

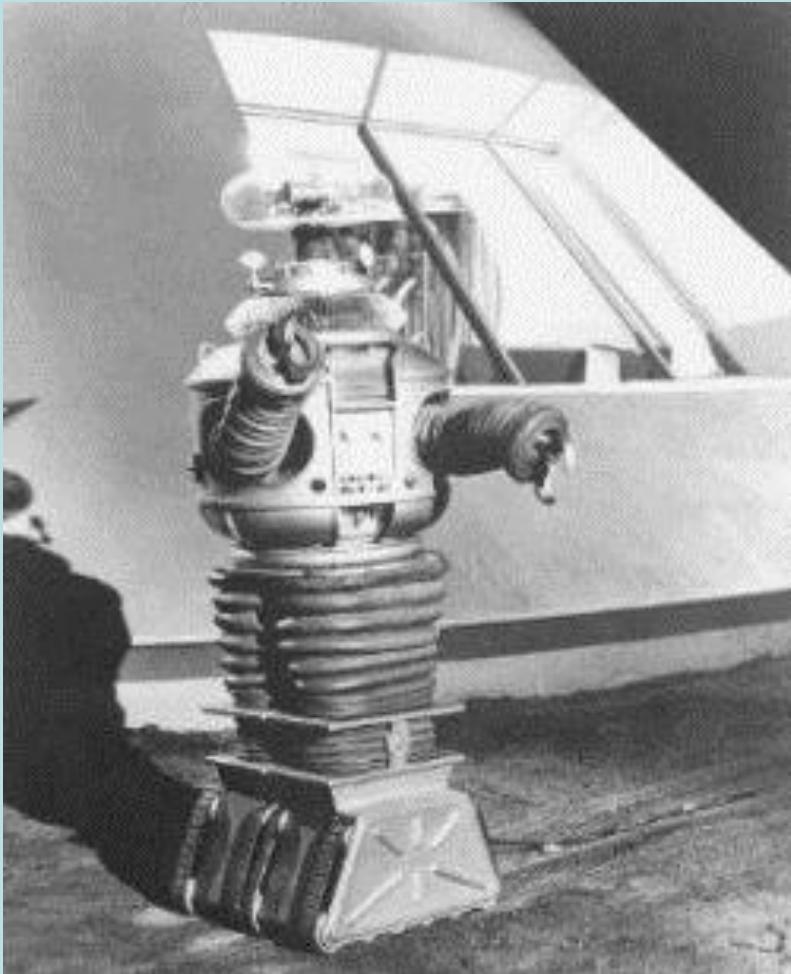
“Christianity Confronts Culture”

The Church Absorbs Paganism

Randy Broberg



“Danger, Will Robinson”



- Circumstantial vs. Direct evidence
- But It's a Strong case
- So what?
- Proper use of this information
- Improper use
- Applications and Relevance to your daily life.

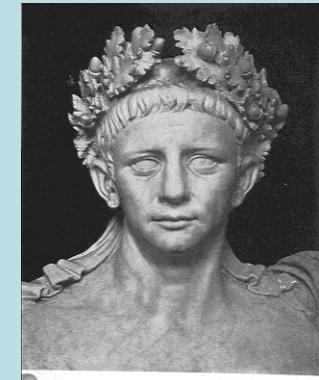
Christianity vs. Culture Before Constantine

- Christians avoided the arena.
- Christians refused to join in patriotic festivals celebrating patron deities.
- condemned the popular theater

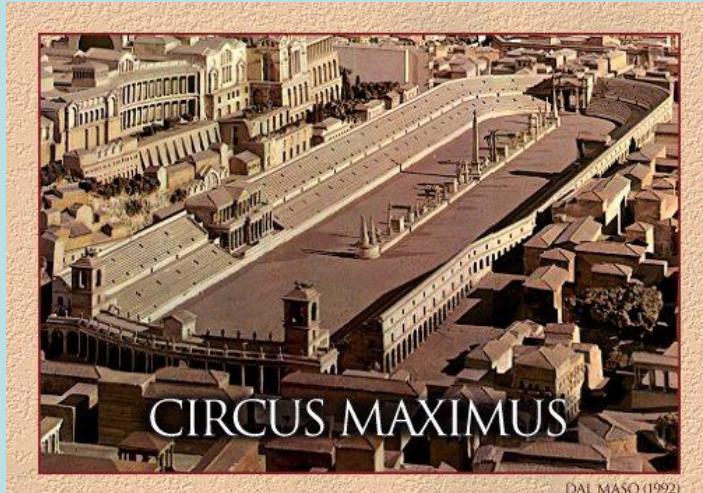
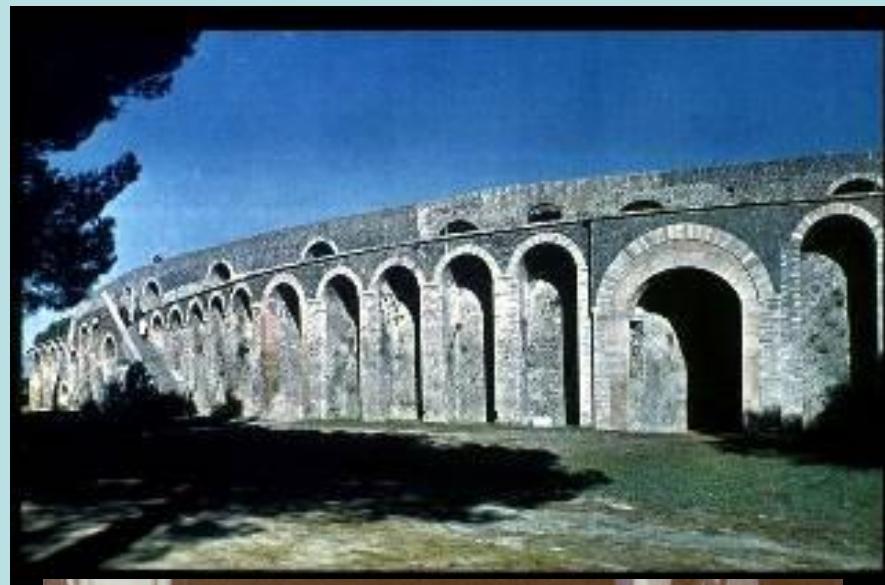
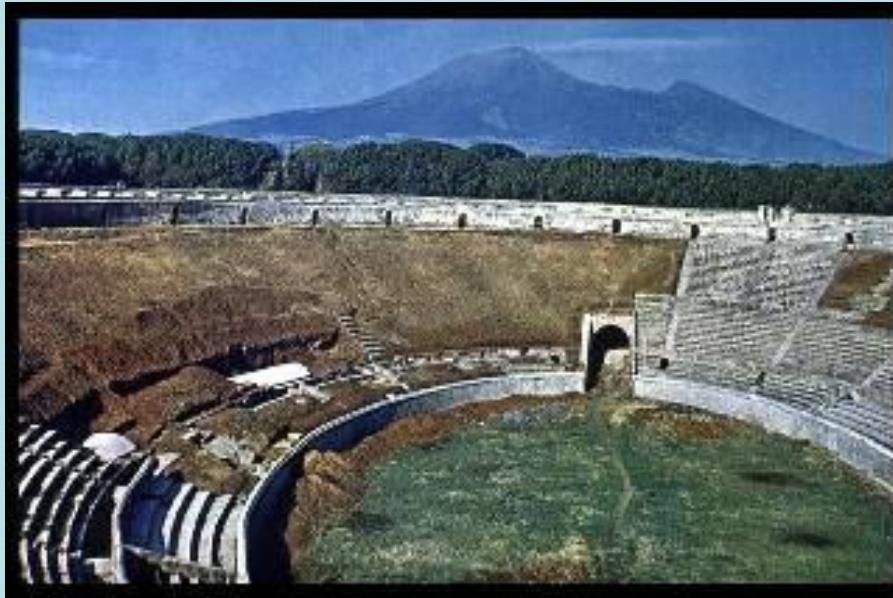
"Among us nothing is ever said, or seen, or heard, which has anything in common with the madness of the circus, the immodesty of the theatre, the atrocities of the arena, the useless exercises of the wrestling-ground,"



Tertullian,
Apology, 38.



A Roman Night on the Town



Dining out the rule, not exception.



Gladiator Fights Extremely Violent

Cultural Separation of Christians



- “Most heathen feasts and social parties were held in the precincts of a temple after sacrifice had been made, and the invitation was usually to dine “at the table” of some god. A Christian could not go such a feast. Inevitably, when he refused the invitation to some social occasion, the Christian seemed rude, boorish and discourteous....The early Christian was almost bound to divorce himself from the social and economic life of his time, if he was to be true to his Lord.”

— *Church History in Plain Language*,
Bruce Shelley.

Incredible Cultural Challenges for Early Christians

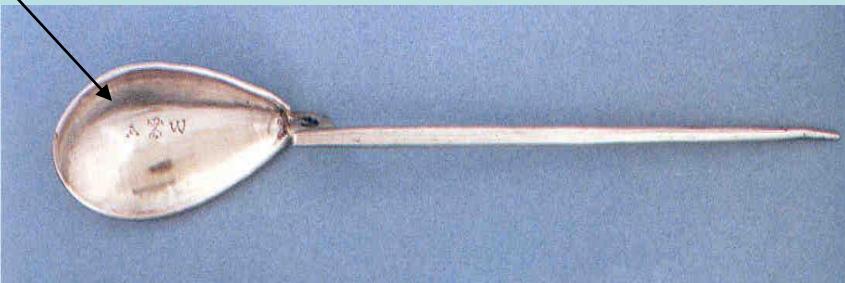
- Christian masons hired to build pagan temples
- Christian school teachers hired to teach pagan myths (as though true)
- Christian doctor asked by patient to chant to god of medicine, Aesculapius
- Christian wife, married to pagan, required to expose new born child.
- Christian soldier, ordered to massacre defeated enemy's women and children.

"We have a reputation for living aloof from the crowds."



Tertullian

- 313: "Edict of Milan," issued with co-emperor Licinius, granted liberty of worship to all Romans, and restored Christian church property confiscated during Diocletian's and Galerius' persecutions.



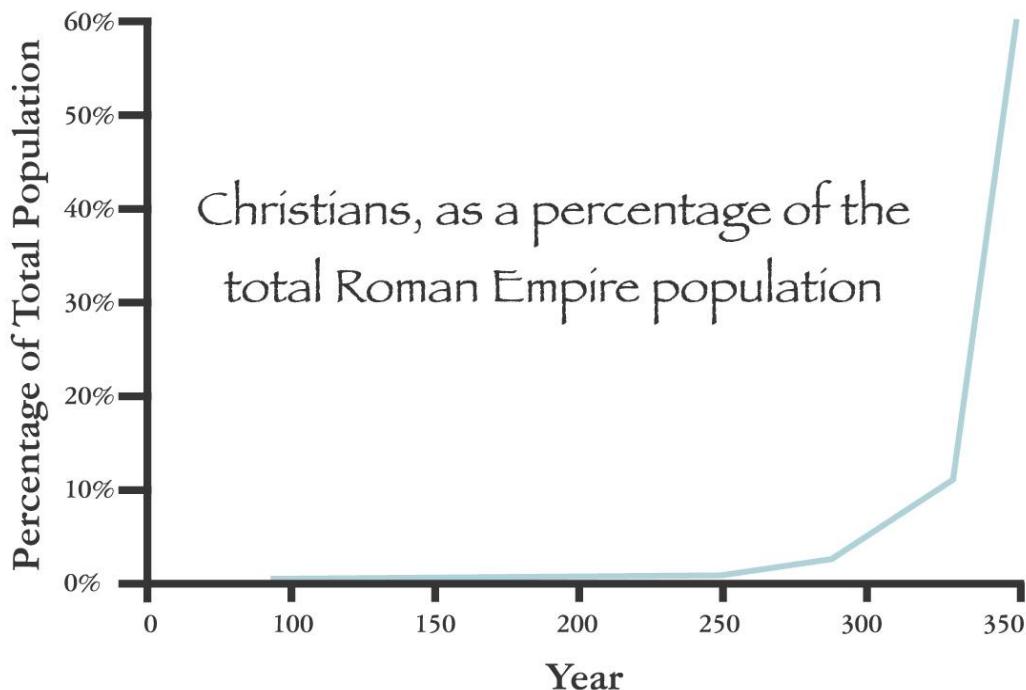
Immediate Effect of Legalization of Christianity



Woman praying, in orant, with doves of Peace appearing

Mass Conversions of Whole Armies, Cities and Tribes

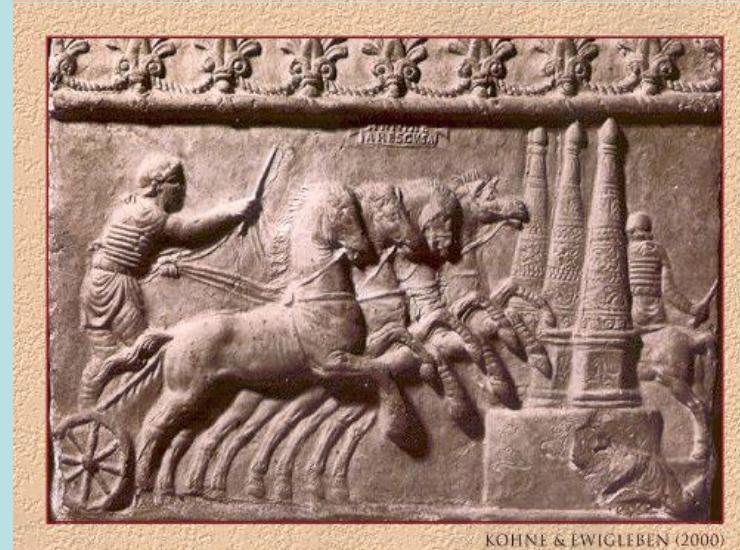
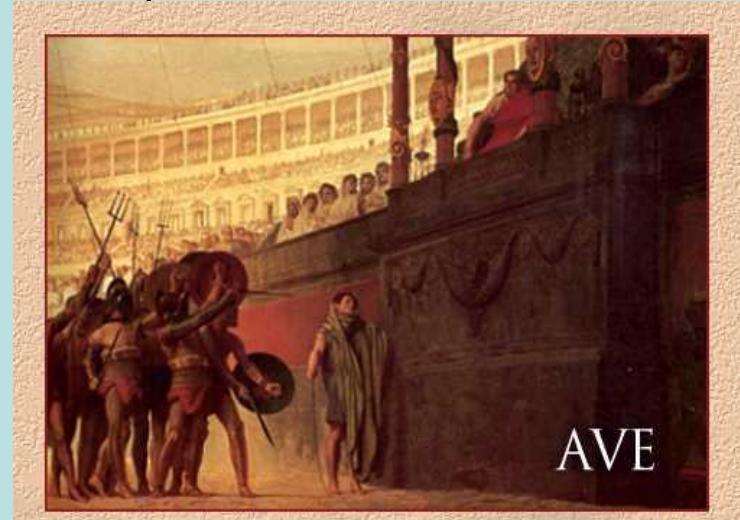
Christians in the Roman Empire



- Millions of new church members.
- Becoming a Christian is no longer a risk, but an opportunity.

