



# Seeing History Through Artists' Eyes

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Wednesday, February 05, 2025 - 6:45 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. ET

## Session 1: The Christianization of Ancient Rome: New God, New Art

### The historical significance of Constantine the Great, d. 337 AD

- Battle of Milvian Bridge 312
- Edict of Milan 313 – free practice of religion including Christianity
- Council of Nicaea 325 – Nicene Creed declares Christ “of one substance with the Father”
- “New Rome” at Constantinople 330

### Constantine: Roman Emperor

- Basilica (audience hall), Trier (Germany), 310
- Basilica Nova (Maxentius and Constantine), Rome, 305-312
- Arch of Constantine, Rome, 312-315: Triumph with Sol Invictus, the unconquered sun god

### Constantine: Christian Roman Emperor

- Old St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, c. 324: Christian *basilica* sited over tomb of martyred St. Peter
- Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem, 326-335, sited over site of crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus; includes both a *basilica* and a *martyrium* (central plan, domed structure)

### Christian Art Before Constantine – Roman pagan, Jewish Bible, Christian Gospels

- Sarcophagus from Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome, c. 270 –Shepherd, Jonah, Baptism of Christ
- Catacomb of Priscilla , Rome, 3rd-4th c; Catacomb of Calixtus, 3rd c; Catacomb of Domitilla, 4thc
- Catacomb of Sts. Peter and Marcellinus, Rome, 3rd-4th c.
  - Orant (praying figure), Good Shepherd, Jonah and the whale
  - cf. Jewish synagogue at Dura Europos (Syria), 3rd c. Old Testament stories, Moses
  - Types of images: symbol (shepherd), allegory (Jonah), typology (Old Testament “types” of Christ – Abraham and Isaac, Daniel in lion's den, Jonah 3 days in the whale)

### **Constantine convenes the Council of Nicaea to combat heresy and establish a creed**

- Council of Nicaea, 325 – Nicene Creed declares “one God” and “one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father . . . *begotten not made, of one substance with the Father.*”
- A century later: Council of Ephesus, 431 – Mary declared “Theotokos,” Mother of God

### **Art After 313**

- Catacomb of Domitilla, 4thc. bearded Christ with Alpha and Omega (beginning and end)
- Santa Pudenziana, Rome, late 4thc. apse mosaic – Christ enthroned in imperial glory in the Heavenly City with apostles and symbols of the 4 evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)
- Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, apse arch mosaic, 442-430, Virgin Mary enthroned

### **Constantine’s Legacy in Ravenna (capital of Western Roman Empire 402-476; exarchate of Byzantine Empire 540-750)**

- Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, 425-450 – Good Shepherd in imperial garb
- Sant’Apollinare Nuovo, 505 – golden mosaics with procession of women martyrs with crowns
- Sant’Apollinare in Classe, 549 – apse mosaic with martyr-saint Apollinare and golden cross
- San Vitale, 547