

Early Christian & Byzantine Art

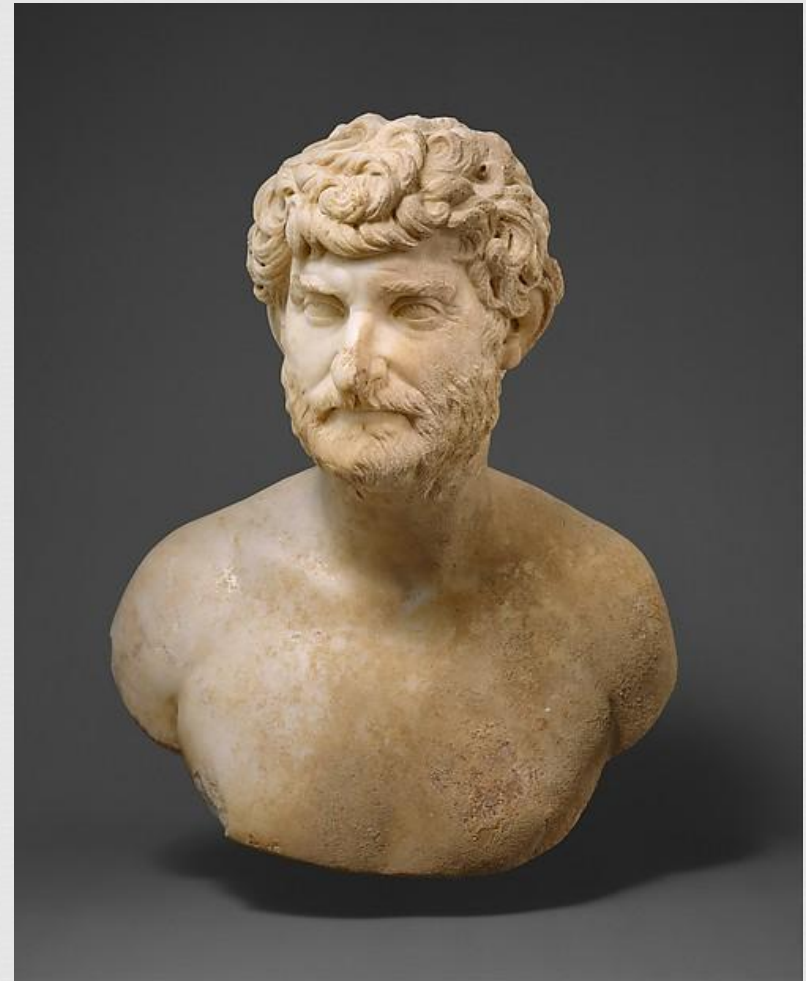
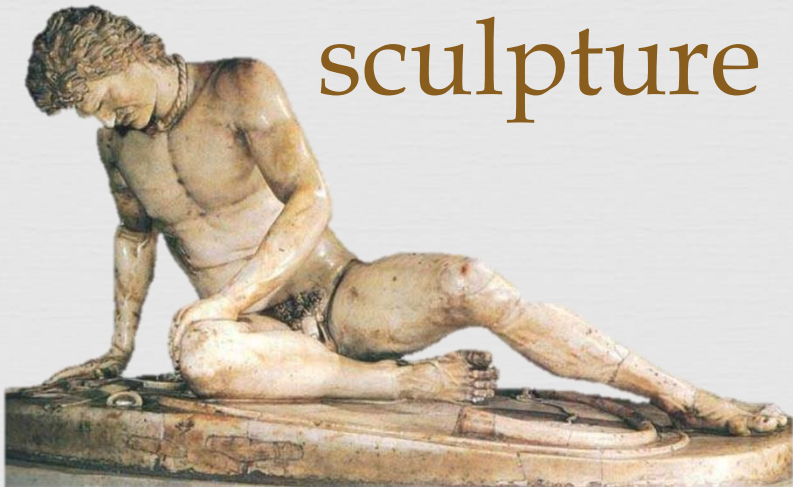
Vocabulary



Use the word bank
to complete 1-5

Greeks, and especially Romans produced art that was very realistic.

Remember the beauty of the Greek and Roman sculpture



Whereas, early Christian and Byzantine art was more concerned with Symbolic Representation