Church Only Gradually Changes Society

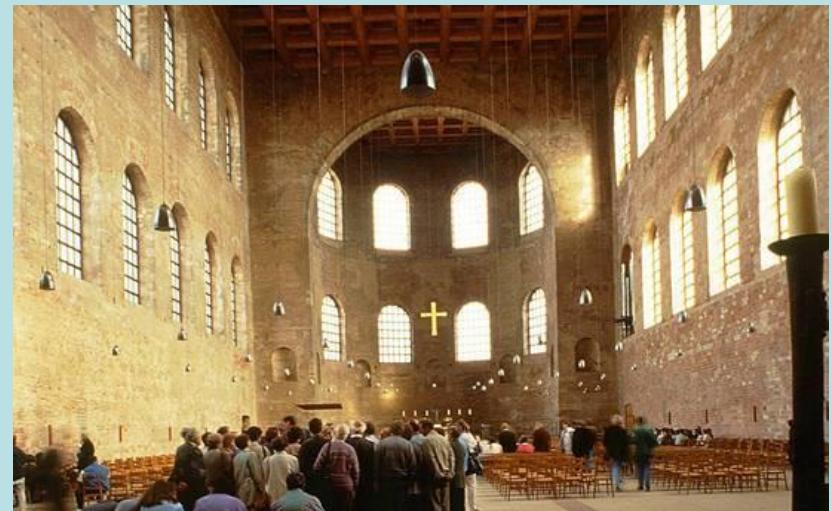
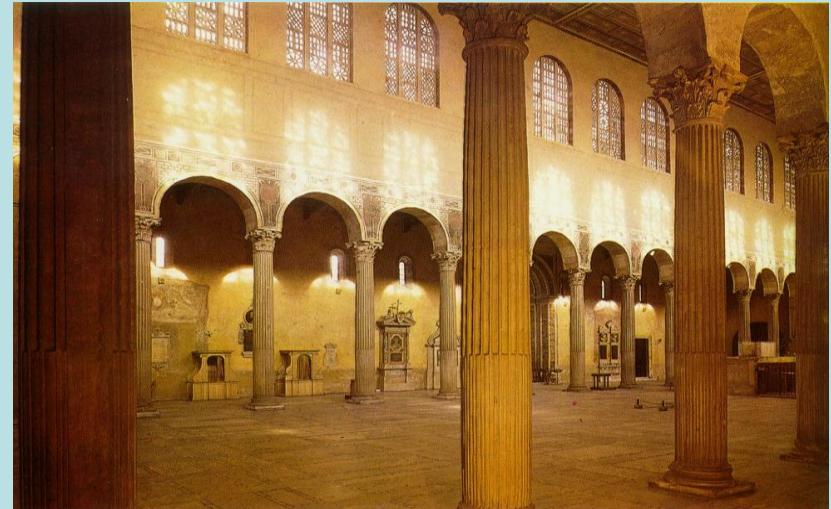
- Slavery was left intact, although subject to the same Christian cautions which are found in the New Testament. Emancipation of slaves was encouraged in some circles, but not many.
- Gladiatorial Shows Continued
- Constantine began abolishing this practice, but only in a limited way.
- By 404, they were pretty much fully stopped, at least between man and man.



Rather, Society Changed the Church!

- "Christianity became a matter of fashion. The number of hypocrites and formal professors rapidly increased; strict discipline, zeal, self sacrifice, and brotherly love proportionally ebbed away; and many heathen customs and usages, under altered names, crept into the worship of God and the life of the Christian people."

— Schaff 3-125



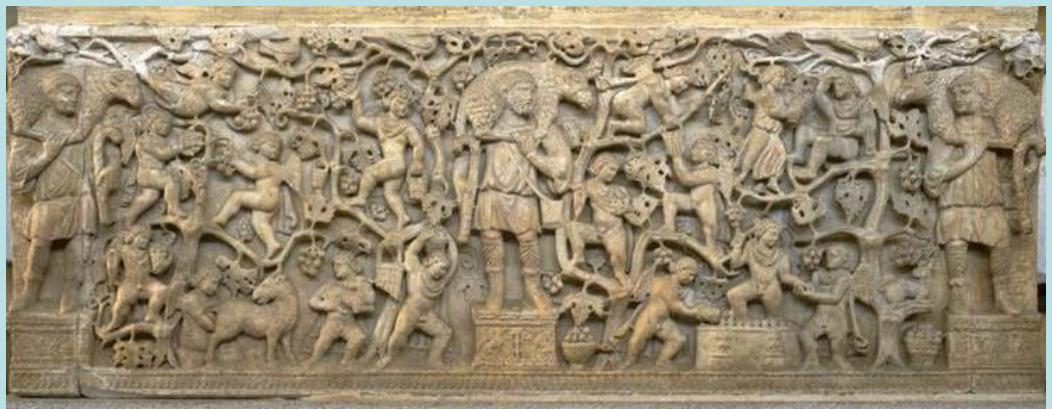
“Acculturation”

- **ac·cul·tur·a·tion** *noun*
- 1: the adoption of the behavior patterns of the surrounding culture
- 2: modification of the culture of a group or individual as a result of contact with a different culture
- 3: the process of assimilating new ideas into an existing cognitive structure



Synthesis & Syncretism

- *Synthesis:*
 - the combination of a thesis and an antithesis to form a higher truth; a compound containing diverse elements.
- *Syncretism:*
 - the combination of different forms of belief or practice

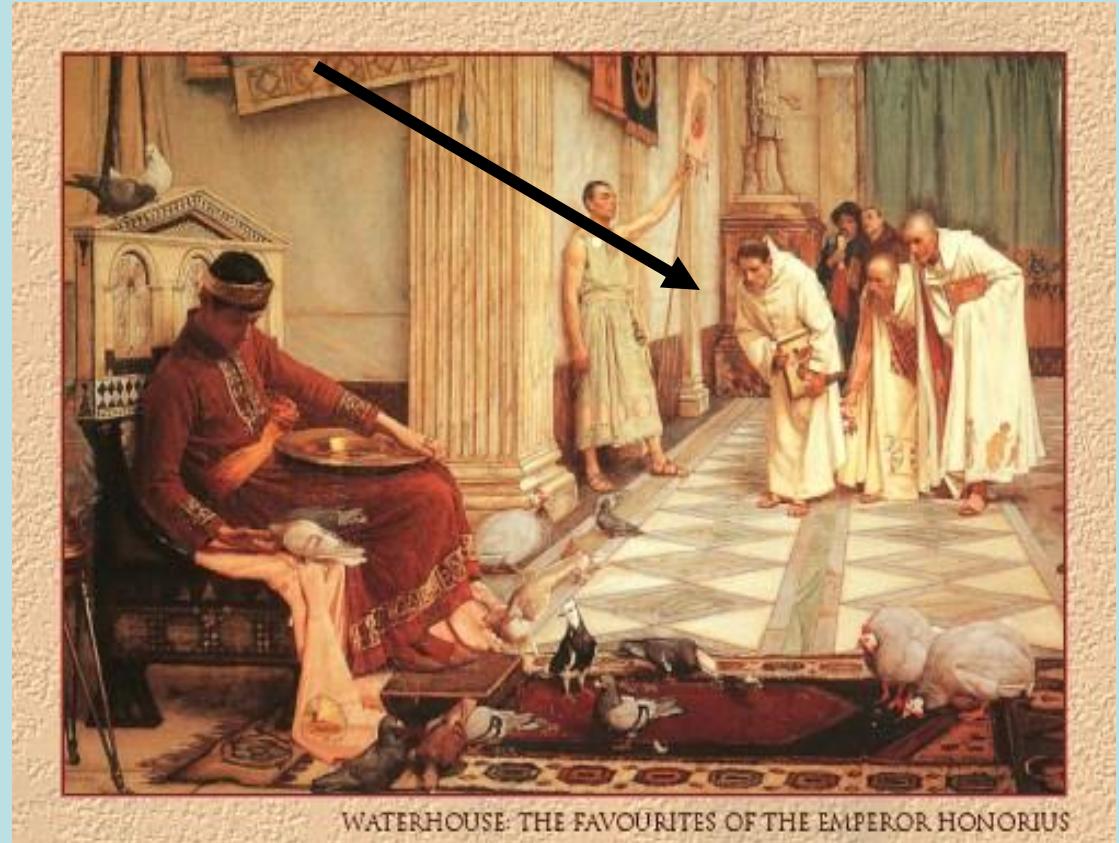
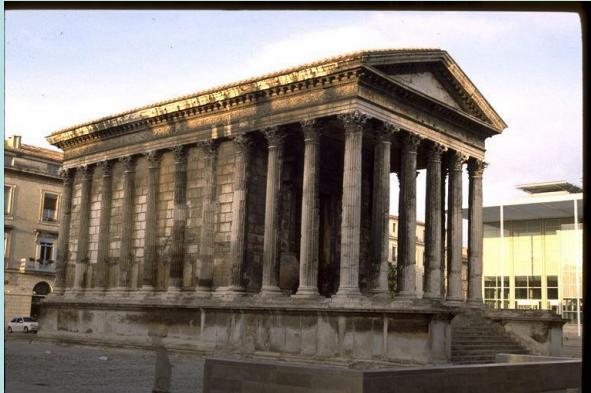




Pagan Temples Become Churches & Pagan Priests Become Christian Priests



- ▶ The Pantheon, pagan temple, became a church



Roman/Greek Pagan Religion

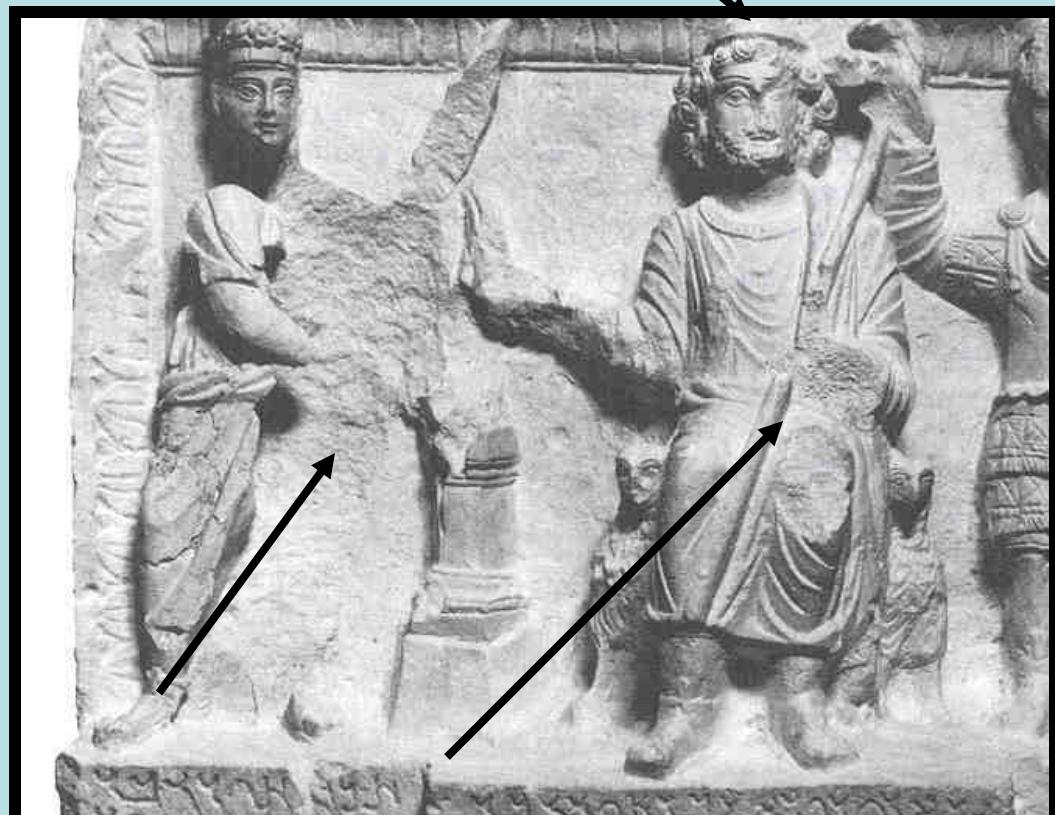
- Formalities and Rituals: need correct and exact wording and procedures
- “Cultus” not “Pietas”
- Appear gods’ anger
- Win gods’ favor
- Prayers as contracts.
- Sacrifices of thanksgiving and propitiation
- Professional priests
- “Church” and State Merged
- Sacred Times
- Sacred Places

Adoption of Pagan Ceremonial and Liturgical Worship

- [The pagan] “Cult is structured with a division of sacred personnel (priests) who lead and perform the cultic ceremonies for the people, who are in a more distant relation with the deity... The words and actions of the cultic performance are divided into roles assigned to the leaders and to the worshipers. It is the tendency of cultic worship to replace spontaneity, which it once had, with set and even rigid forms of words and acts. These are preserved by tradition, and they generally have a sacredness that is based on the belief that the directions for cultic worship came ultimately from the deity.
 - *Encyclopedia Britannica*
- In the Greek East in the second half of the fourth century ceremonial began to become quite elaborate. Greek clergy began to wear ornate clothes, and ritual acquired a high degree of splendor.
 - Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*, p. 266



