



first noticed the ships as I was returning from the scriptorium. I had been recording the work of the church founders, but the sun was covered with cloud and light was lost.

Walking back to my cell through the cloisters, I looked, by chance, towards the sea.

Sailing towards the shore were at least 12 ships, some powered by a crew of 40 men, others by a crew of just eight. Even from such a distance, I could hear harsh voices dictating the rhythm of the oars.

As the ships drew closer, the true scale of the vessels became visible. Some were vast in length, while others looked to be mere rowing boats. The pace of the fleet never eased, until they seemed close enough for me to reach out and touch them. I had never before seen ships like these.

Moments later, the oarsmen came into view. I could see their fierce, bearded, weather-beaten faces and prayed to the Lord for protection. They had rough, woollen tunics tied around their middles with belts made of leather. Based on the terrifying weaponry they carried, it was clear these marauders meant to ransack our church. I feared greatly for our lives!

Barely had the ships touched the line of the shore, before the raiders descended. Their eyes blinked not and, with firm resolve, they advanced upon this house of God.

I hurried from my vantage point, to warn my fellow monks of this alarming turn of events. Was the harmony of our simple existence about to be destroyed?