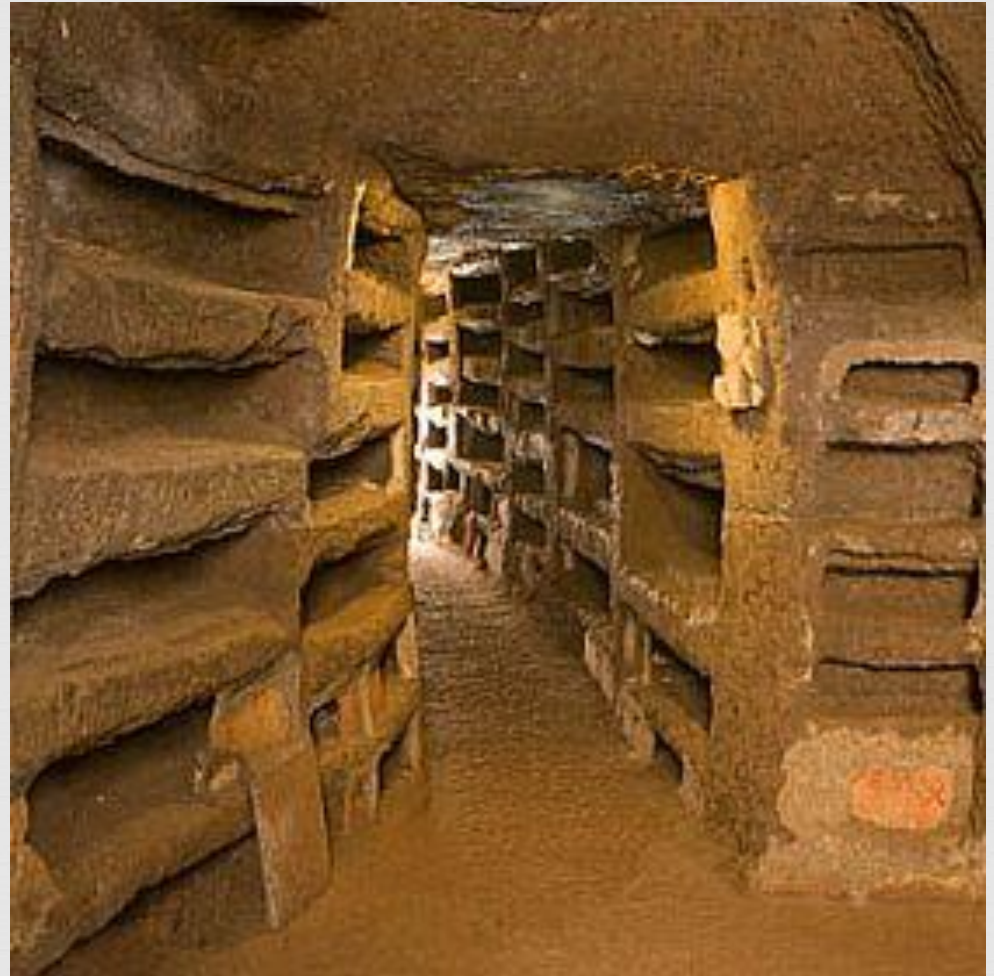


Early Christianity

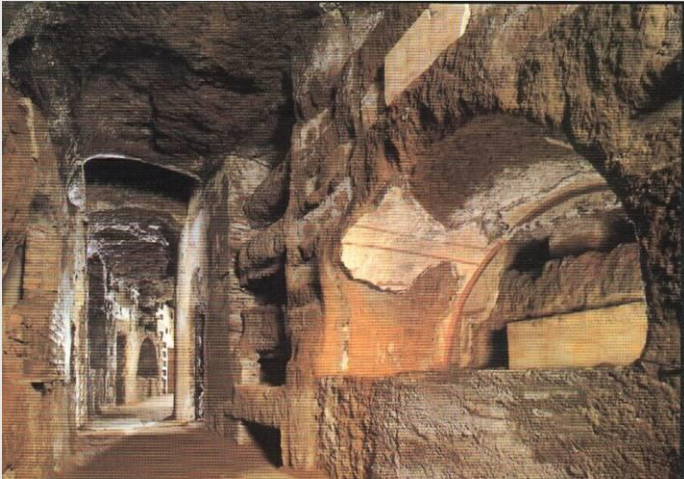
- ❧ Christianity began in the 1st century AD as a Jewish sect but quickly spread throughout the Greco-Roman world.
- ❧ Although it was originally persecuted under the Roman empire, it would ultimately become the state religion.
- ❧ For 250 years Christians suffered from sporadic persecutions for their refusal to worship the Roman emperor, considered treasonous and punishable by execution.
- ❧ Some felt, they needed some place to meet secretly.

Catacombs

☞ The catacombs are ancient underground cemeteries, used by the Christian and the Jewish communities, through out Rome.



Catacombs



✠ Christians started using these underground burial tunnels to bury their dead and to practice their religion in secret.



Catacombs

✻ Christians did not want to cremate their dead (as done by the Romans) due to their belief in bodily resurrection.

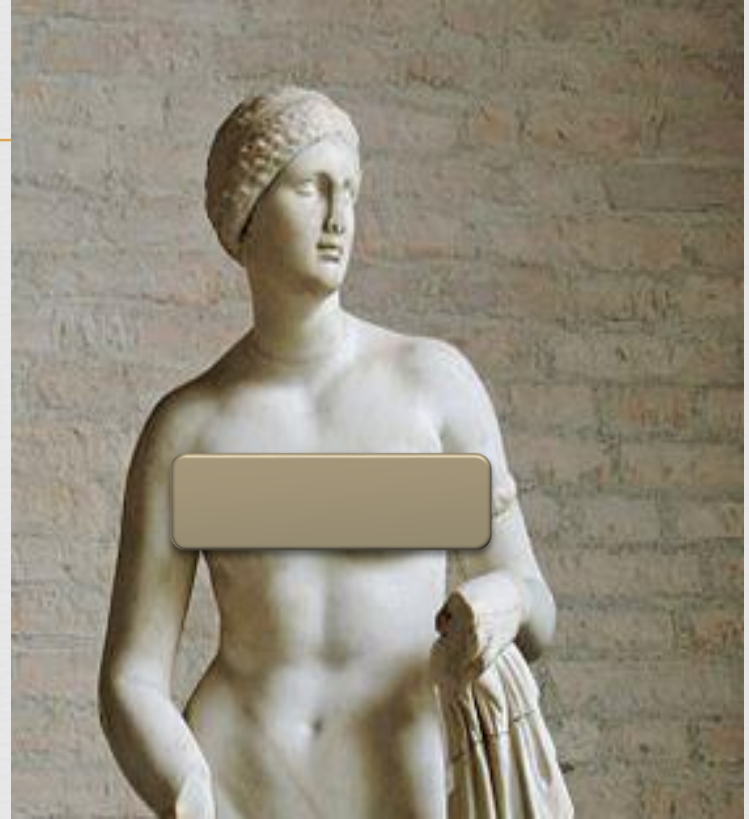


Compare and Contrast



The Cambrai Madonna
Early Christian or Greco- Roman?

Early Christian



Aphrodite of Cnidus
Early Christian or Greco- Roman?

Greco-Roman

Compare and Contrast



The Cambrai Madonna

Early Christian



Aphrodite of Cnidus

Greco-Roman

How did Early Christian art differ from the ancient Greco-Roman Art?

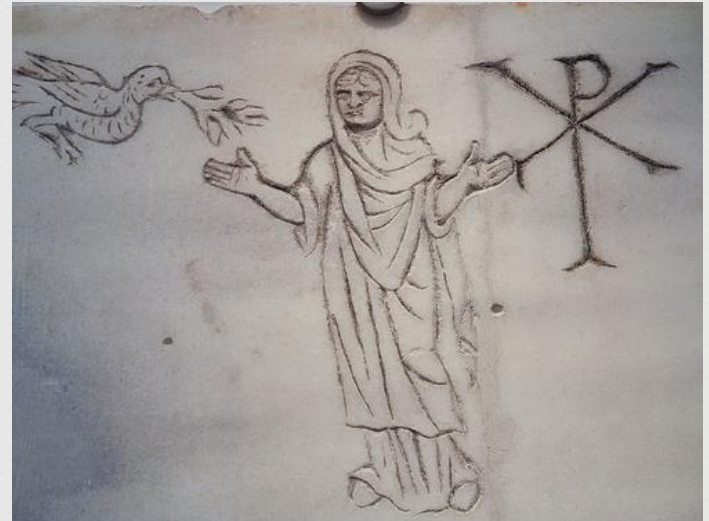
Christian Symbolism

Unable to profess their faith openly, the Christians made use of **symbols**, which they depicted on the walls of the catacombs and carved them on the marble-slabs which sealed the tombs.



