

einen Kaiser, der am Ende der Zeiten die Christenheit entweder züchtigen oder reformieren werde. Papst Nikolaus V. hatte sogar gezögert, Friedrich zu krönen, damit er nicht einen dritten Kaiser Friedrich heraufbeschwor, der die Kirche verfolgen werde. Tatsächlich hielt Friedrich III. selbst anscheinend den Staufer Friedrich II. wegen seines energischen Vorgehens gegen Papst und Kirche für einen Tyrannen. Friedrich III. dagegen bevorzugte friedliche, nicht gewalttätige Methoden und verdankte seine politischen Erfolge seinen überlegten Heiratsstrategien und seiner eigenen Langlebigkeit.

Among the anomalies in the numbering of the German emperors, the case of the Fredericks stands out: After Frederick I Barbarossa (1152–1190), Frederick II (1211–1250) and Frederick the Fair (1314–1330), a fourth Frederick took charge of the empire, reckoned as Emperor Frederick III (1440–1493). As Duke of Austria, he styled himself Frederick the Younger; only after his imperial coronation in 1452 did he call himself Frederick III. Yet he did so only rarely, perhaps due to folk prophecies of the Third Frederick, an emperor who was expected to chastise or reform Christendom at the end of days. Pope Nicholas V even hesitated to crown Frederick, lest he conjure a Third Frederick to oppress the church. In fact Frederick III appears to have regarded the vigorous approach of the Staufer Frederick II as tyrannical. He preferred peaceful to violent methods, and owed his political success to deft marital manoeuvring and his own longevity.