French Wars of Religion
3 prominent families:
- Guise (Catholic)
- Valois (Catholic)
- Bourbon (Huguenot)
King Henry II and Catherine de Médicis
King Henry II (1547-1559)

- part of the Catholic Valois family
- fervent Catholic
  - The Edict of Chateaubriant (1551)
    - called upon the civil and ecclesiastical courts to detect and punish all heretics
    - placed severe restrictions on Protestants
      - including loss of property, cutting out their tongues for speaking Protestant beliefs, or burning them alive
    - prohibited the sale, importation or printing of any unapproved book
• Henry II tramples heresy under his foot
King Henry II (1547-1559)

• arranged the marriage of his son Francis at the age to Scotland’s Mary Stuart in 1548
  – Mary had been crowned Queen of Scots in 1543, at the age of nine months
  – in 1548 the 6-year-old Mary was sent to France, to be raised in the royal court until the marriage
  – while Francis was still the dauphin (heir, next-in-line), he married Mary in 1558 when he was 14
  – a union that would give the future King of France the throne of Scotland and a claim to the throne of England

• Henry died in 1559, and his son Francis took over at the age of 15
  – But since he was so young, his mother, Catherine de Medici, she served as his regent
Catherine de’ Medici
r. 1559-1589
“the age of Catherine de’ Medici”
Queen of France
Catherine de’ Medici

- Catherine feared the power of the Guise family (Catholics)
  - even though she was Catholic, she sought allies with prominent Protestants
  - named a prominent Huguenot, Gaspard de Coligny, a key advisor to Charles IX
Gaspard de Coligny
Catherine de’ Medici

• Catherine was concerned about Coligny’s idea to send French troops into the Netherlands, supporting Dutch Protestants
  – Catherine knew this would put France on a collision course with mighty Spain
  – Catherine then claimed that there was a Huguenot coup planned, led by Coligny
    • Called for the execution of Protestant leaders to prevent the Protestant coup
    • Result was the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre (August 24, 1572)
St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre

20,000 Protestants Killed
Catherine de Medici views the aftermath of the massacre
Giorgio Vasari’s Massacre of Coligny and the Huguenots

- Commissioned by Pope Gregory XIII to decorate a hall in the Vatican asserting the Church’s struggle against “unbelief”
- Coligny is hurled from a window while his followers are slaughtered
Christian History

Huguenots and the Wars of Religion

The Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre, 1572
Reforming Doctrine and Daily Life
Making Sense of Slaughter
Escape from France
France

- With the death of King Henry III in 1589, the Valois dynasty ended
  - Last of Catherine de’ Medici’s children
  - had no heirs, so the throne went to a new line of succession
- Henry IV, Henry of Navarre succeeds him
  - the first Bourbon king
  - Huguenot
King Henry IV (r. 1589-1610)

- believed a policy of tolerant Catholicism would be the best way to achieve peace in France
- in 1593, he converted to Catholicism
  - “Paris is well worth a mass.”
King Henry IV (r. 1589-1610)

- **Edict of Nantes (1598)**
  - a religious truce
  - granted Huguenots:
    - freedom of public worship
    - right of assembly
    - admission to public offices and universities
  - Not complete religious freedom, more like toleration
The Edict of Nantes (1598)
La France religieuse à l'époque de l'Edit de Nantes
France

• Henry IV was assassinated by a Catholic fanatic in 1610
  – his son, Louis (Louis XIII), took over for him