Fresco - A method of painting on plaster. Pigments are applied to thin layers of wet plaster so that they will be absorbed and the painting becomes part of the wall.

❧ **PURPOSE:** Early Christian art was created to inspire & teach their faith. Symbolic (religious) content was the aim rather than depicting beauty. It was a way to disguise the teachings of their faith from the Roman authorities.

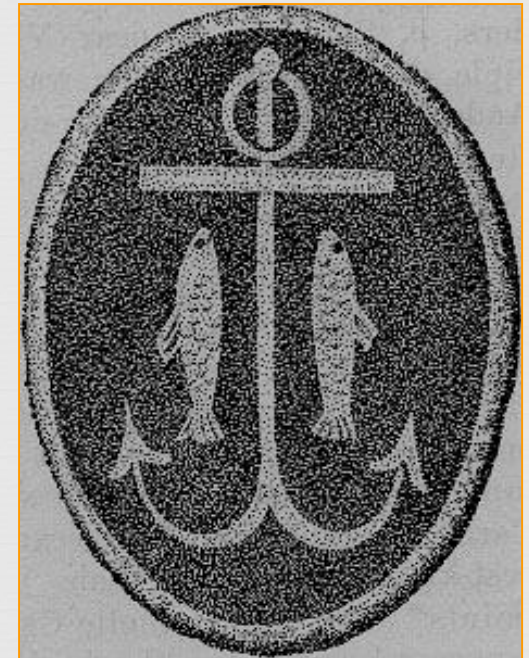




FISH: A common symbol was the fish. Sometimes it depicts men who have been caught by Christ and his apostles.



ANCHOR: A common symbol in the catacombs is a boat anchor. It expresses the firm expectation of eternal life. The anchor was also used as a disguised cross in a day when the cross itself was seldom used for fear of persecution.





The **Good Shepherd** with a lamb or goat around his shoulders represents Christ and the soul which He has saved. This symbol is often found in frescoes and relief sculptures. Also a symbol of Christ and his apostles and Christ's compassion.

Funeral Art

FUNERARY ART was carved with symbolic scenes that advanced the Christian belief of the soul's life after death because of Christ's resurrection. As time passed, the realistic figure proportions & the skill of the sculpting of Roman times deteriorated.



Symbolism became more important than realism & design.

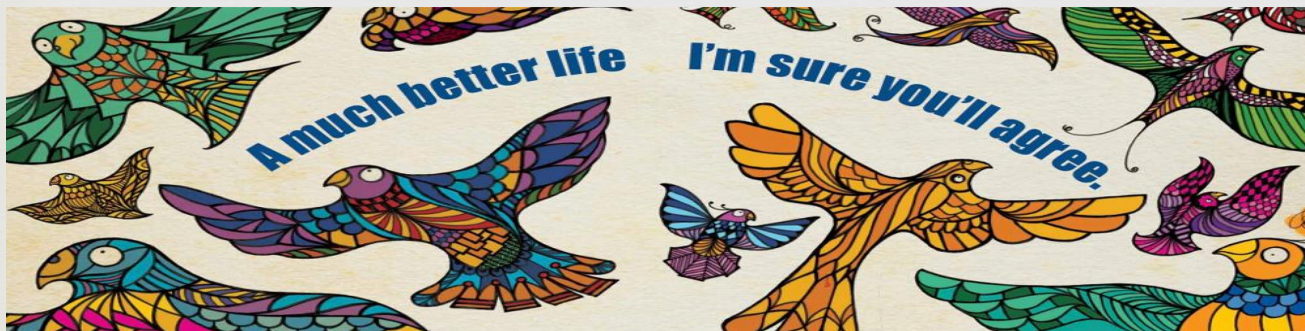
Bumper Sticker Project

Groups of 2 or 3



Example: The Book Club has been banned! I'm still going to be part of the book club and here is how I let other members know....

... a dream that you hold in
your hands...



Constantine

☞ In 313 AD, in a dream the night before an important battle, Constantine claimed he had a sign from the God of the Christians. Constantine won this battle and thereafter, showed his gratitude to the Christian God by legalizing their religion thus ending the persecution of Christians.



Constantine

- ✧ Constantine was the first Roman ruler to become a follower of the Christian religion.
- ✧ This new freedom of worship helped spread Christianity into many regions of Europe.



☞ Around 315 A.D. the Arch of Constantine was built in Rome



Byzantine Empire

After the death of Constantine in 337, the Roman Empire was split into Eastern and Western Empires.

∞ The Western half (capital – Rome) declined

- Eastern half (Byzantine Empire), with its capital in Constantinople (ancient city of Byzantium), flourished.



Byzantine Empire

From there a succession of emperors (primarily Justinian) ruled the Byzantine Empire as the Roman Empire dissolved.



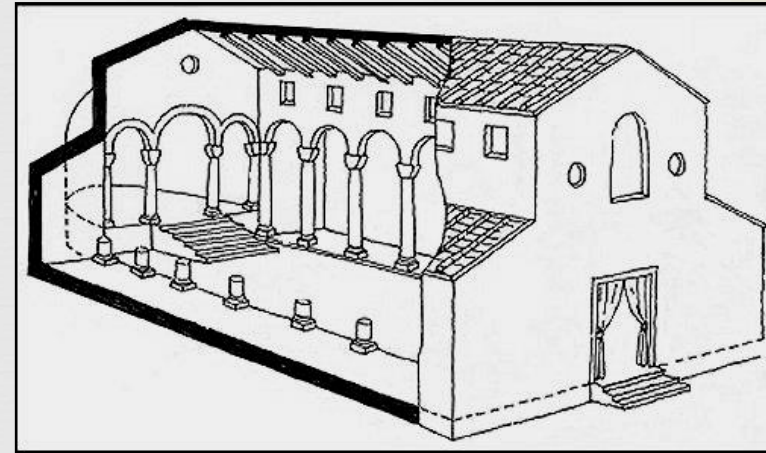
Early Christian/Byzantine Architecture

- Along with the new freedom to practice Christianity came a period of church building due to the demand for public places for Christian worship.
- The old temples of the Roman gods were too small to hold large congregations. Also the Christians did not want to worship in pagan temples.