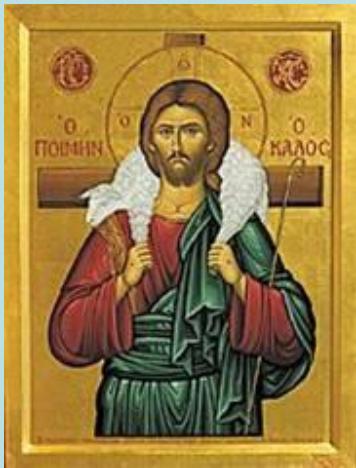
Adaptation of Pagan Symbolism



Zeus Crowned in Babylon



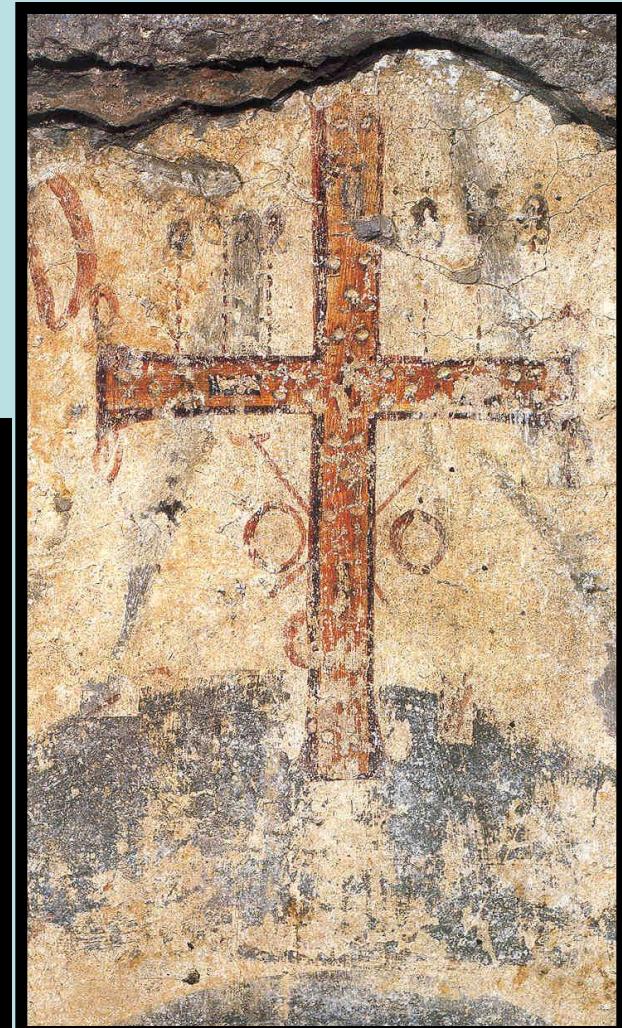
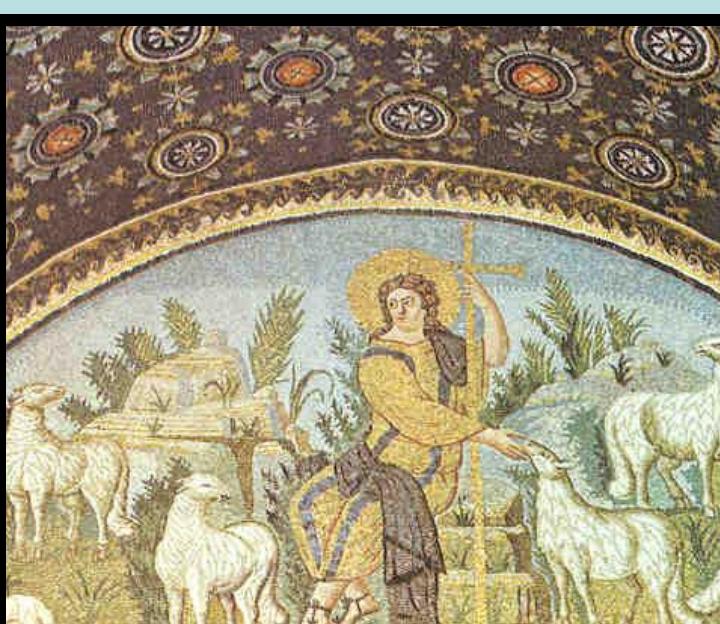
Christ Crowned in Rome



Pagan Orpheus Shepherd God Images Adopted for Christ the Good Shepherd



Cross Adopted as Christian Symbol



Pagan Egyptian Cross (*Ankh*) Adopted by Christians

ā



Grave of Rhoda, in Egypt

ankh *n.*

A cross shaped like a T with a loop at the top, especially as used in ancient Egypt as a symbol of life.

Note how Rhoda is praying in an Orant with covered head

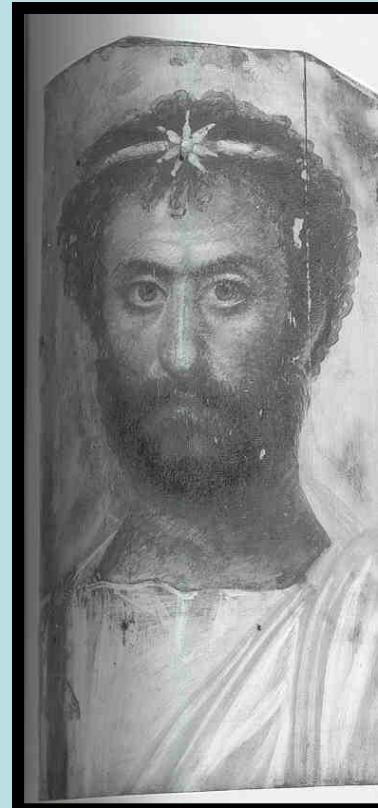
What Jesus Looks Like Begins to Change

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

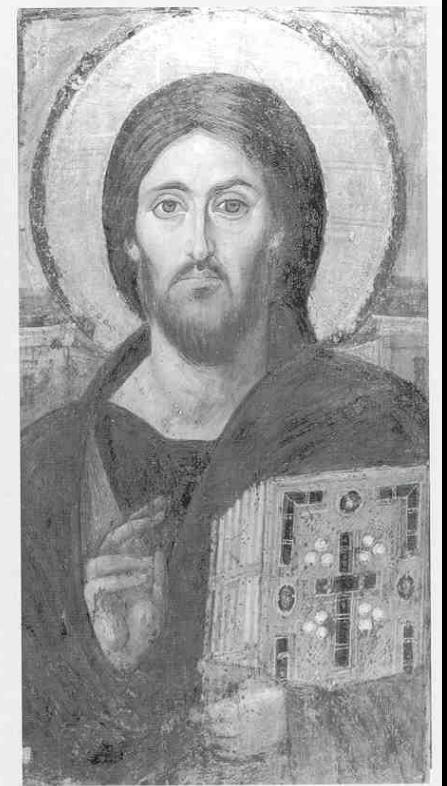


Note clean shaven,
short haired Jesus

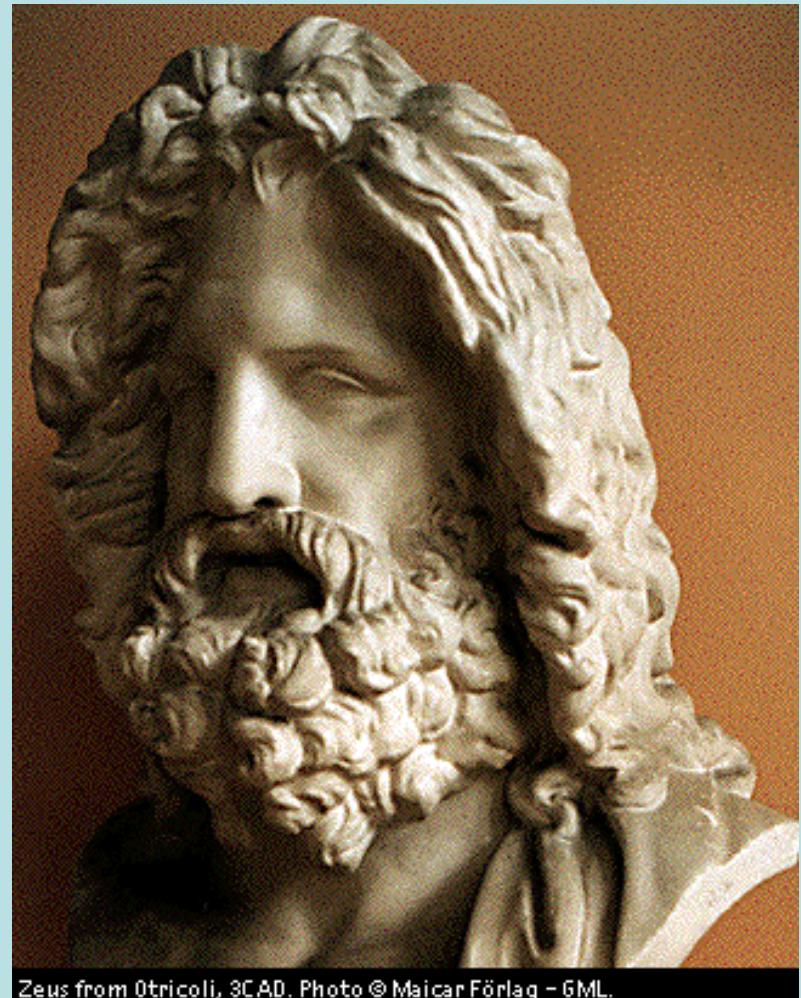
“Quest for Historical Jesus”???



Pagan Priest



ZEUS (JUPITER)



Zeus from Otricoli, 3CAD. Photo © Maicar Förlag - GML.

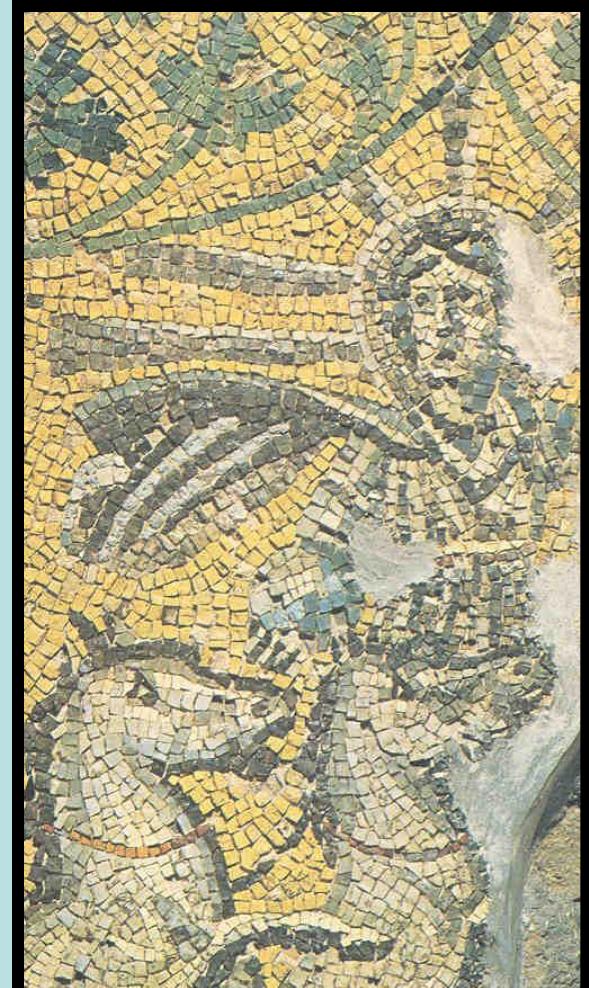
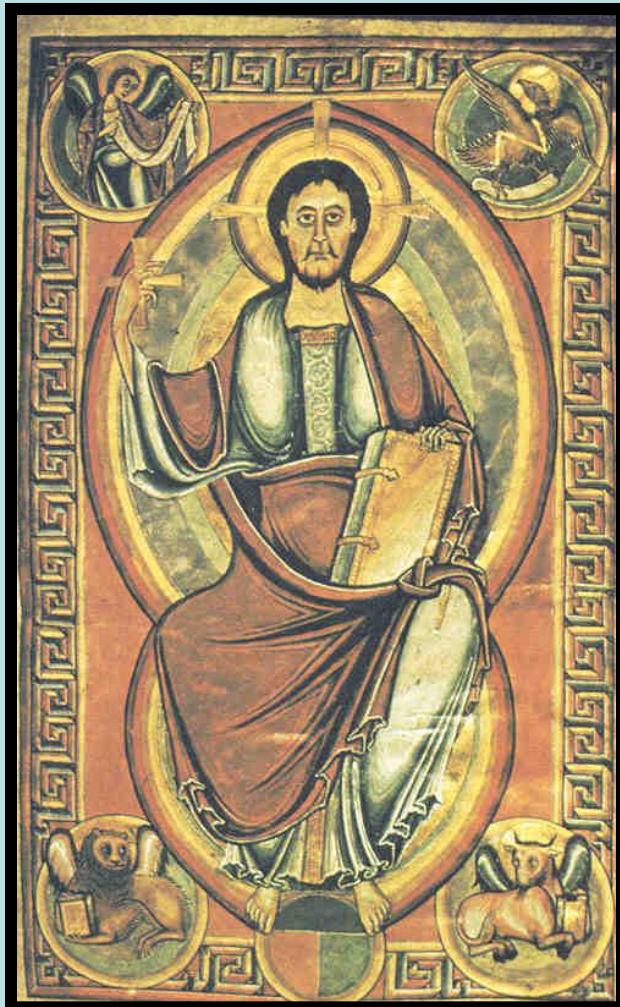


Pagan Sun God (Helios)

(where we got the halos)



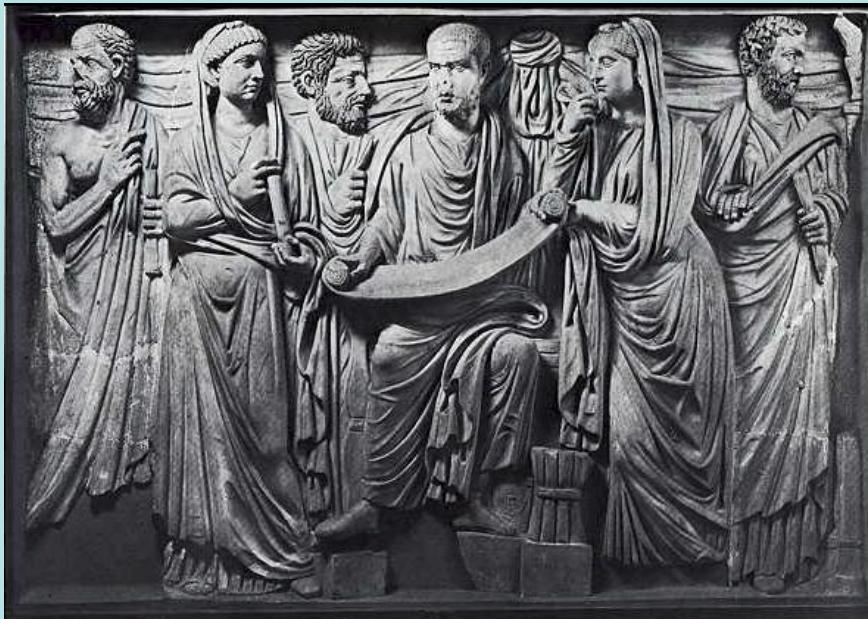
Jesus as Pagan Sun God





Jesus as The Philosopher

Socrates and His Disciples



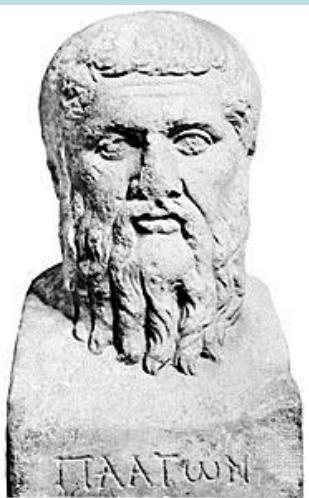
Plotinus Surrounded by his disciples



Christ surrounded by his disciples

Christ as Philosopher King

- Christ begins appearing in artwork as a majestic emperor like king or as a philosopher, in philosopher's garb, carrying a codex or scroll.

