# Charlemagne

(Charles the Great,

747-814)



*Bust of Charlemagne from his tomb in the cathedral at Aachen, Germany*

Charlemagne was a king of the Franks (a Germanic tribe that settled in the 400s AD in modern-day France) for 45 years, from 768 to 814.  His grandfather, Charles Martel, led Frankish forces against the Moors in the Battle of Tours (732 AD). Charlemagne's father, Pippin the Short, was the first of his family to be King of the Franks, receiving approval from the Pope to depose the previous Merovingian line of rulers.

He **defended Christian Europe** against raids from Nordic tribes as well as attacks by Islamic armies from Africa. His empire covered France, and large parts of Germany and Italy, as well as a small region of northern Spain. This had the effect of pushing back peoples who would have conquered parts of, or simply plundered, his empire. During hisr reign, he doubled the size of territory that the Franks controlled.

He initiated the **Carolingian Renaissance**. Many Latin and Greek manuscripts were copied. He created a royal scriptorium, and libraries that freely shared works with each other. A script, known as Carolingian minuscule, was developed, which increased ease of copying and reading.

He **created a common currency** in his realm based on a **pound of silver** (which was divided into 240 pennies).

Crowned **Emperor of the Romans** by the Pope on Christmas Day, 800. As Emperor of the Romans, he defeated the Lombards in Italy, protecting the Pope and others in Italy. He called several synods of bishops, to maintain church unity, and enforced their decrees. He affirmed the Donations of Pippin (which created the Papal States in central Italy). He bestowed his imperial title on his only surviving son, Louis the Pious, in 813, by crowning him by his own hand.

While a revived Carolingian Roman empire didn't last, without a doubt the powerful Frankish monarchs helped preserve freedom for many in western Europe that faced threats from Arab and Viking raids.