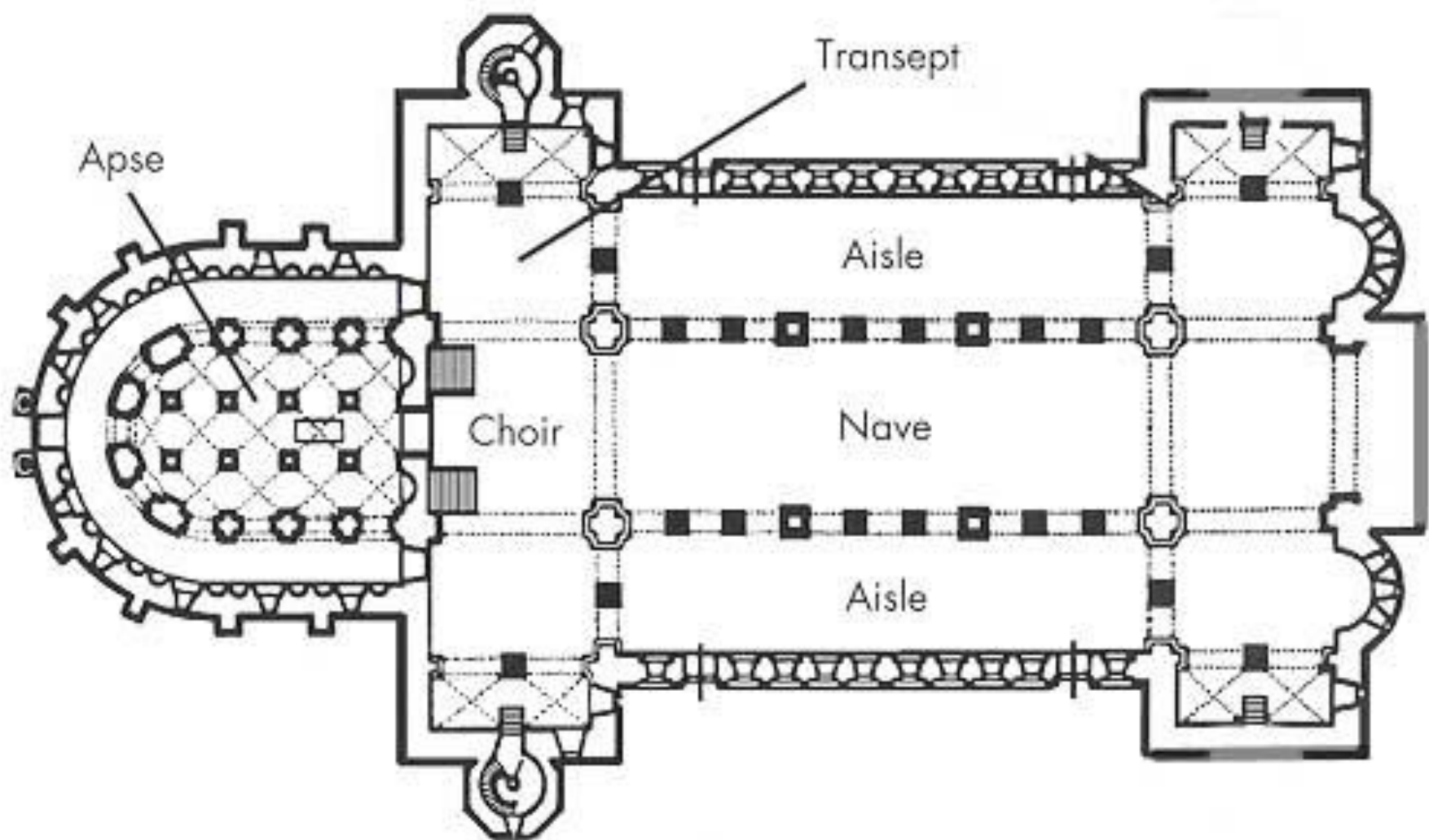


Early Christian/Byzantine Architecture

- The early Christian and Byzantine builders copied the floor plan design of the large Roman assembly hall: the **BASILICA**, along with many new advancements.



- **Basilica:** An ancient Roman floor plan for a style of large building that was used as a meeting place and law court. Consisting of a long nave, apse, open floor plan and high ceilings.



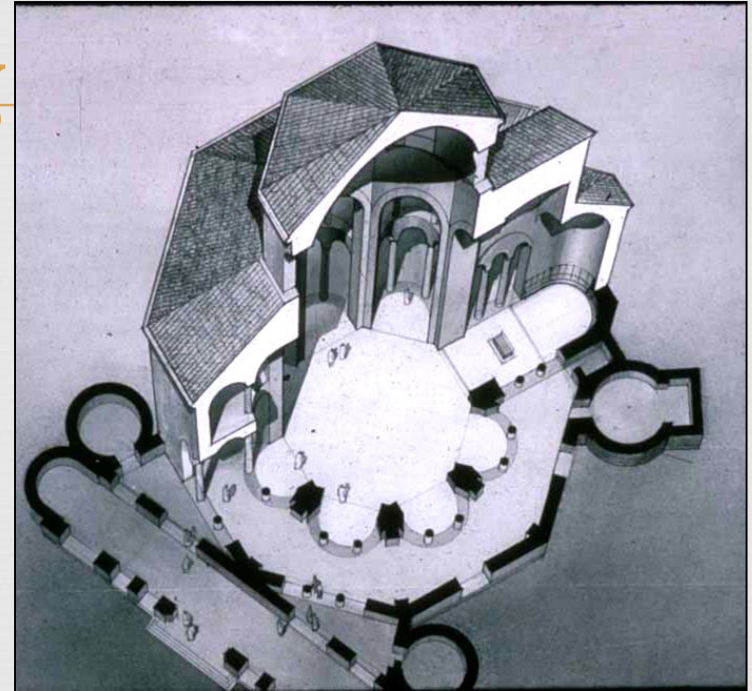
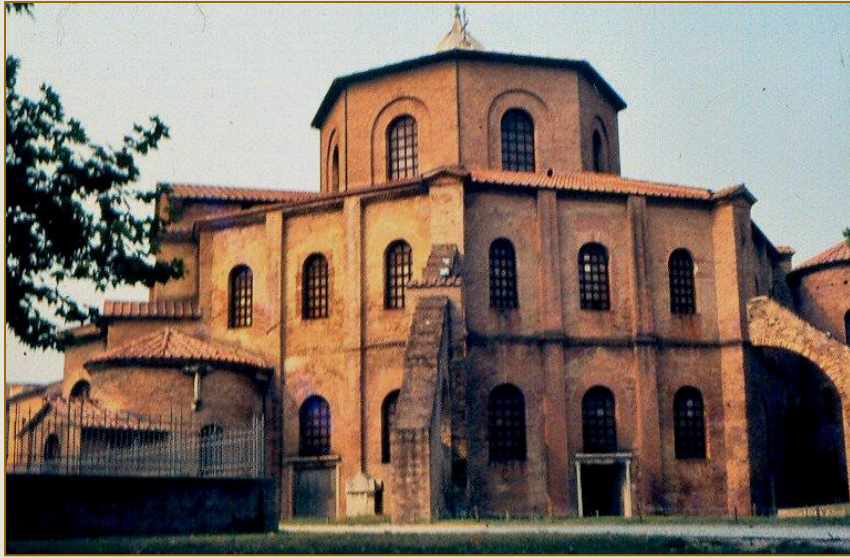