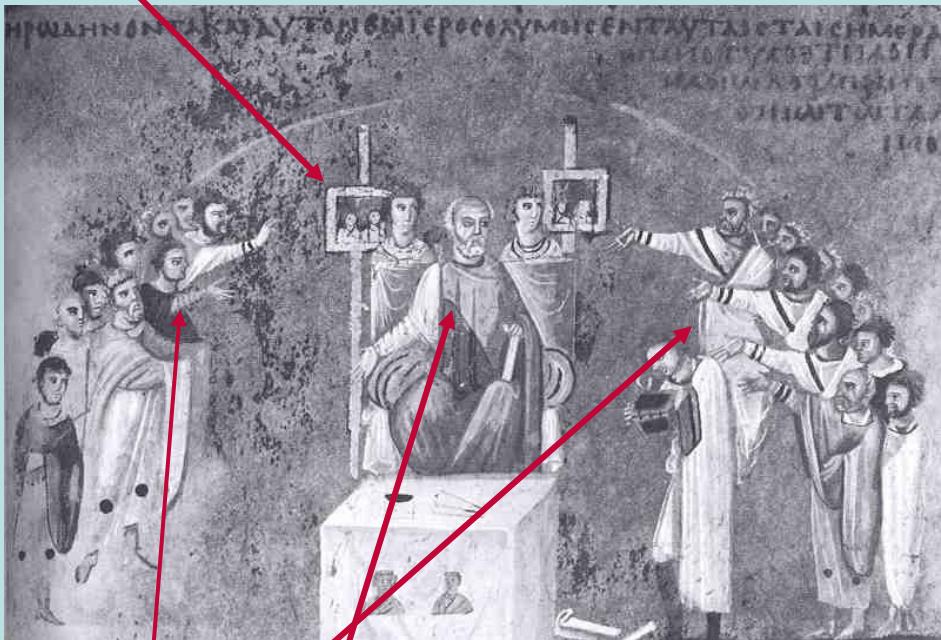


Plato discussed the
philosopher king



Christ as Emperor in His Court

Icons of
Imperial Family



Roman Governor in Bema Seat

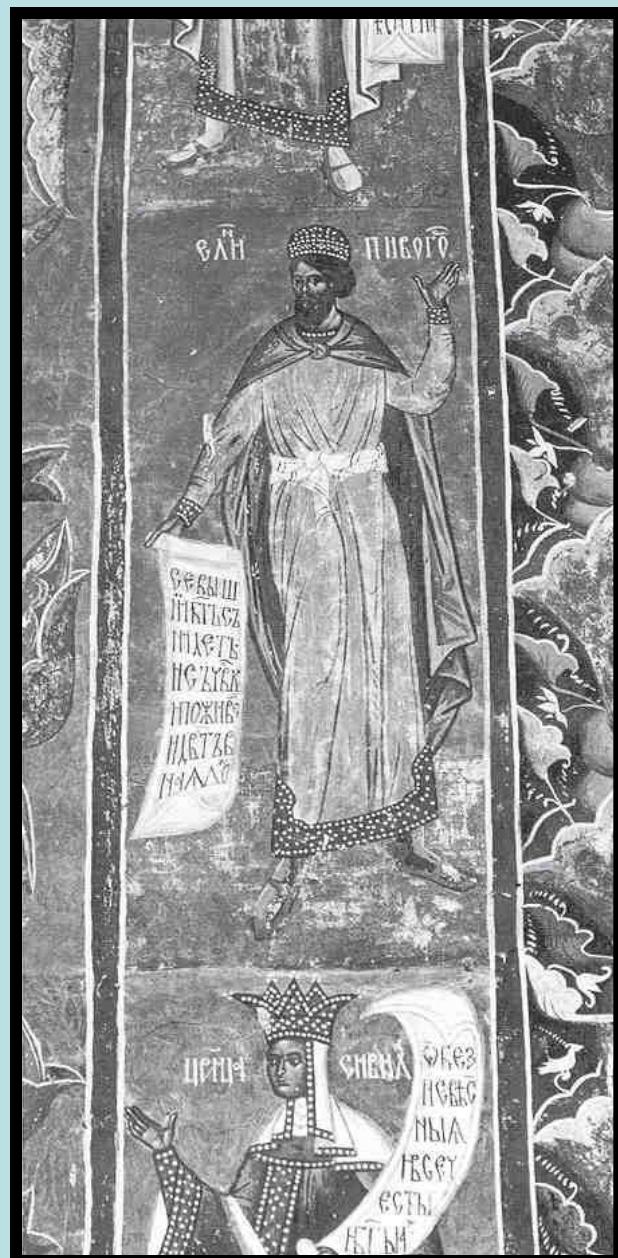
Advisors/Patrons/Apostles
Advising the Judge/Jesus

Note lattice fence separating
Jesus from the Masses

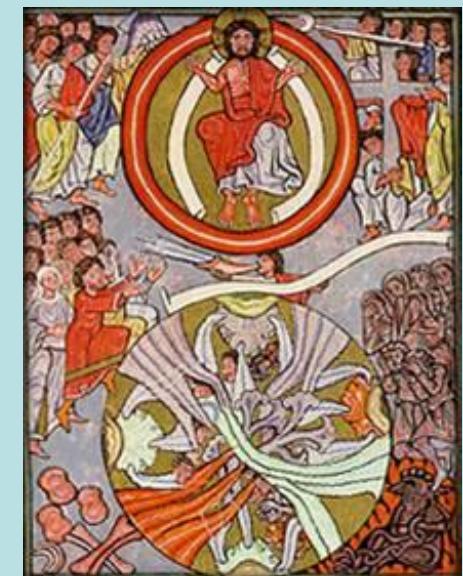
Pagan
benediction
hand gesture

Jesus on Bema Seat



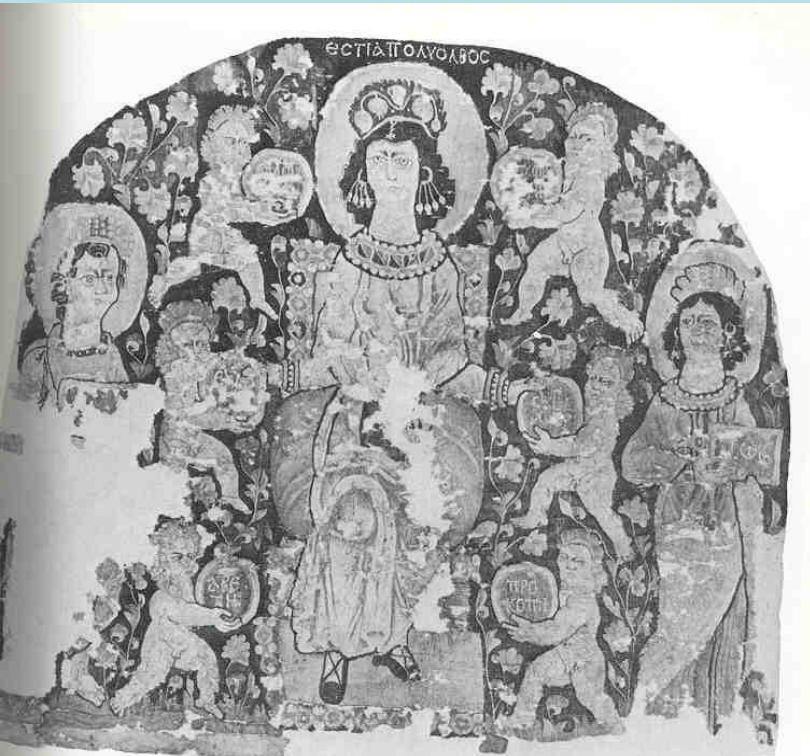


Jesus as Other-Worldly Figure



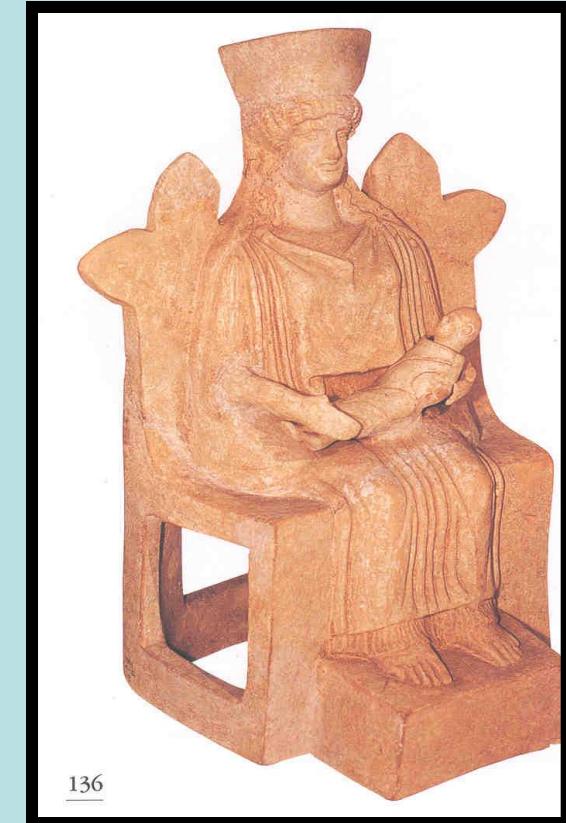
Pagan benediction
hand gesture

Magna Mater, Pagan Mother Goddess



Magna Mater
Pagan Queen Goddess of the Universe
Surrounded by courtiers and cherubs

• Oh, Queen of the sky, ... with any name, with any rite, under any aspect it is right to invoke you give me your help in the time of the extreme tribulations, consolidate my afflicted fortune, and after so many misfortunes that I have suffered give me peace and rest.



Magna Mater, Mother
Earth

Isis, Queen of the Universe and Horus

I am the mother of the universe, the sovereign of all the elements, the origin before the centuries, the totality of the divine powers, the queen of the spirits, the first of the celestial ones. My essence is indivisible, but in the world I am worshipped anywhere under manifold forms, with different rites, under different names. Therefore the Frigis, the first inhabitants of the earth, call me mother of the gods [Great Mother, Cybele]... But the ... Egyptians gifted with the ancient knowledge, they honor me with rites that belong to me alone, and they call me with my true name: Isis Queen.



Isis and Horus

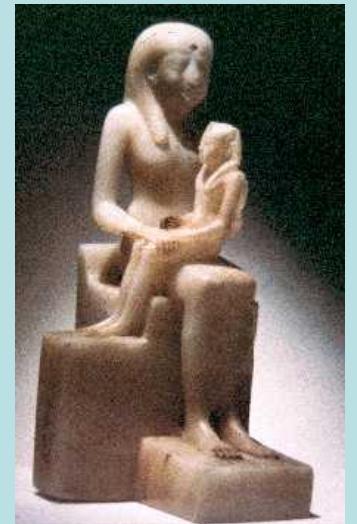
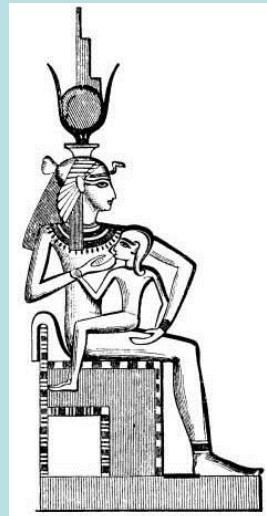
Isis and Horus Become Mary and Jesus



