• disseminated through missionary activity
• beautiful and lavish reliquaries explained and extended the powers and messages of the relics and saints. The mundane essence of the real relic was often hidden for its own 'protection' under layers of gold and gems or distorted and exaggerated by light-reflecting mirrors
• reliquaries were given a specific value in an elaborate system of provenance and underwent constant physical or contextual revision
• often carried pictographic representations of the story of the saint, or important figures such as the 12 Apostles, or biblical scenes which were understood by the illiterate

Unified the community in time of change and political and religious fragmentation (protection)

• tensions between Carolingians and Holy Men
• tensions between East/West Christianity
• Bishops were patriarchs of their own "micro-Christendoms"
• worship of relics ascended class boundaries
  - required of altars in churches
  - necessary for oath taking in courts of law (Carolingian)
  - e.g. Roland's sword helped to bring victory on the battlefield
• cult of saints was intrinsic to the entire Christian tradition e.g. pilgrimages
• post-Carolingian Europe provided little by way of identification and organisation - the fundamental unit of organisation was the family. As both ancestors and living head of the monastic family, saints were obliged to defend their family members
  - decentralisation of state over religion
  - monasteries were rich and relatively defenceless, therefore they sought supernatural protection - or noble protection by way of using their spiritual leverage (connection to a saint or relic) to pray for the nobility
  - could curse those who dared to plunder
    - saints were deemed as being able to strike people down, ceasing to work miracles or causing harvests to fail etc
• Provided a safe rallying point during the traumas of Muslim invasion and iconoclastic controversy
• the cult of Saint Mary, in its lacking of corporeal remains, remained universally localised

Provided comfort and spiritual fulfilment

• saints were thought to be still active and present on Earth, and their interventions met the daily needs of believers
• the saints were seen as having a 'direct line' to God and could make the prayers and grievances of devotees be heard and answered - were thought to act as advocates in the heavenly court
• the miraculous power of a saint was the basis on which his political, economic and religious leverage rested
• it was taken as read that saints could perform miracles from beyond the grave