Most Byzantine architecture was also plain on the exterior. The interiors were richly decorated in mosaics and frescoes.



Nave looking towards the apse

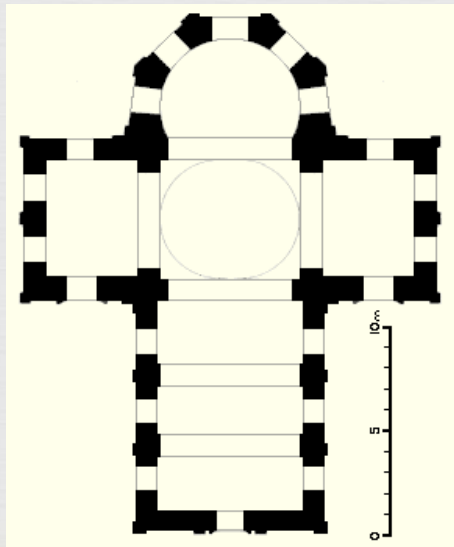
Other Byzantine Church Floor Plans

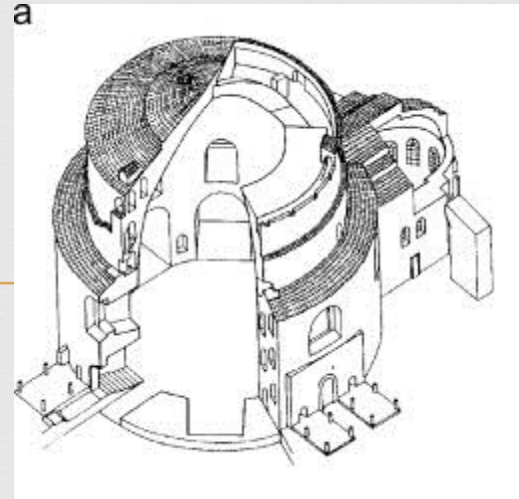


San Vitale (525-547)
octagonal central plan
church built in Ravenna,
Italy



Greek Cross Central Plan





**Central Plan
with a
Rotunda**



Most Famous Byzantine Basilica

❧ Hagia Sophia - “Holy Wisdom”

❧ Located in Constantinople (Istanbul, Turkey)



Most Famous Byzantine Basilica

- ✧ Built by the Emperor Justinian (very generous to the church)
- ✧ Was once the largest church in the world



Most Famous Byzantine Basilica

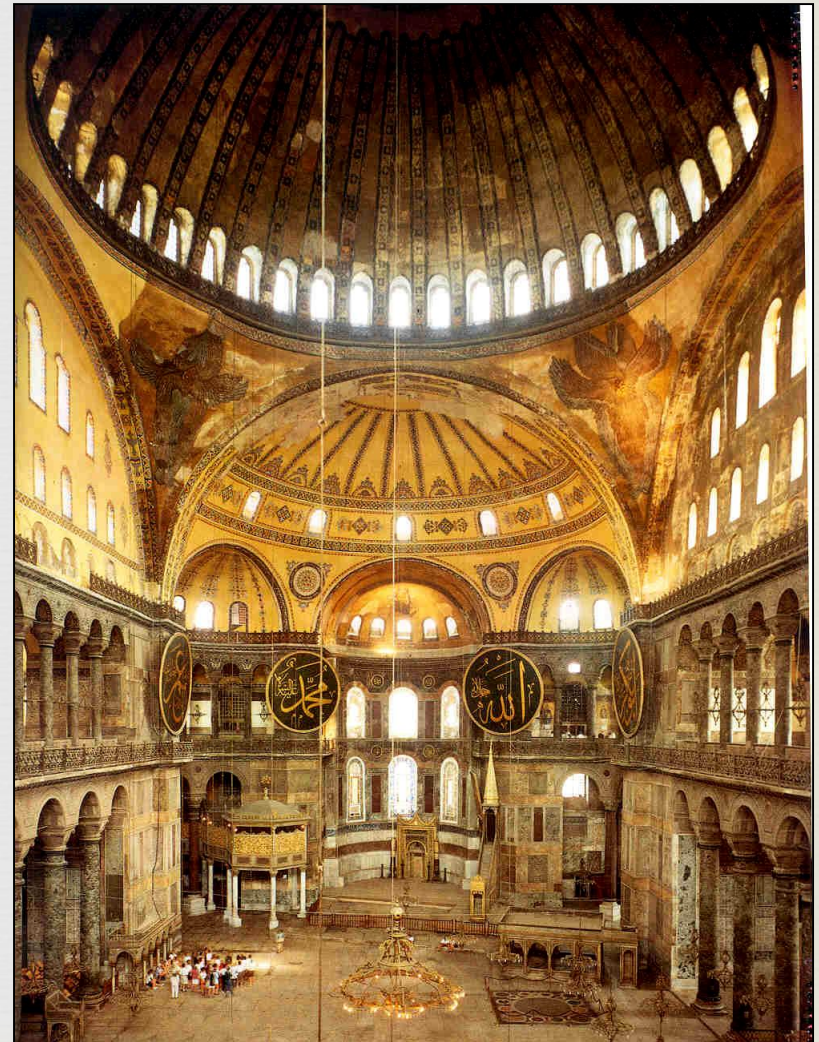
☞ Became a mosque after the fall of Constantinople to the Turkish Muslims (the addition of minarets attests to this buildings religious change)