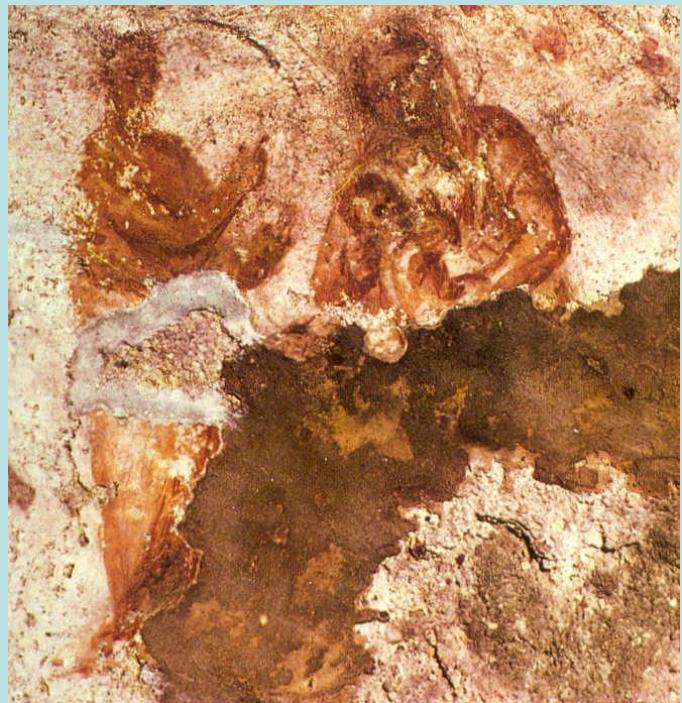
Isis, holding Horus

Contemporary
Mary Portrait

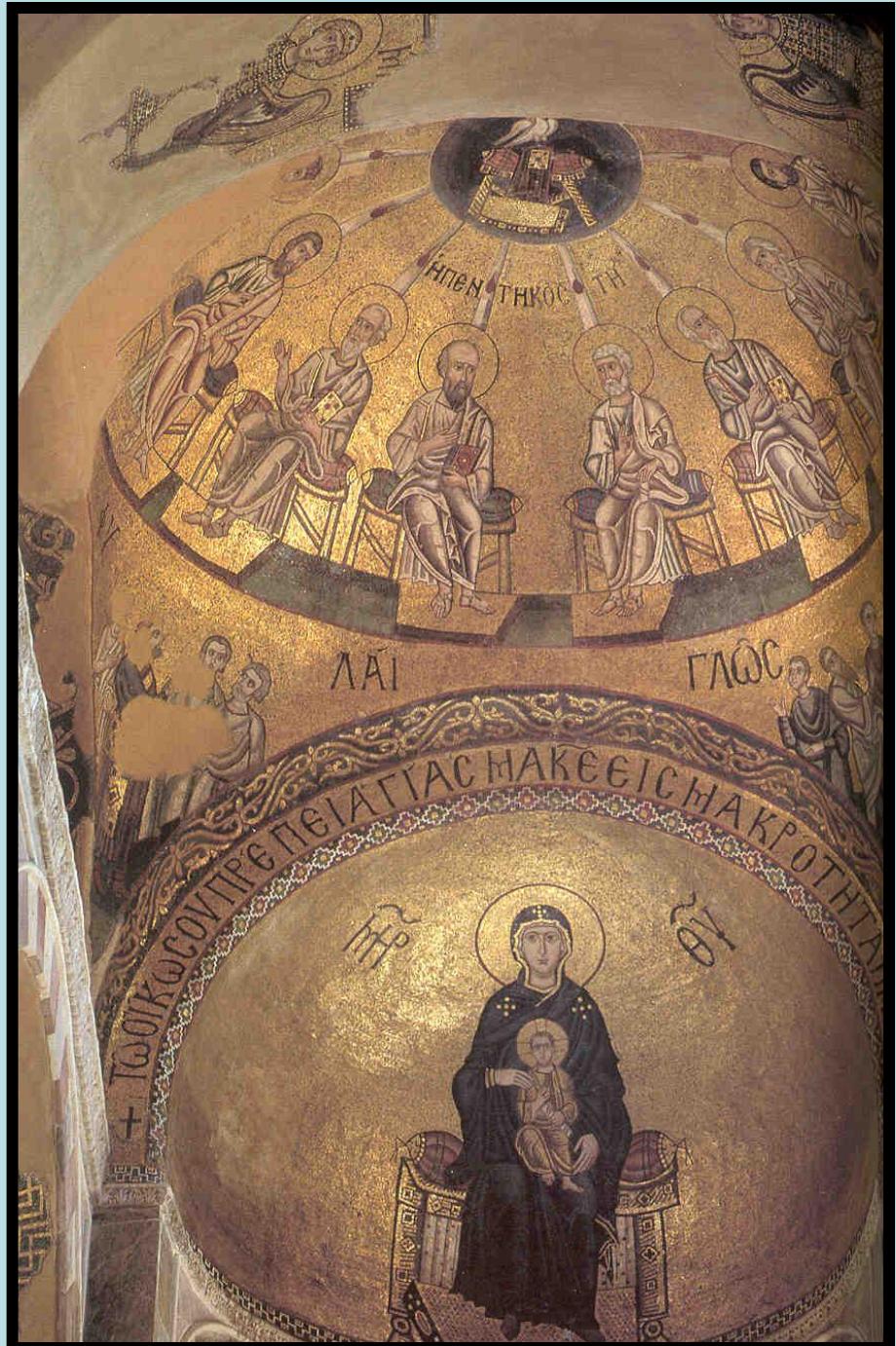
- ***Theotokos - Mary is the Mother of God***
- Theotokos doctrine is central today in Eastern Orthodox churches



Simple Mary Becomes Queen of the Universe



Earliest Known Image of Mary,
approx 100 AD

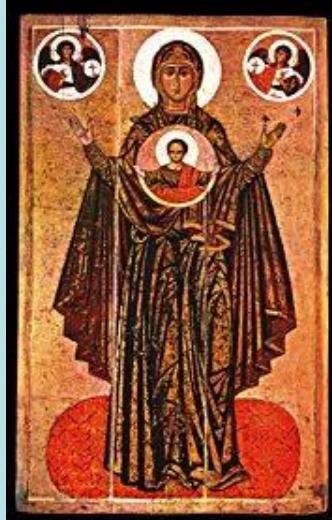
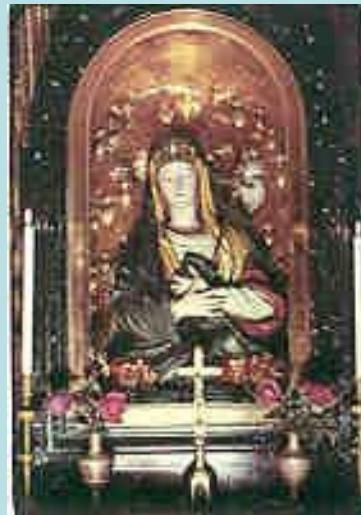
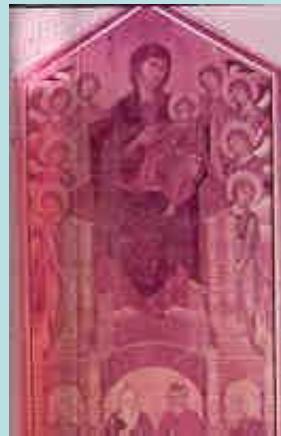


Mary, Queen Of Universe



Note bejeweled imperial robes like Persian kings, no longer like Romans

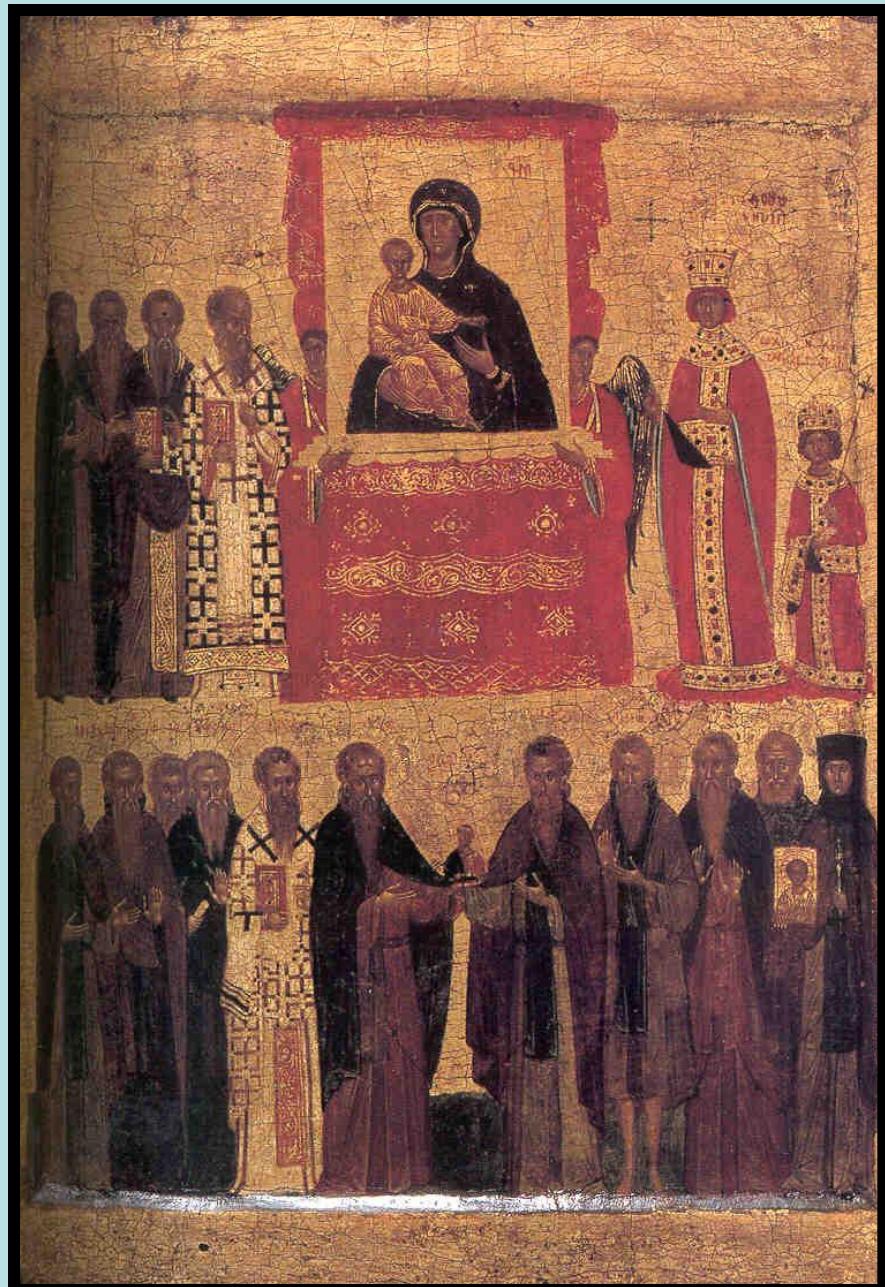
Mary Icons & Idols



Eastern Orthodox

Mary Worship

- *"In you, O woman full of grace, all creation exults, the hierarchy of angels, together with the race of men. In you, sanctified Temple, Spiritual Paradise, glory of virgins of whom God took flesh, from whom our God, who existed before the world was, became a child! By taking flesh in you He made your womb his throne. He made it more spacious than the heavens. In you, O woman full of grace, all creation exults: glory to you."*
- Orthodox Eucharist



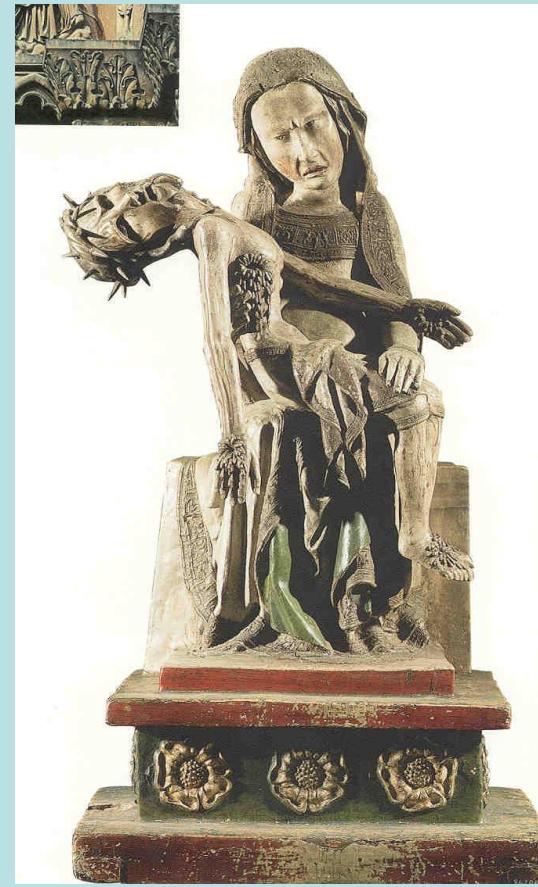
Roman Catholic Mary Worship



- Priest: *I confess to almighty God, to blessed Mary ever virgin, to blessed Michael the archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy apostles Peter and Paul, to all the saints, and to you, brethren, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed.*
- ... **Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death.**
- **HAIL HOLY QUEEN, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To thee do we cry, ..., to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us, and after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet virgin Mary. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.**
- **O God, ... look down with favor upon Thy people who cry to Thee; and through the intercession of the glorious and immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God, of her spouse, blessed Joseph, of Thy holy apostles, Peter and Paul, and all the saints, ... hear the prayers which we pour forth to Thee ...**

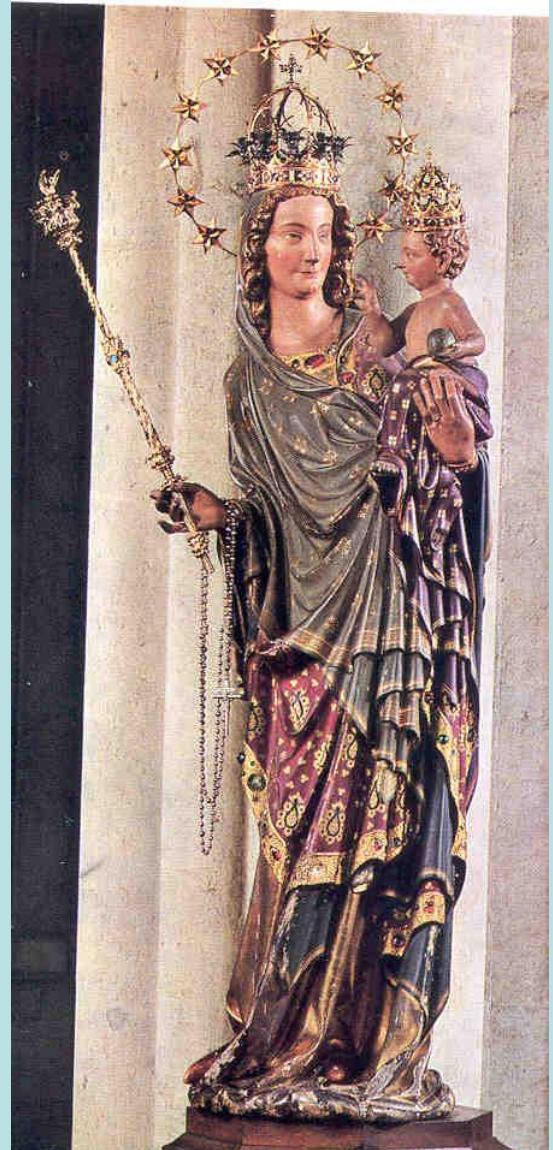
— RCC Ordinary Mass

RCC Medieval Mary-ology



Later Roman Catholic Development of Mary Worship

- Belief in immaculate conception of Mary spreads.
- The theologian Duns Scotus in the 13th century systematized the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which teaches that Mary was actually conceived without original sin.
- Spread of belief in perpetual virginity of Mary, even though there is flat contradiction of it in the Bible. ("his mother and his brothers," etc.)



