Protestants estimated that seventy thousand were killed.

Catherine sent a report of the massacre to Philip II of Spain who was so delighted that he called for a special mass to celebrate. Pope Gregory XIII called for a special thanksgiving mass and ordered an annual Te Deum to celebrate the occasion. He had a special medal struck to commemorate the massacre of Protestants.

THE FOURTH WAR OF RELIGION (1573):

Most of the Huguenot leaders had been killed but the Huguenots did not give up. Artisans, shopkeepers and sailors would not give up. La Rochelle on the coast and Sancerre in central France became rallying points. Sailors of La Rochelle joined with Dutch sailors preying on Spanish shipping. Nîmes and Montauban closed their gates to the King's soldiers. Milhaud, Aubenas, Privas, Mirabel, Anduze, Sommières and other towns and villages became places of refuge for Huguenots. They armed themselves, maintained communications and religious services—generally meeting at night. The Fourth War came from an attempt of the Catholics to take these Huguenot strongholds. La Rochelle was able to survive a Catholic blockade. The people of Sancerre and La Châtre starved to death rather than surrender. The war ended with the peace of Rochelle.
(July 1573) with liberty of conscience given to all but the right to worship was permitted only in Rochelle, Nimes, Montauban, and the houses of nobles. The harsh terms did not break the spirit of the Protestants.

THE FIFTH WAR OF RELIGION (1574-76):

The Protestants of the South used the peace of Rochelle to prepare to renew the war. They divided into districts and formed military governments. They formed a Protestant nation within the kingdom of France. They imposed taxes on Romanists and Protestants and confiscated ecclesiastical revenues. They perfected and armed a military organization that included twenty thousand men ready for offensive warfare. Nimes and Montauban sent a deputation to the King with a series of written demands: free exercise of religion in every part of France; maintenance of Huguenot garrisons at government expense in all strongholds of the Huguenots; two cities of refuge for Huguenots in every province of France; the King must condemn the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day, execute justice on those who had part in it, reverse the sentence passed on all victims, approve Huguenot resistance; secure from all Protestant States of Europe guarantees of the rights of the Protestant minority in France. They dated their document August 24—the date of the anniversary of the massacre.

Catherine was furious at the audacity of what she called "those rascals." She was dealing with citizens of a Protestant democracy that she could not frighten nor seduce with her "Flying Squadron." They called her and her Squadron rude names such as "murderesses" and "fallen women." She forbade the King to give them an answer.

A new party called "the Politiques" had been forming since St. Bartholomew's Day. It was made up of men who put the welfare of France above religious parties. They declared "a man does not cease to be a citizen because he has been excommunicated." They called for an end to the rule of the Queen Mother, the Guises, the Italians, and the Jesuits. They were willing to unite with the Huguenots if it would bring peace. They began to plot the escape of the Duke of Alençon, the youngest brother of the King, and Henry of Navarre.

Charles IX died May 30, 1574 of consumption and to the end he had been troubled with guilt over the massacre. He was succeeded by his brother, Henry III, who was Duke of Anjou and King of Poland. He was Catherine's pet and willingly left the business of government to her. The ruinous wars continued. The Queen Mother and the King became more and more unpopular. Protestants carried on a slanderous pamphlet war against Catherine. One pamphlet was entitled "A wonderful Discourse on the Life, Deeds, and Debauchery of Catherine de' Medici."

The Duke of Anjou (the Duke of Alençon had taken this title when his brother became King) escaped from imprisonment on
September 15, 1575. He joined Conde at the head of the forces of the Huguenots and Politiques. Henry of Navarre escaped on February 3, 1576 and renounced his forced adhesion to Catholicism. He proclaimed himself a Protestant and attended Protestant worship. The escape of the princes led to the "Peace of Monsieur" published in the Edict of Beaulieu on May 6, 1576. Protestants were given the right of public worship everywhere in France except in Paris and towns where the Court happened to reside (while the Court remained there). Protestants received eight walled towns as cities of refuge and as guarantees the terms would be observed. The King apologized for the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew and revoked all sentences on the victims.

THE SIXTH WAR OF RELIGION (1577):

The recognition of the Protestants infuriated the Catholics. They blamed King Henry III. Henry, Duke of Guise and Catherine de' Medici began to organize the "League." The Duke of Guise published in the name of the League a declaration calling for the restoration of the ancient liberties of the provinces against the crown and the reestablishment of the worship of the Catholic Church. The Guises circulated petitions to support the League throughout France. So many Catholics signed the petitions that Henry III renounced the peace treaty declaring it had been exacted by force. He declared himself the head of the League. He summoned a meeting of the States General to be held at Blois in December 1576. This required the holding of elections for membership in the Third Estate. The Protestants boycotted the elections. The Catholic assembly voted to enforce religious unity.

