



Join #HistoricalFiction author, Mary Ann Bernal, as she takes a look back in time to the plight of the Lepers. There is also a chance to check out Mary Ann's fabulous new book — Crusader's Path #History @BritonandDane

THE COFFEE POT BOOK CLUB

# Crusader's Path

By Mary Ann Bernal

From the sweeping hills of Argences to the port city of Cologne overlooking the River Rhine, Etienne and Avielle find themselves drawn by the need for redemption against the backdrop of the First Crusade....



The Coffee Pot Book Club

# The Plight of the Lepers

## Mary Ann Bernal

Leprosy (Hansen's Disease) has been around long before 1550 B.C. when the infection was first documented in ancient Egypt and other countries. The culprit behind the now-treatable disorder is *Mycobacterium leprae*, a bacterium related to the tuberculosis strain.

Recapping some of the symptoms include disfigurement, claw hands, skin lesions, nerve damage, muscle weakness, and a collapsed nose. The contagion is spread through skin contact and respiratory secretions. While leprosy is contagious, it never reached pandemic proportions. Meaning, isolating the poor souls was never necessary, so much heartbreak because of ignorance.

Leviticus 14 provides a recipe for a “cure” where bird blood is sprinkled over the affected person. Throughout the ages, dog and lamb blood was used to either drink or bathe in. Desperation leads to desperate measures as witnessed by the various odd treatments using snake venom, frog poison, bee and scorpion stings, and chaulmoogra oil to apply on the lesions. Worse yet was the use of arsenic and castration, believing the disease was sexually transmitted.

Fear and superstition held a firm grip on societal mores. Why were lepers shunned? Was it because of Leviticus? Was it not written the afflicted were unclean? And of course, the inference for causation was sin. Even though the New Testament states, Jesus healed lepers while forgiving sins, mankind was not as forgiving.



Leviticus states lepers are unclean and sinful. The afflicted were shunned, forced to live in caves during Biblical times, and in colonies as the centuries passed. Laws were enacted to protect the population. Lepers lost their rights. They were declared legally dead, forced to participate in a ritual where they stood in an open grave as the damning words were read. They became the living dead. Their property was confiscated; all their wealth went into governmental coffers. They were denied entry to places inhabited by healthy people.

Leper houses and asylums became prominent throughout all of Christendom in the Middle Ages. If not confined, the lepers had to follow harsh rules. They had to wear special clothing and play a wooden clapper, later a bell, to warn of their approach. They also had to take vows listed in the Mass of Separation. And yes, rich lepers fared better than poor ones.