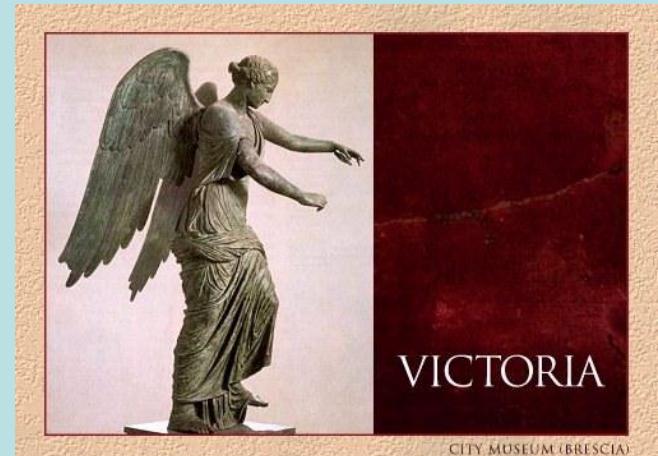
5 MINUTE BREAK

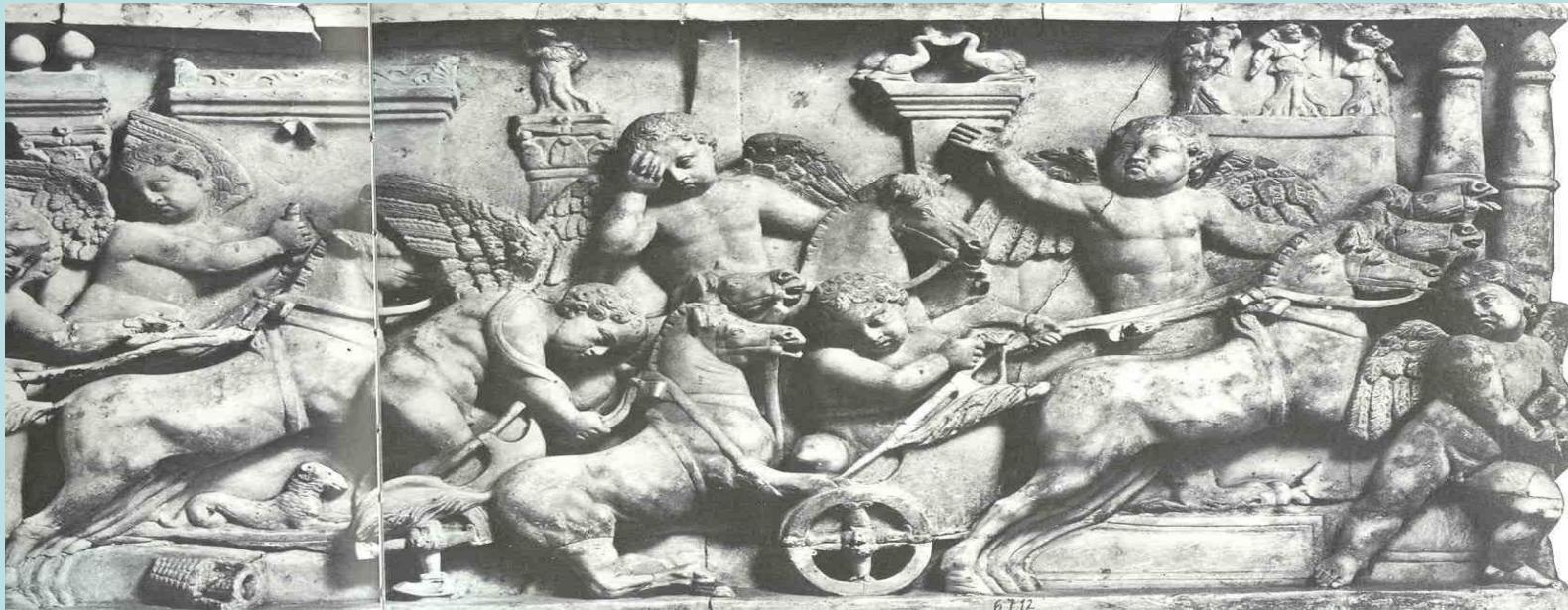


Pagan Nikes



Pagan
Goddess
Nike/
Victoria
the
Winged
Victory



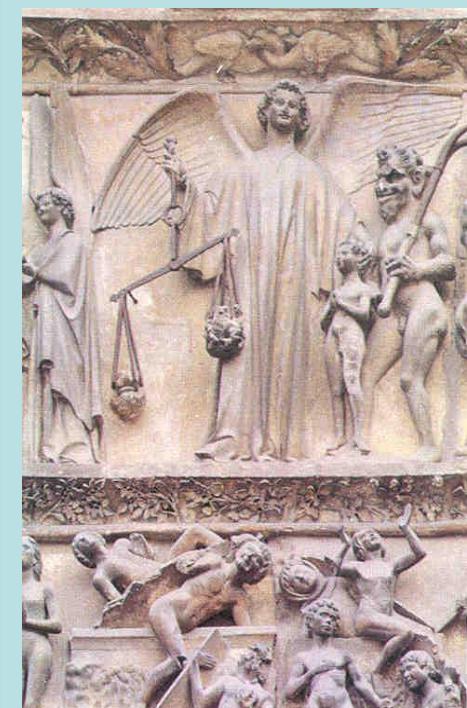
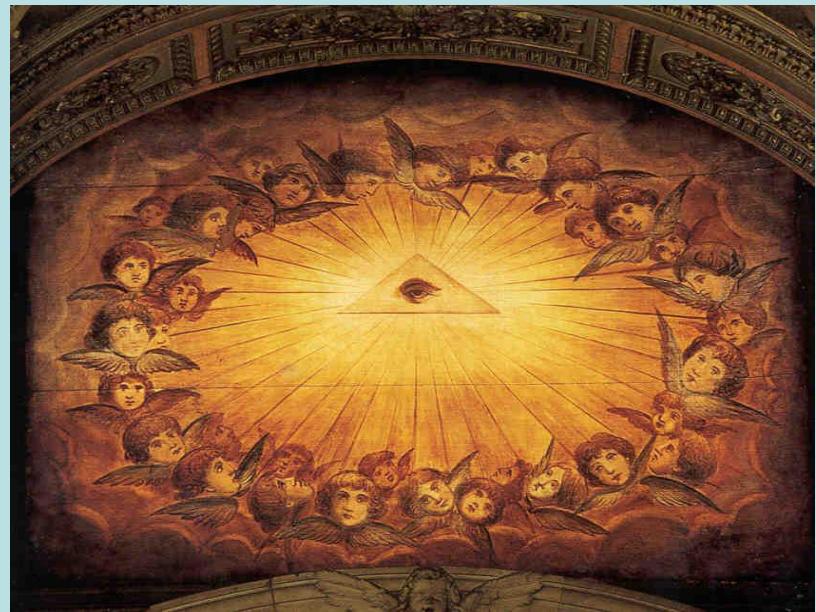


Sweet Little Pagan Cherubs!

Flying naked babies were common in Pagan Art. To the left is a fresco from Pompeii

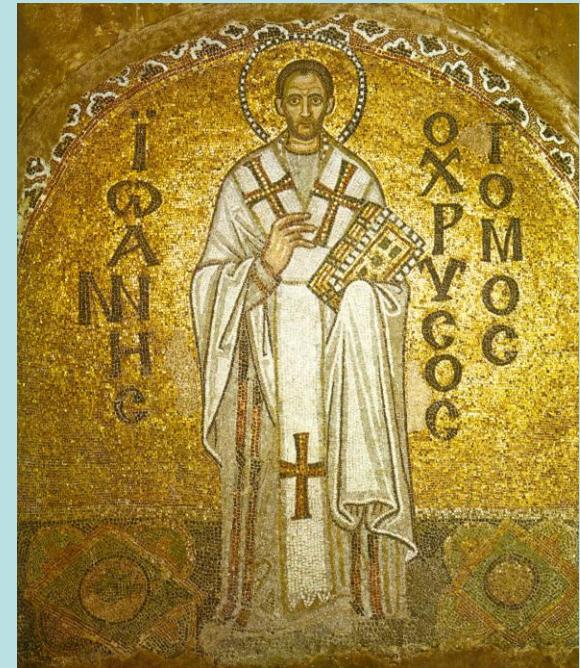
Worship of Angels

- Priest: “*St. Michael, the archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the malice and snares of the devil. We humbly beseech God to command him. And do thou, O prince of the heavenly host, by the divine power thrust into hell Satan and the other evil spirits”*”
- RCC Ordinary Mass



Worship of Martyrs and Other “Saints”

- Saints and martyrs took over devotion from the minor pagan gods, moving right into their temples without missing a beat.
- In the search for saints (to enhance revenues from pilgrimages), many pagan deities were absorbed into the church and sanitized as saints, such as St. Brigit, originally god of the Brigantes.
- Saints act as intercessors between God and Man
- By the fourth century those worshipping in Churches would pray to Martyrs.
- Martyrs were thought To have special healing powers and the ability to forgive sins



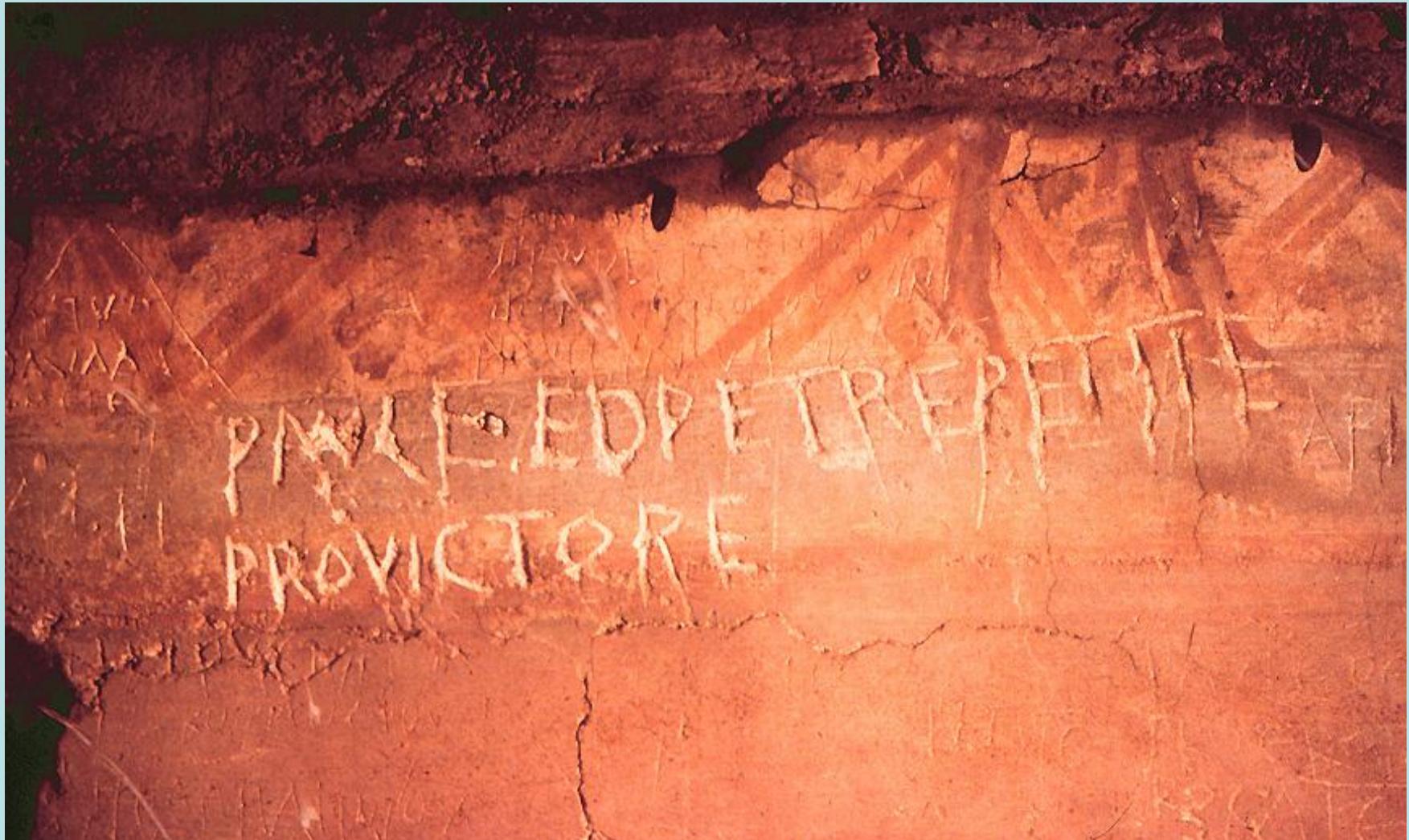
- Mass conversions meant converts brought with them into the church their superstitions, gods and practices.

- Saint Peter, who bore the sword, was viewed as the soldier's saint.
- St. Anthony watched out for pigs and pig farmers.
- St. Gaul looked out for chickens and chicken farmers.
- St. Apollonia cured toothaches.
- St. Genevieve cured fevers.
- St. Blaise cured sore throats.

