

Doctrine of Discovery bullet points

- The Doctrine of Discovery, issued by Pope Alexander VI as a Papal Bull in 1493, ensured Spain's exclusive rights to land "discovered" by Columbus.
- Any land not inhabited by Christians was available to be "discovered," claimed and exploited by Christian rulers.
- It became the basis of all European claims in the Americas as well as the foundation for the United States' western expansion, upheld by the US Supreme Court in 1823 (Johnson v. McIntosh); in essence, American Indians had only a right of occupancy which could be abolished.
- In the 1900s and in 2000, many Catholics petitioned Pope John Paul II to formally revoke it and recognize the human rights of indigenous "non-Christian peoples."
- **From the original text** (the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History):
"...the Catholic faith and the Christian religion be exalted and be everywhere increased and spread, that the health of souls be cared for and that barbarous nations be overthrown and brought to the faith itself."
- "...you may be enabled for the honor of God himself and the spread of the Christian rule to carry forward your holy and praiseworthy purpose so pleasing to immortal God."
- "...to make diligent quest for these remote and unknown mainlands and islands through the sea, where hitherto no one had sailed..."
- "...these very peoples... believe in one God... and be trained in good morals."
- "...to bring under your sway the said mainlands and islands with their residents and inhabitants and to bring them to the Catholic faith."
- "And we appoint you and your said heirs and successors lords of them with full and free power, authority, and jurisdiction of every kind..."

Discussion questions:

1. By what authority did Pope Alexander VI claim the power to give Spain nearly exclusive possession of the New World?
2. Why do you think Spain wanted exclusive rights in the New World?