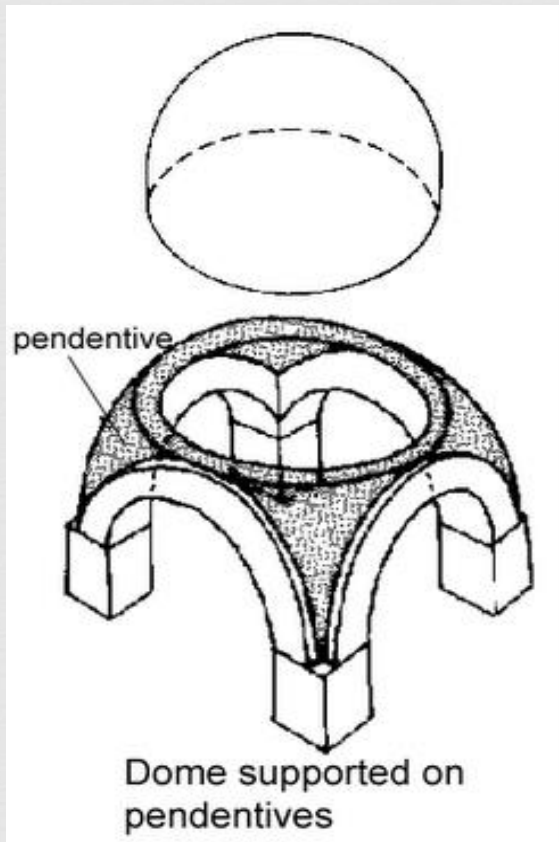


HOW IS THE DOME SUPPORTED?



How is the dome of HAGIA SOPHIA supported differently?

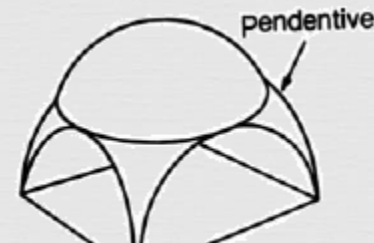




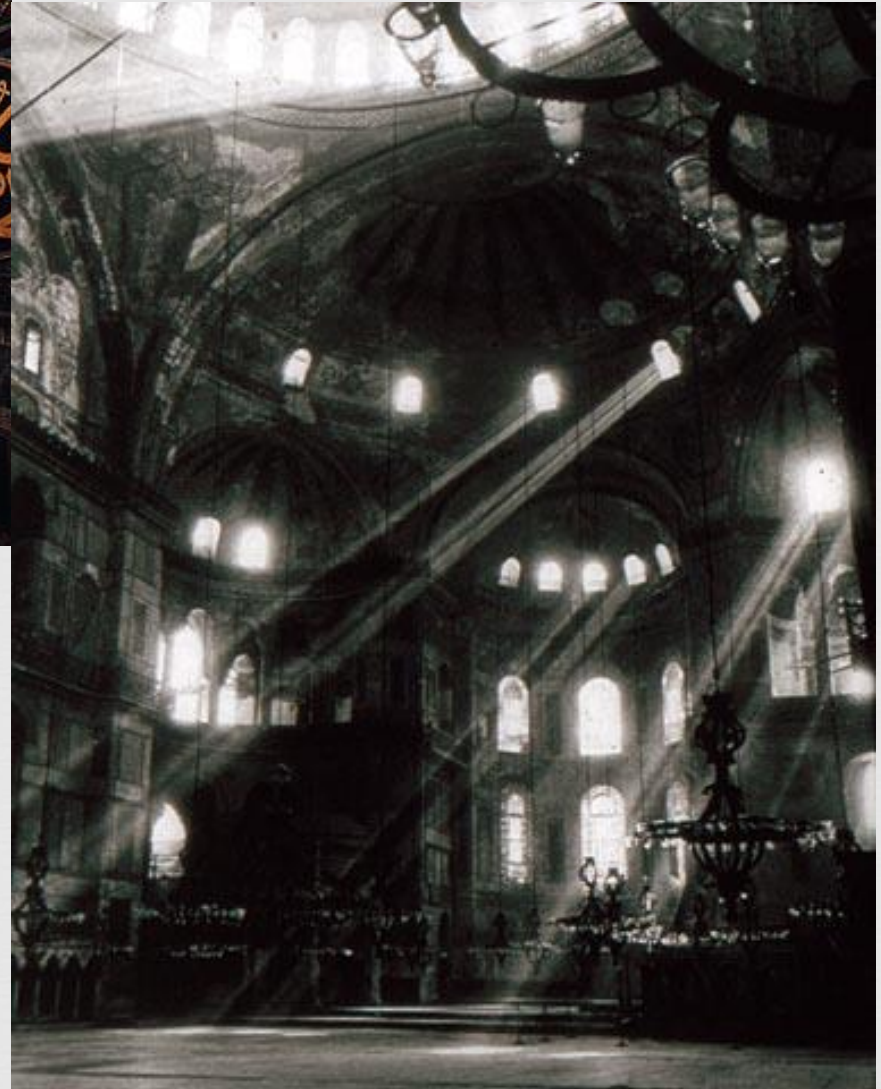
☞ In order to create a transcendental environment, the dome could not be heavy as seen in typical vault techniques

☞ Architects solved this by creating pendentives on top of piers

☞ This construction allowed for thinner walls housing many windows to light the interior



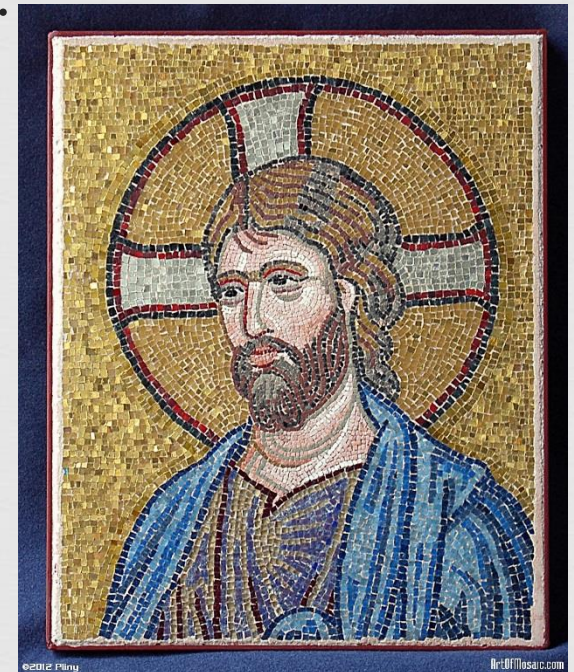
Pendentive - A concave, triangular piece of masonry which provided the transition from a square area to the circular base of a covering dome. Although they appear to be hanging (pendant) from the dome, they in fact support it.



