**Starter Activity: views – The Crusades in retrospect**

**May 4th 2005 – Christopher Howse article, *The Daily Telegraph,* asserted “the Crusaders were right, and we should be grateful to them.” May 6th 2005 – *The Daily Telegraph* published these responses:**

1. “Sir – So, Christopher Howse believes “the Crusaders were right…”The Crusades were launched in 1095 by Pope Urban II, who – in order to shore up his position in the Church – worked an assembly of knights, nobles and clerics in Clermont, France, into a frenzy with what is now acknowledged to have been fictitious tales of Muslim atrocities in the Holy Land. “If you must have blood, bathe in the blood of infidels”, the Holy Father instructed them.

Aside from utterly destroying Antioch – one of the greatest cities in the world at the time – these first Crusaders, in conquering Jerusalem, massacred the Muslim garrison and almost every Muslim and Jewish occupant of the town in an orgy of violence until, as one contemporary chronicler reports, the horses of the invaders were “knee-deep in blood”. … Mr Howse neglects to mention this bloody episode or to compare it with the humane manner in which… Saladin…treated the Christians when he recaptured al-Quds (Jerusalem). Does the “free press” that Mr Howse so lauds allow only Muslims to be portrayed as barbarians?”

(Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary, Media Committee, Muslim Council of Britain)

1. “Sir – It was refreshing to read Christopher Howse’s comments on the Crusades. He is right that we should regard these movements as part of the long-lasting struggle between Christendom and Islam, not just as one-off events. They were a small-scale, rather belated, response to the process of Muslim conquest that had subjugated all Christian lands in the Middle East, North Africa and parts of Europe.

It is the fashion to deplore the Crusades, yet, as Mr Howse argues, it is because there were soldiers prepared to defend Europe against Muslim invaders that Christian civilisation was preserved and its benefits enjoyed today. The Christian populations that fell under Muslim domination fared less well: when not killed or forced to convert, they had the second-class status of ‘dhimmitude’, under which yoke non-Muslims still suffer in Muslim majority countries.”

(Colin Sowden, Abergavenny, Mons)

1. Read each letter – identify facts and opinions.
2. In your own words, summarise in one paragraph the 2 contrasting views.
3. What are your personal responses?

CRH, May 2016.