The Huguenots considered the action of the States General a declaration of war. It was indecisive but the Catholics had the upper hand. The terms of the Peace of Bergerac (September 15, 1578) were harsher than those of the Edict of Beaulieu. Freedom of worship was guaranteed only where the authorities were willing to permit it.

THE SEVENTH WAR OF RELIGION (1580):

Hostilities were renewed and again the war dragged on indecisively until it was ended by the Peace of Fleix (November 1580). Protestants were not able to win and Catholics were not able to crush the Protestants.


Henry of Navarre alienated many strict Calvinists by marrying Marie de' Medici and by the brilliant and gay court he set up at Nerac. In 1584 Duke Francis of Anjou returned from unsuccessful campaigns in the Netherlands. He died soon after his return (June 10, 1584). Since Henry III had no children, Henry of Navarre became successor to the throne of France. Henry III urged Henry of Navarre to become a Catholic but he refused.

To the Catholic Church Henry of Navarre was an apostate who had become a heretic who should be punished by death. The
pamphlet press of the Catholics began violent attacks. Romanist nobles met at Nancy late in 1584 to reorganize the League. They passed a resolution excluding Protestant Bourbons from the throne. They proclaimed Cardinal Bourbon as the successor of Henry III. They sought and in the Treaty of Joinville (December 31, 1584) received the support of Philip II of Spain. They solicited a bull from the Pope approving their selection.

In Paris Catholics formed the League of Paris with a council of eight to take control of everything. Secret societies were organized to extirpate the Protestants.

King Henry III published an edict forbidding all armed assemblies. The League published a manifest announcing its support of Cardinal Bourbon to meet the threats against the Catholic religion. The Duke of Guise with his troops opened hostilities. The War of the three Henries had begun: Henry III, Henry Duke of Guise, and Henry of Navarre.

Henry II became alarmed and negotiated a treaty with the League. He revoked all toleration for Protestants. All Protestant ministers were banished, all Protestant worship was forbidden, and all Protestants were ordered to become Catholics or leave France within six months (Treaty of Nemours, July 7, 1586).

Pope Sixtus V issued a bull excommunicating both Henry of Navarre and the prince of Conde and excluding both from succession to the throne on the grounds of heresy. Henry of Navarre denounced the bull as contrary to French law and hence invalid.

The war went badly against the Huguenots at first. They were fighting both the King's Loyalists and the League led by the Guises. The majority of Frenchmen supported the League. As the war went on Henry of Navarre showed superior generalship and at Courtrai (October 20, 1587) almost annihilated the Royalist army. The Royalists and the League were not wholehearted allies. The League put pressure on the King to join the league or to join the enemy. Madame de Montpensier, sister of the Guises, directed a band of preachers who inflamed the people of Paris against both King and Huguenots. The Guises demanded that the King publish the decrees of the Council of Trent, establish the Inquisition in France, and execute all Huguenots who would not renounce their religion. A secret revolutionary government called "The Sixteen" was organized under the direction of the Guises to take over Paris and a plot was formed to seize the King.

The Paris League invited the Duke of Guise to enter and take control of Paris. The King strengthened his guard and forbade the Duke to enter the city. The people erected barricades to prevent the movement of the King's guards. The Queen-Mother persuaded the King to welcome the Duke of Guise. The King had to appeal to the Duke to protect him from the people and had to turn the war and the city over to the Duke of Guise. The King managed to escape secretly from Paris. The King hoped to rally support at the meeting of the States General at Blois in October 1588.
The League and the Guises controlled all three Estates. The King wanted to denounce the League and outlaw it but the Cardinal of Bourbon compelled him to tone down his speech. The Estates forced the King to swear that he would permit only the Roman religion in France.

News reached the meeting of the complete destruction of the Spanish Armada. The King saw prospects of help from England if he gave support to Protestants. He summoned a meeting of the Council that included the Duke of Guise and his brother, Cardinal of Guise. The King had arranged for the Duke to be assassinated. The Cardinal was arrested and executed the next day. The mother of the Guises and other leaders of the League were arrested. The bodies of the Guises were burned and the ashes thrown into the Loire.

When news of the assassinations reached Paris the city was filled with rage. The Sixteen took control of the city. The Sorbonne declared citizens were absolved from allegiance to the King. Pope Sixtus V issued a bull summoning the King to Rome for trial for murder or be excommunicated.

King Henry joined Henry of Navarre and the two Henries marched on Paris. Catherine de' Medici died. On August 1, 1589, a Dominican monk murdered the King. In Paris the people celebrated at the news the King was dead. They swore they would never accept a Protestant king. Cardinal de Bourbon, still a prisoner, was proclaimed King Charles X.