- It also created the illusion of a lighter weight.
- Light = symbol of divine wisdom

Byzantine Art

- ✧ Since the Christian focus was on salvation for a glorious afterlife, interest in realistically representing objects disappeared.
- ✧ Byzantine artists had to follow a strict set of rules about subject matter, content, and form.
- ✧ Very religious – nudes were forbidden and even clothed bodies showed ignorance of anatomy.
- ✧ **Mosaics and Fresco** paintings



Byzantine Art

- Art became the servant of the church – theologians believed church members would come to appreciate divine beauty through lavish mosaics and paintings
- Symbolic representation became very important



Roman frescos

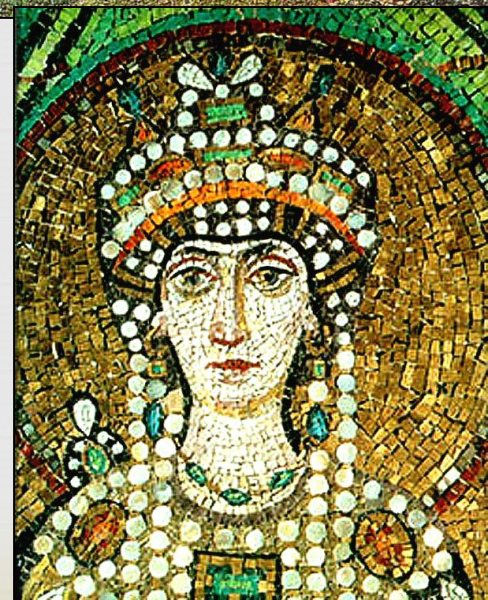


Compare the way ancient Roman artists depicted the human form with the Byzantine figure stylization.



WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES?

Byzantine



Byzantine Style Features



- Iconic subject matter
- Figures appear flat and fairly abstract
- Little or no shading
- Large, dark eyes stare directly at the viewer



Byzantine Style Features

- Oval shaped faces
- Faces appear expressionless and generally not exact portraits
- Religious figures often depicted with halo of light





- Little suggestion of space as figures only overlap to show depth yet all are the same height
- Clothing appears flat & linear (seems to be hung on hangers rather than covering 3-D bodies)



- Figures have hanging feet that do not appear to touch the ground (tippy toed)

- Bodies are
 - elongated
 - stiff
 - stylized

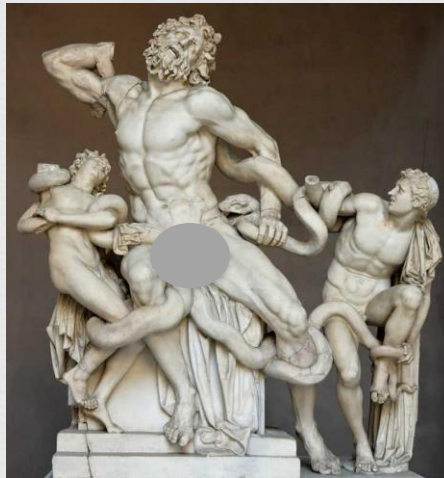


St. Boris and St. Gleb, Byzantine

Label the Art



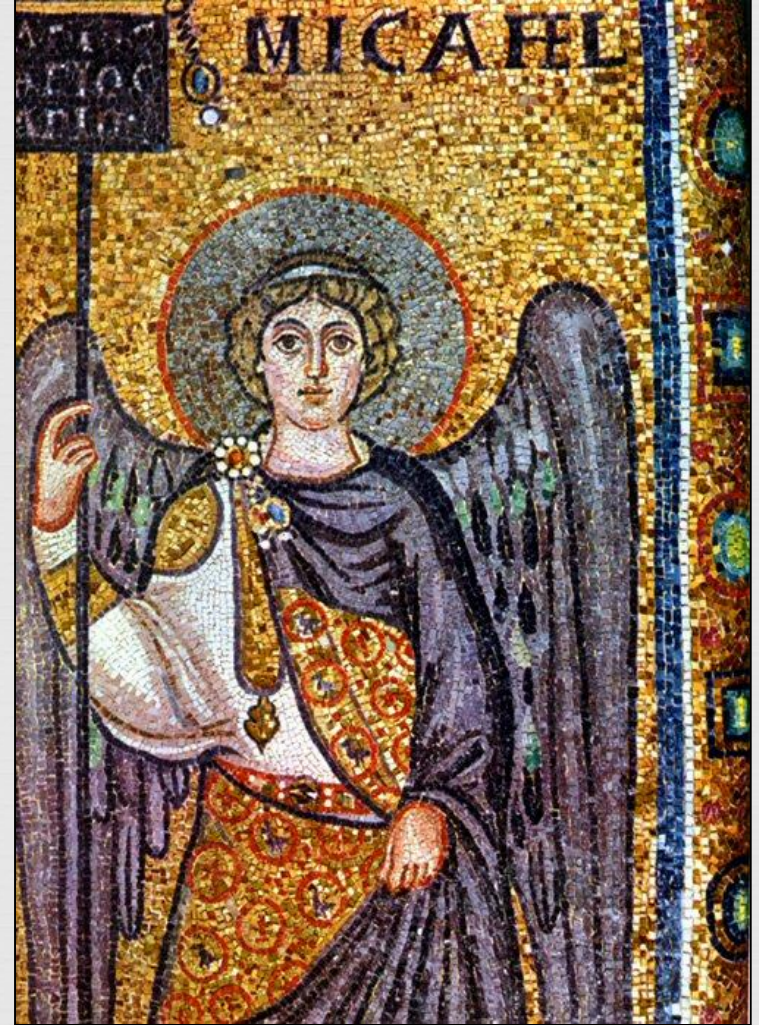
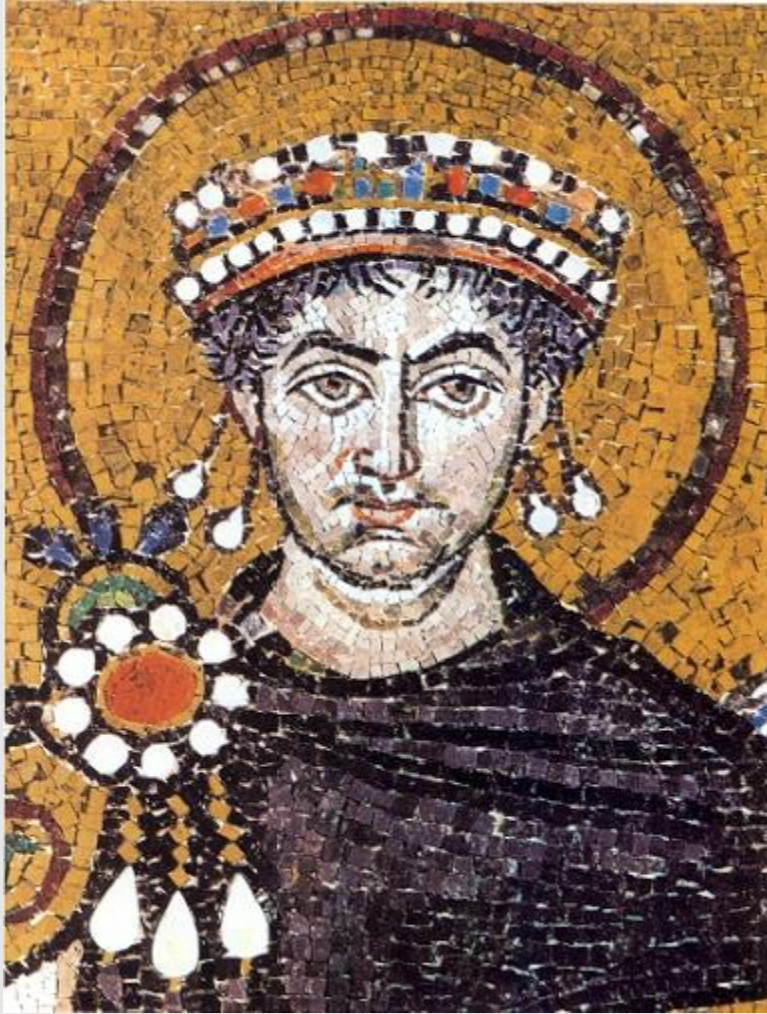
Egyptian