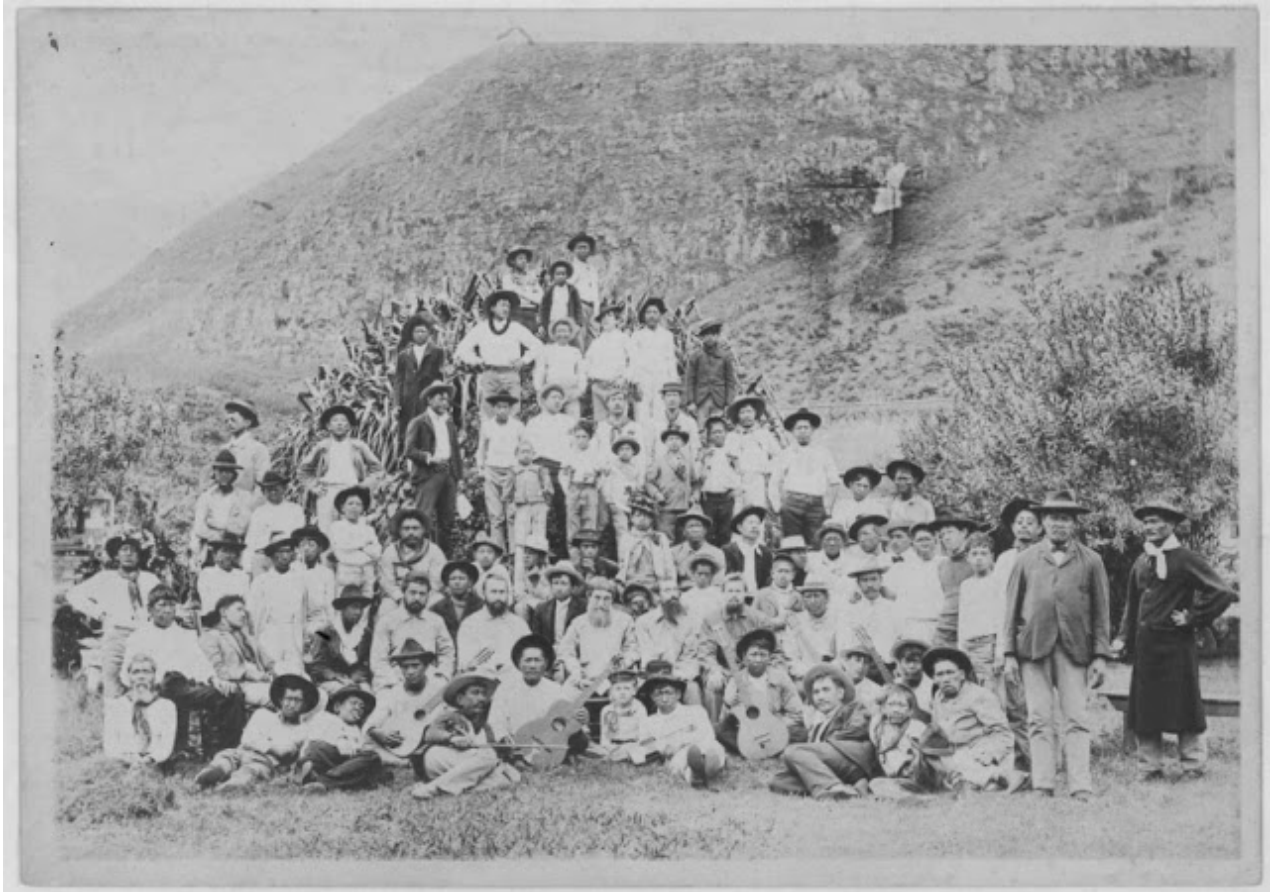
It is hard to visualize a beloved family member being treated with disdain, ostracized by the community, and forced to live a life of misery, begging for alms, bereft of hope. Can you imagine yourself having to ring a bell as you approached the local mall, warning people of your imminent arrival? You probably wouldn't have made it out of the parking lot before the Police arrived.



Medieval leper bell at the museum Ribes Vikinger, Ribe, Denmark — Wikipedia.

Grant it, catching a disease was very scary throughout time. We still shy away from people infected with some respiratory disease, sending sick workers home. How many times have you heard “I’m not contagious” when greeting someone who has a runny nose and coughs a lot? And remember how patients with AIDS were treated when the disease was first diagnosed? Fear and ignorance reigned, just like it did when lepers walked the countryside in days of old. At least, today, we are fortunate to have science to explain the unexplainable. We have the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). While we are much better off than our forebearers, we still have a long way to go to eradicate the fear and educate the ignorant.

Hawaii's leper colony is located at Kalaupapa, on the island of Molokai. It housed thousands of infected people since its inception in 1866. The statement by Makia Malo is a stark reminder of society's failure to embrace the truth.