Outside Paris Catholic nobles urged Henry of Navarre, as King Henry IV to declare himself a Catholic. The Duke of Mayenne, a younger brother of the Duke of Guise, promised that he and the League would accept Henry as king and give him six months to consider the religious question. Soon the forces of the Duke of Mayenne and those of Henry IV were at war. In the Battle of Ivry, March 14, 1590, Henry IV won a decisive victory. He marched on Paris and put the city under siege. During the siege thirteen thousand died of hunger and twenty thousand died of disease. When the Duke of Parma invaded France Henry had to lift the siege. France was in a state of anarchy.

Philip II offered to support Mayenne as governor if the League would make his daughter Queen--her mother was Elizabeth of Valois, daughter of Catherine de' Medici. When the French refused Philip proposed that the new Duke of Guise marry his daughter and be king. Again the French refused.

Henry IV published a declaration that the Roman religion would remain the religion of France. He declared he was willing to be instructed in the Roman Religion.

**HENRY IV BECOMES A CATHOLIC:**

Henry IV decided that the only way to peace in France was for him to become a Catholic. The Archbishop made the announcement
and the news spread over France. The ceremony of reception was held at Saint Denis, north of Paris on July 15, 1593. Henry abjured the Protestant faith. Kneeling before the Archbishop of Bourges he was received into the Roman church. A multitude of citizens welcomed him with "Vive le Roi!" That evening after the celebrations of the day the new King rode to the top of Montmartre and looking down on the city of Paris is reported to have remarked, "Paris was well worth a mass."

Paris was still controlled by the League. Many Catholics doubted the King's sincerity. Paris preachers who were members of the League ridiculed the conversion from the pulpit. One of them sneered, "My dog, were you not at mass last Sunday? Come here and let us offer you the crown."

The Politiques rallied behind the King. Mayenne and the League soon quarrelled and the League began to melt away. The King was crowned at Chartres, February 27, 1594. He received homage from the Sorbonne and the Parliament of Paris. Henry IV laid his hands on some who claimed they were ill and word was spread that they were healed. With wise statesmanship the King consolidated his power. He showed clemency in dealing with his enemies—he banished only about 130 people. Pope Clement VIII finally granted him recognition on September 17, 1595, without requiring that he support the Council of Trent. The pope was anxious to keep Henry from establishing a national church.

Philip II was enraged at the thought of losing France and declared war. He was joined by Mayenne and a remnant of the League. Henry IV routed the Spanish at Fontaine-Francaise on June 5, 1595. A peace treaty was signed with Spain in 1598 (Treaty of Vervins).

The Huguenots were enraged and felt betrayed even though Henry IV guaranteed them freedom of religion. They held an assembly at Nantes (October 1593-January 1594) at which they pledged themselves to die for their faith. They organized a kingdom within a kingdom. They demanded equal civic rights with the Catholics. They demanded more than the King's guarantee. In 1597 four delegates were appointed to negotiate with the King. Out of the negotiations came the Edict of Nantes of April 13, 1598—the Charter of French Protestantism and the end of the Eight Wars of Religion.

The Edict of Nantes made the Catholic Church the official state church and restored to it its former rights, possessions, and income. But the King had not forgotten his former associates. Liberty of conscience was granted to all without being questioned, vexed or molested. No one was to be forced to act contrary to his religion. Liberty of worship was conceded in all places in which it had been practised during the last two years. Two places of public worship could be maintained in every governmental district except large towns, where services were held outside the walls and in the houses of nobles. Public worship was to be permitted in two hundred enumerated towns and in some 3,000 castles, whether the proprietor was in residence or not. Lesser nobles were not to invite more than thirty persons in
in addition to members of their families. Nobles, officers of the army, and governors could have worship in their apartments provided the doors were kept shut and there was no loud singing of psalms or disturbing noise. Protestant worship was forbidden in Paris and for twelve and a half miles outside the walls. Financial support was promised by the government to Protestant schools. The publication of Protestant books was legalized. Protestants were accorded full civil and political rights. Protestants were granted the right to hold ecclesiastical assemblies, such as consistories, colloquies, and synods, national and provincial. They could exercise judicial functions among themselves. They were granted the right of entry into all universities, schools, hospitals, and admission to all public offices. To guarantee that these privileges would be respected the Protestants were granted complete control of two hundred fortified towns for eight years. In these towns they could keep armed garrisons paid for by the government. They could organize a state within the kingdom and could raise and maintain an army of 25,000 soldiers--the King kept an army of only 10,000 in times of peace. The Protestants could meet to discuss political questions provided they first secured permission from the King. The King declared the Edict of Nantes perpetual and irrevocable.

The Huguenot Church of France rapidly became one of the leading Protestant churches of Europe. Theological colleges were established at Sedan, Montauban, and Saumur. Learning and piety flourished. The Huguenots greatly increased in numbers and peace and prosperity returned to France.