Greco-
Roman



Byzantine



Mosaic - A picture or design made of tiny pieces of coloured stone, glass, tile or paper adhered to a surface. It is typically decorative work for walls, vaults, ceilings or floors, the pieces are set in plaster or concrete and usually on a slight angle to reflect the light.



Justinian and Attendants (547 A.D) is found in the San Vitale Church in Ravenna, Italy. It includes the Emperor Justinian with the archbishop, deacons, soldiers and attendants. Those bodies of most importance overlap those of lesser importance.



✎ The figures are stiff and stylized, including: full frontal viewpoints, elongation of the figure, and stylization of faces with large eyes and almond shape faces, and decorative costumes.

- Strong use of symbolism- bread and wine of Eucharist. Halo to show that Justinian is Gods holy representative on earth and therefore holy himself.

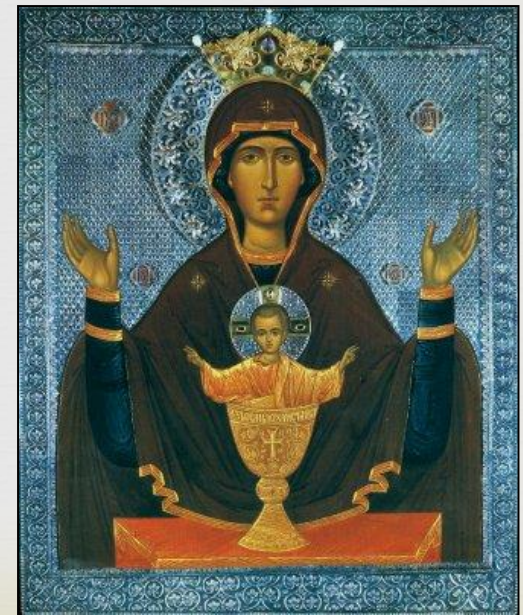
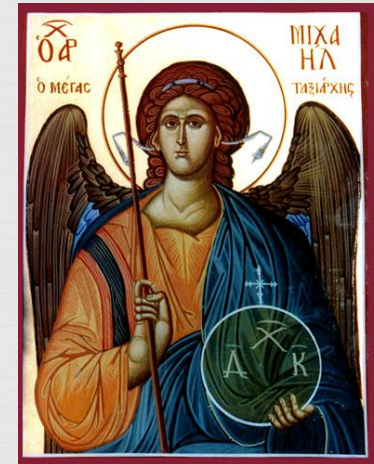
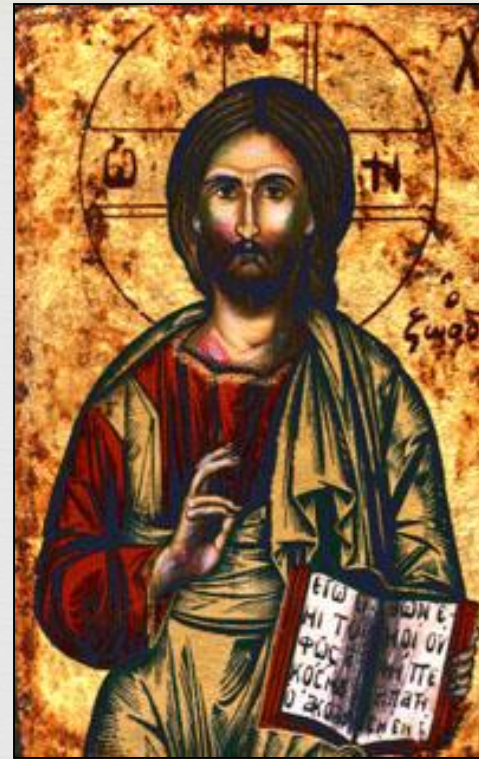
Byzantine Icons

Icons are art and prayer combined under a set of stylistic rules that evolved in the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantine Empire)

Believed to have a spiritual dimension

Icons were usually painted on hardwood, sometimes elaborately framed or encased in precious metals and stones

Monks & lay artists who painted icons were thought to be divinely inspired. The profession had considerable prestige



Iconostasis: a wall of icons and religious paintings separating the nave from the sanctuary in a church (basically an altar screen)





<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Odtoyhc6tEM&list=PLIJASI0pqGM-745drQPmbZSPn86keZaF0&index=19>

Wrap Up Video