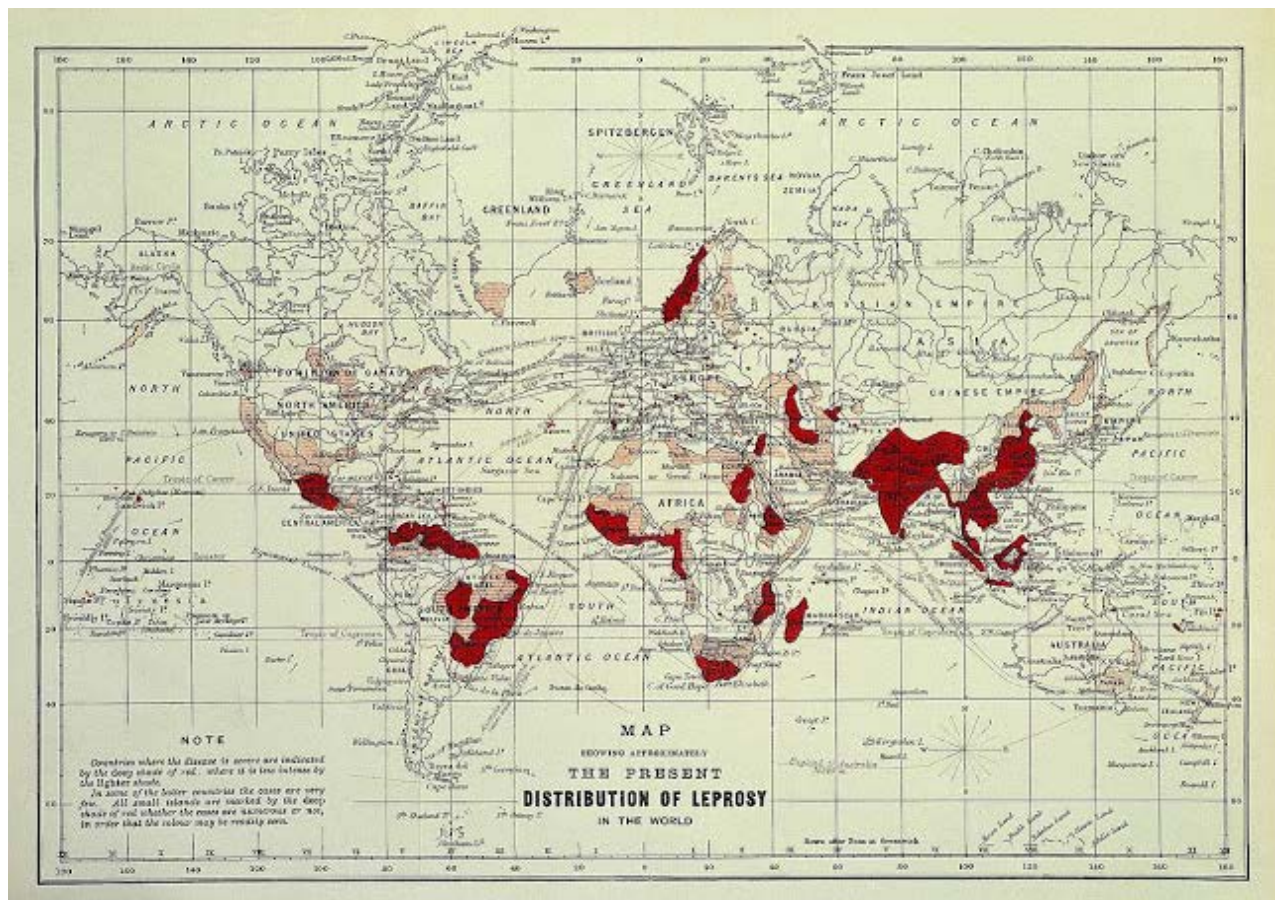


[Kalaupapa leper colony in 1905 Wikipedia.](#)

In 2003, patient Makia Malo said to the Associated Press, “One of the worst things about having had this disease is that even after you're cured, society will not let you heal because of the 'L' word. People don't know how hurtful and wrong that term is.”

The word leper is synonymous with outcast and is offensive to modern-day sufferers of the disease. While using the medical term, Hansen's disease, is preferable, an acceptable alternative is stating the person has leprosy.

Leprosy is a curable disease today, but there are still people being crippled by this wretched pestilence. India, Brazil, and Indonesia have the highest rate of infection.