A Saint for This and A Saint for That

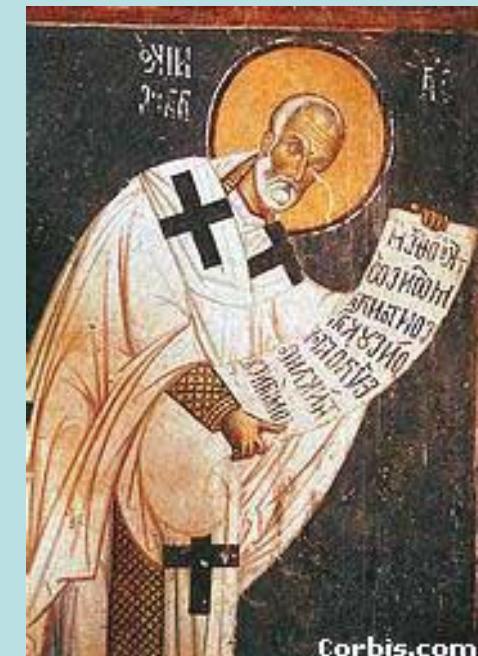


GRAFFITI IN TOMB INVOKING PROTECTION OF PETER AND PAUL



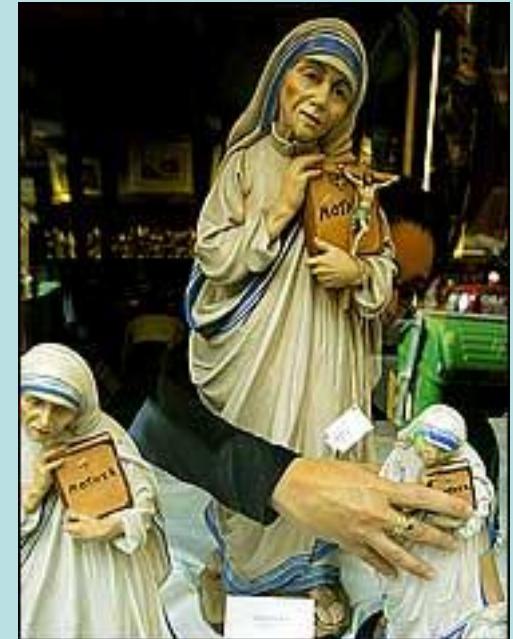
Martyr Myths

- Superstitious stories were now told of the martyrs (or their relics) healing from sickness and performing other miracles after death.
- Christina is one of the martyr saints of Italy whose story is so far-fetched that it gravely undermines the credibility of similar stories.
 - According to the legend, she broke up some idols belonging to her pagan father, a magistrate, and gave the golden fragments to the poor. Infuriated, her father had her beaten with iron rods and thrown into a dungeon. Later, he dragged her forth, had her torn with iron hooks and fastened over a fire. When the flames miraculously turned against the onlookers, her father ordered a heavy stone tied around her neck and flung her into lake Balsena. An angel rescued her. Her father died in his malice and the succeeding magistrate continued to persecute Christina. She survived a blazing furnace for five days, was then exposed to snakes (which would not hurt her) and was finally finished off with arrows at Tyro, after having her tongue cut out.
- Her relics were preserved at Palermo, Sicily inside the head of a gold statue of a Roman Emperor!!



Corbis.com

Medieval Popes Officially Adopt Saint Worship

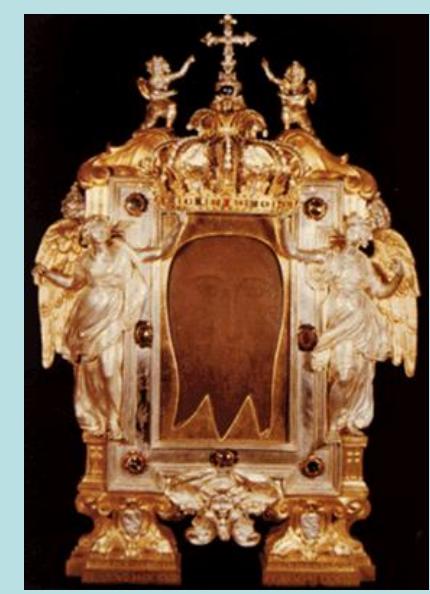


- 993-95--Saints begin to be officially canonized by the Roman church.
- 1170--Pope Alexander III established rules for the canonization of saints, the same year Thomas Becket is murdered in England. Becket is canonized in 1173.



Relics Viewed to Have Magical Properties

- Constantine's mother Helena "discovering" the "true cross."
- 386 veneration of cross and relics officially authorized
- Relics were credited with miracles.



Reliquaries

Worship of Relics



Arm of John the Baptist (in Istanbul)



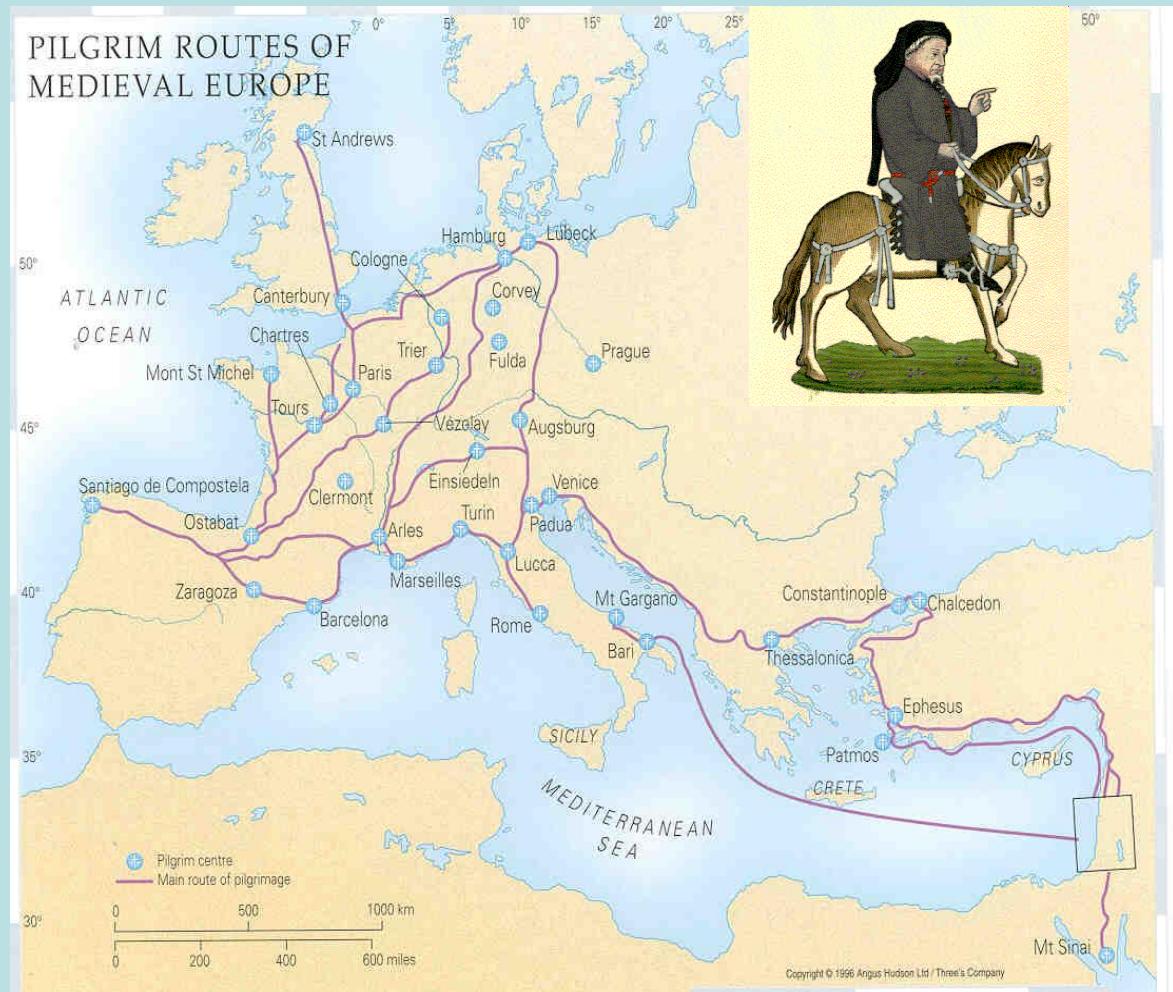
One of the heads of John the Baptist! (in Germany)



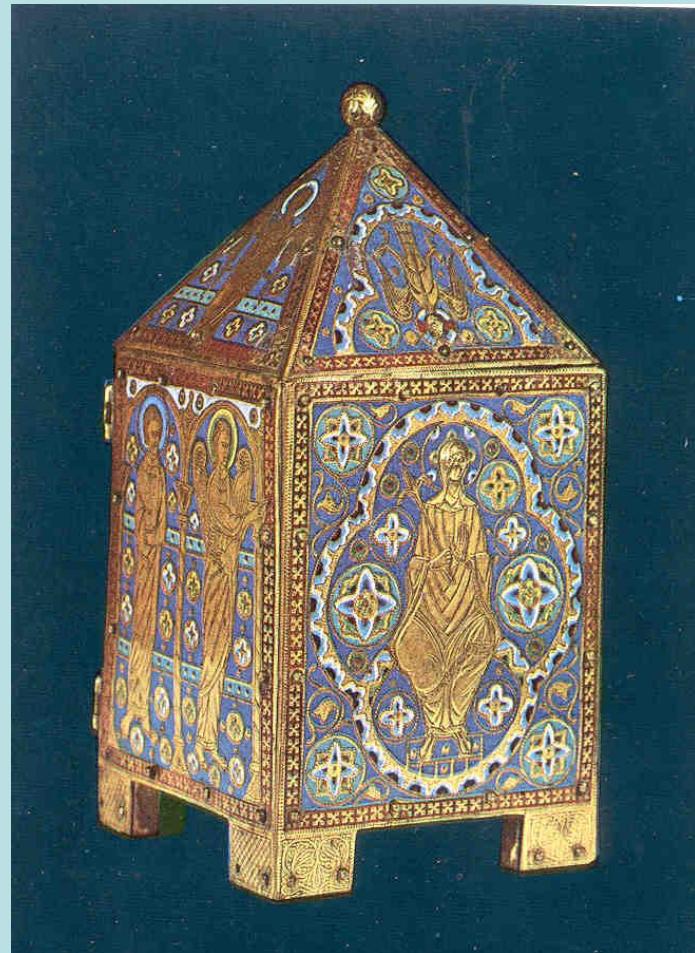
Reliquary holding the heads of the three wise men & others

“Holy Sites” and Pilgrimages

- Pagan holy sites were also converted to Christian use
- Christian “pilgrims” began visiting holy sites to fulfill vows, receive healings or for the forgiveness of sins. Often there was the veneration of relics such as bones of martyrs or splinters of wood from the cross.

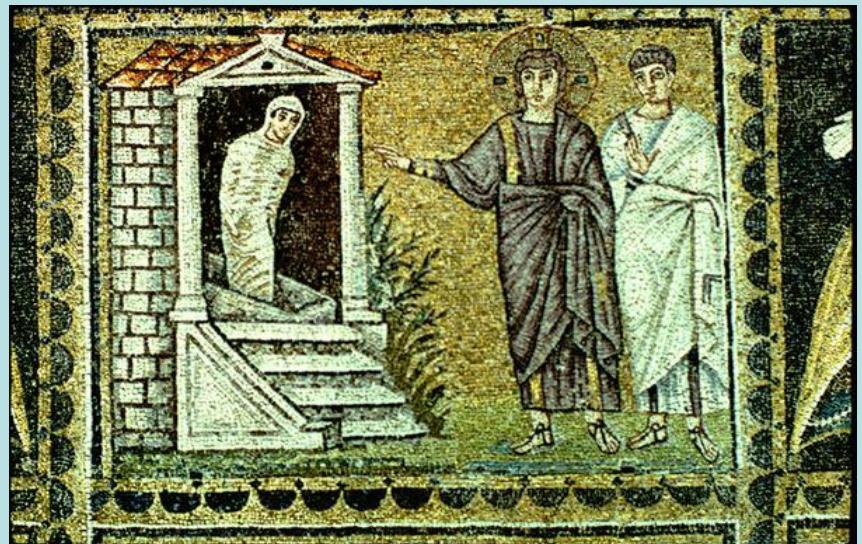


Reliquaries



- Pagan Notion that all dead go to Limbo or Hades to await final judgment
- Prayers for Dead and post-death repentance and salvation
 - Priest: “*Be mindful, also, O Lord, of Thy servants N. and N., who have gone before us with the sign of faith and who sleep the sleep of peace. To these, O Lord, and to all who rest in Christ, grant, we beseech Thee, a place of refreshment, light, and peace. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.*
 - RCC Ordinary Mass

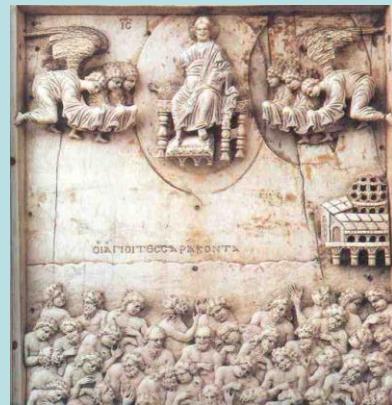
RCC: Prayers on Behalf of the Dead



Pagan Votive Statues



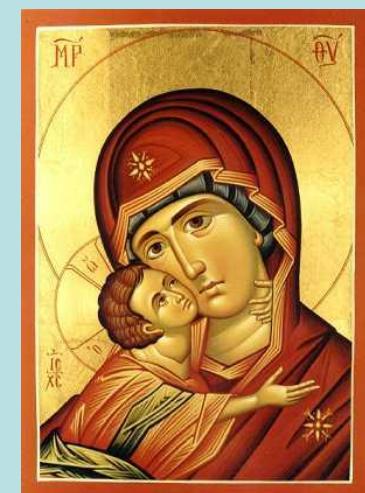
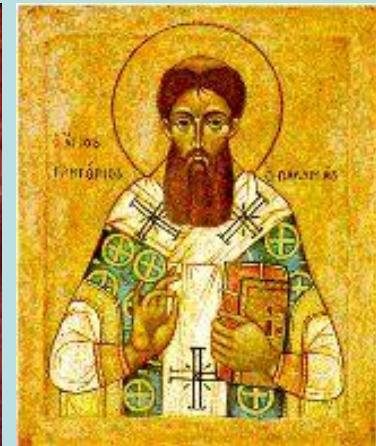
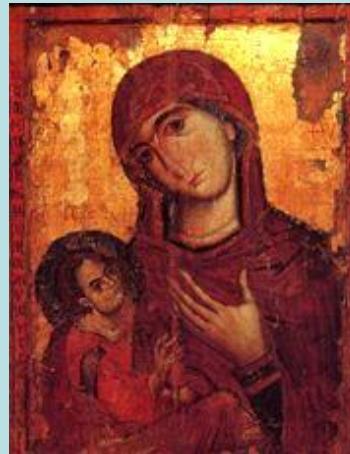
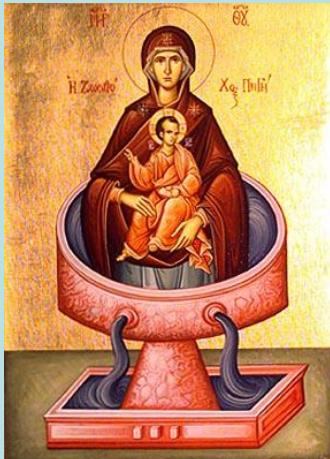
Roman Catholic Statues



The only difference between the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic positions is that that only flat images are allowed in Eastern Orthodoxy while Roman Catholicism allows sculptures also.