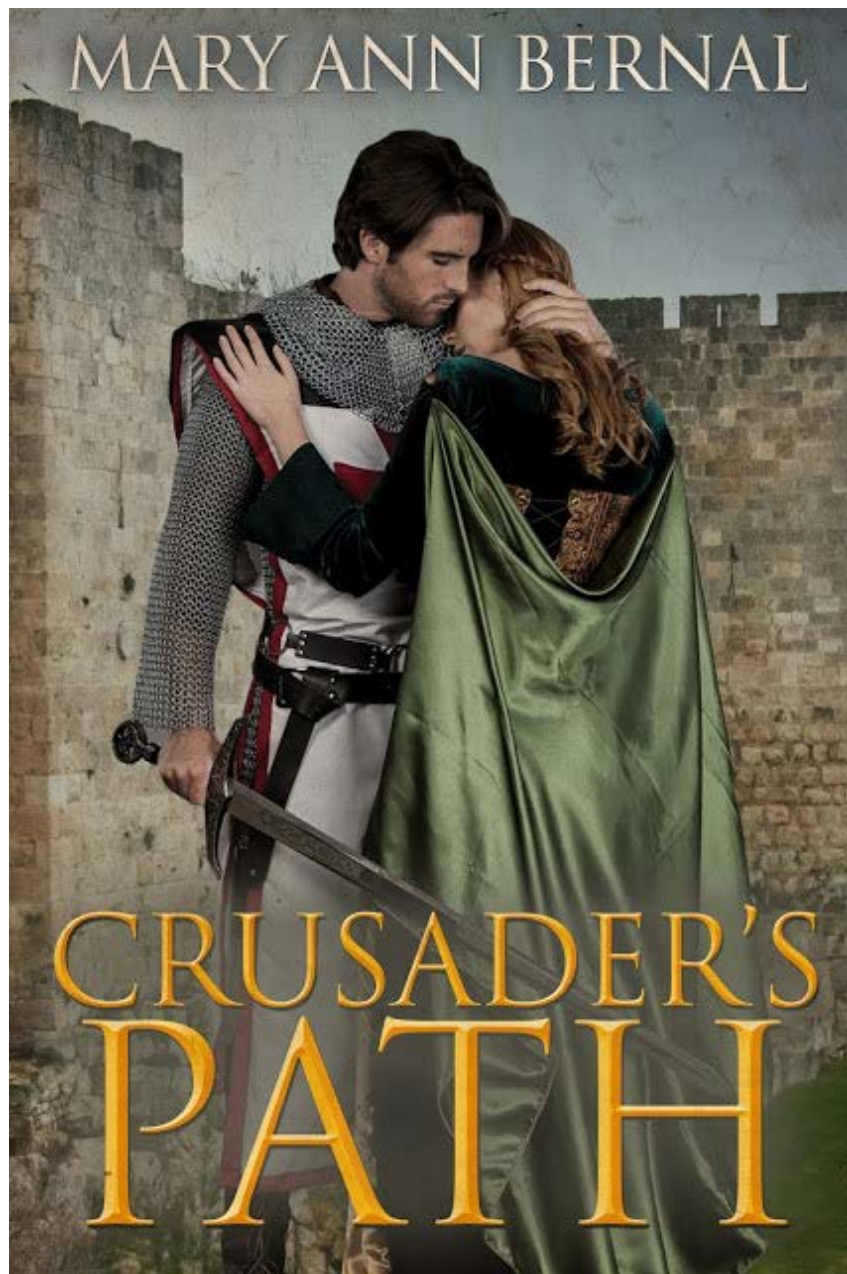


Distribution of leprosy around the world Wellcome— Wikipedia.

World Leprosy Day is observed on the last Sunday in January.

# Crusader's Path

## By Mary Ann Bernal



From the sweeping hills of Argences to the port city of Cologne overlooking the River Rhine, Etienne and Avielle find themselves drawn by the need for redemption against the backdrop of the First Crusade.

Heeding the call of His Holiness, Urban II, to free the Holy Land from the infidel, Etienne follows Duke Robert of Normandy across the treacherous miles, braving sweltering heat and snow-covered mountain passes while en route to the Byzantine Empire.

Moved by Peter of Amiens' charismatic rhetoric in the streets of the Holy Roman Empire, Avielle joins the humble army of pilgrims. Upon arrival in Mentz, the peasant Crusaders do the unthinkable, destroying the Jewish Community. Consumed with guilt, Avielle is

determined to die fighting for Christ, assuring her place in Heaven.

Etienne and Avielle cross paths in Constantinople, where they commiserate over past misdeeds. A spark becomes a flame, but when Avielle contracts leprosy, Etienne makes a promise to God, offering to take the priest cowl in exchange for ridding Avielle of her affliction.

Will Etienne be true to his word if Avielle is cleansed of the contagion, or will he risk eternal damnation to be with the woman he loves?

## Pick up your copy of *Crusader's Path* Amazon

### Mary Ann Bernal



Mary Ann Bernal attended Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, NY, where she received a degree in Business Administration. Her literary aspirations were ultimately realized when the first book of The Briton and the Dane novels was published in 2009. In addition to writing historical fiction, Mary Ann has also authored a collection of contemporary short stories in the Scribbler Tales series. Her latest endeavor is a science fiction/fantasy novel entitled Planetary Wars Rise of an Empire. Originally hailing from New York, Mary Ann

now resides in Elkhorn, Nebraska.

Connect with Mary Ann: [Website](#) • [Whispering Legends Press](#) • [Twitter](#).