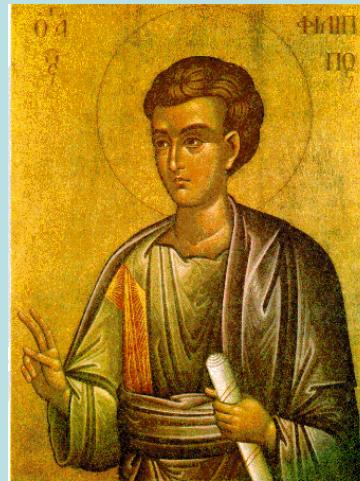


Eastern Orthodox “Icons”



- Even more vigorous opponent of icons was Emperor Leo's son and successor, Constantine V.
- Constantine was the person most responsible for developing the arguments used against icons.
- In 754 he called the Council of Hieria, and the 338 bishops assembled from throughout the empire, condemned the making and venerating of icons.
- However, Constantine had guided into the assembly only those bishops who supported his views. Nonetheless, the bishops declared their assembly the "Seventh Ecumenical Council."

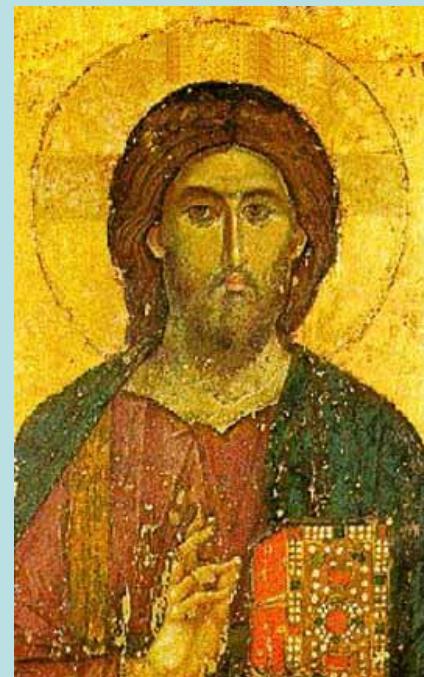
Iconoclasm Controversy (726-943)



Icon of
Philip the
Apostle



Wall in front of altar



- After the Council of Hieria, a large-scale war broke out against the supporters of icons. Monks, icons' staunchest defenders, felt the heat of persecution the most. Thousands were exiled, tortured, or martyred.
- Between 762 and 775, countless Christians suffered greatly, and the period became known as the "decade of blood."



"The Blood of the Icon Martyrs"

Religious Civil War in Byzantine Empire



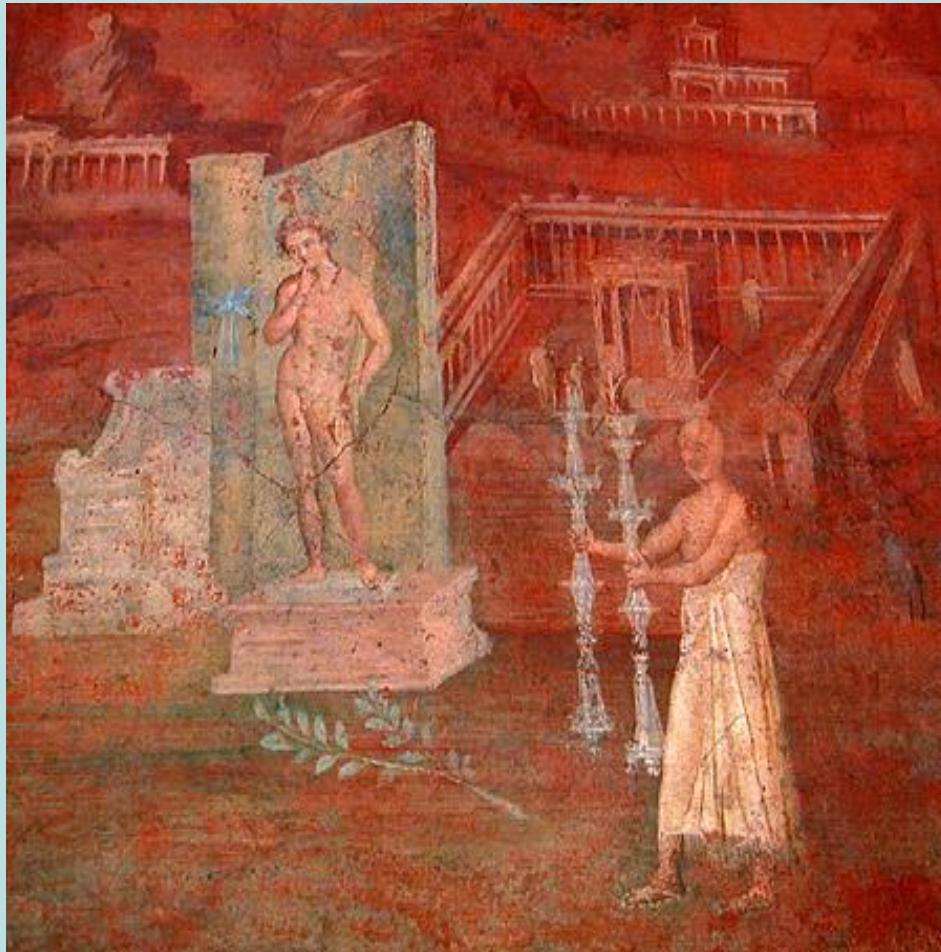
Manuscript depicting Icon smashers

Icon “Worship” or “Veneration”?



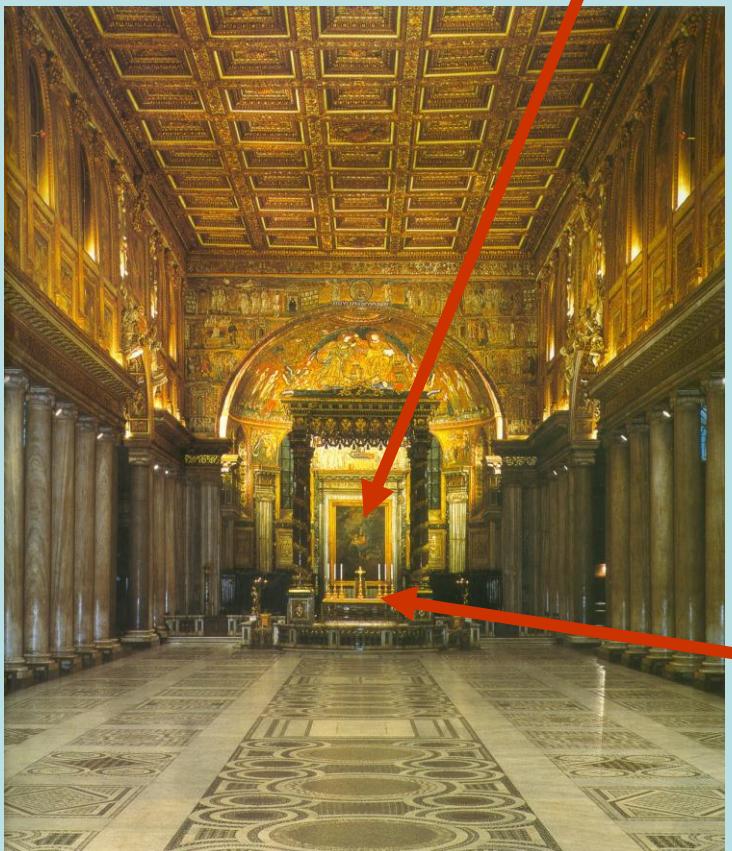
- *"An image is a likeness, a model, or a figure of something, showing in itself what it depicts. An image is not always like its prototype in every way. For the image is one thing and the thing depicted is another."*
 - John of Damascus's
- *"Orthodox theology on this point is good: the Orthodox say they do not ‘worship’ icons but only ‘honor’ or ‘reverence’ them. I'm sure this is true for many Orthodox. But it's not hard to imagine that countless Orthodox worshipers don't see the difference and that, in many cases, icons are simply worshiped."*
 - Harold O.J. Brown

Pagan and Christian Priests Bringing the Candles Into the Temple



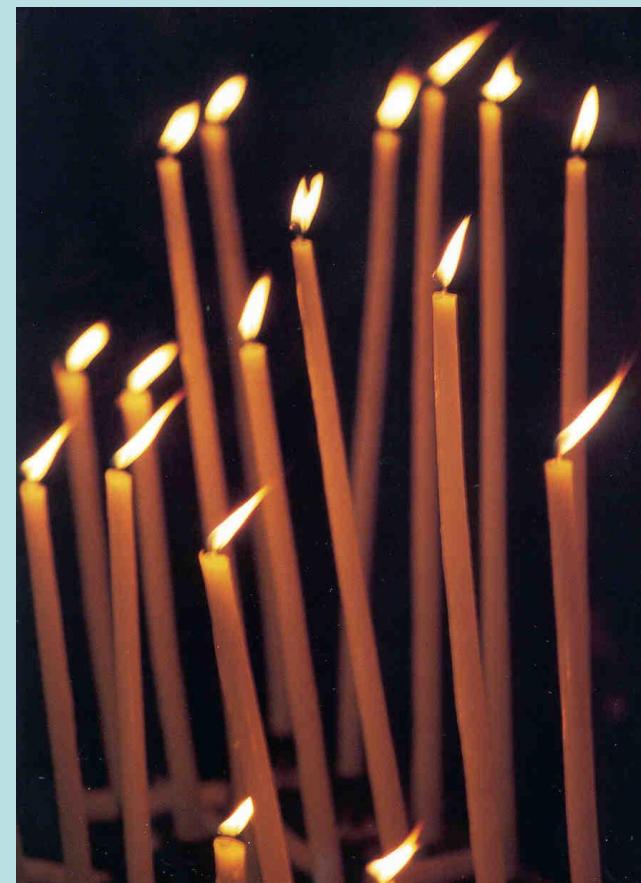
Pagan Candle Burning Practices

Note "Throne" like Altar just like in Roman Basilicas



Note candles on an altar and burning incense just like in pagan temples

Adoption of Pagan Votive Candles





Adoption of Pagan Incense Use

- Incense was most common form of Pagan sacrifice, far more common than animal sacrifices
- *“The rising smoke from the burning represents our prayers rising to God. Using all five senses to seek communion with God is to affirm that God's physical creation is good, that Man is material as well as spiritual.”*
 - Official Greek Orthodox Web Site



© 2000 IRC

IRC

Sensory Worship?



- from Greek chriein, “to anoint”.
- A priest anoints the forehead, eyes, nostrils, mouth, ears, breast, hands, and feet of the newly baptized with chrism (myron), a mixture of olive oil and balsam blessed by a bishop, and says at each anointing, *“The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*
- Used in baptism, confirmation, ordination and last rites



Chrismation



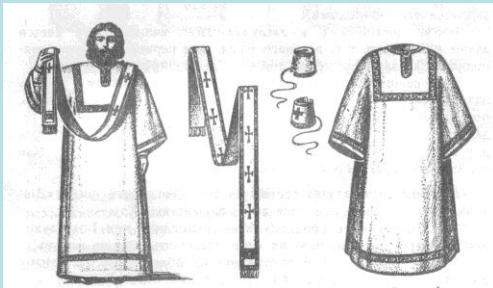
- “Chrism” is a mixture of oil of olives and balsam, used in the administration of sacraments. To be valid, chrism “must consist of pure oil of olives, and it must be blessed by a bishop, or at least by a priest delegated by the Holy See. These two conditions are certainly necessary for validity; moreover it is probable that there should be an admixture of balsam, and that the blessing of the chrism should be special, in the sense that it ought to be different from that which is given to the oil of the sick or the oil of catechumens. If either of the last two conditions is wanting the sacrament will be doubtfully valid.”

— *Catholic Encyclopedia*

Magical Oils



Professional Priests



Pagan Priests with Miters



- “Before the age of Constantine, the bishop wore no special dress.”
 - Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, p. 304
- “The notion of fixed clerical salaries was considered an outrage as late as c. 200, in both Rome and Asia. It was the shocking practice of Christian sectarians and heretics.”
 - Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, p. 305

Pagan Religious Processions



Adoption of Pagan Processesions

- The clergy move in and out of the sanctuary in what appears to be a precise dance.
Acolytes process with candles.
The faithful move back and forth, placing candles on stands before icons



Reliquary

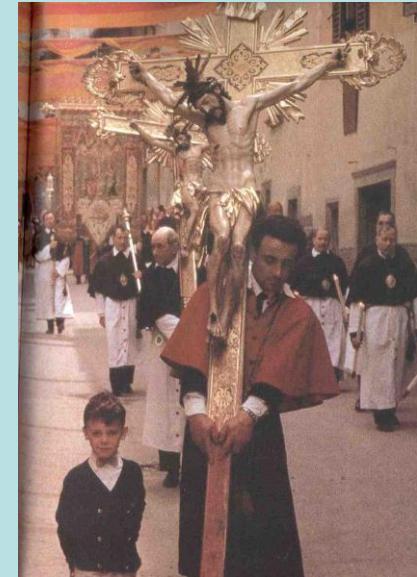
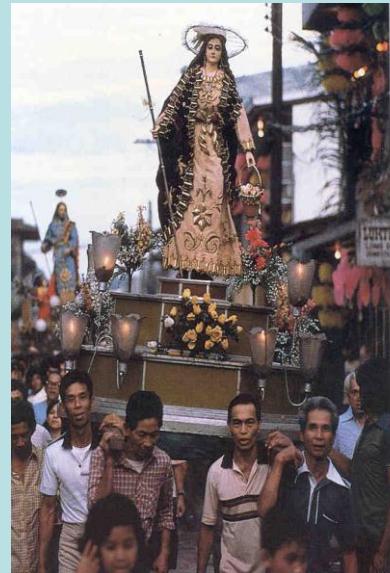


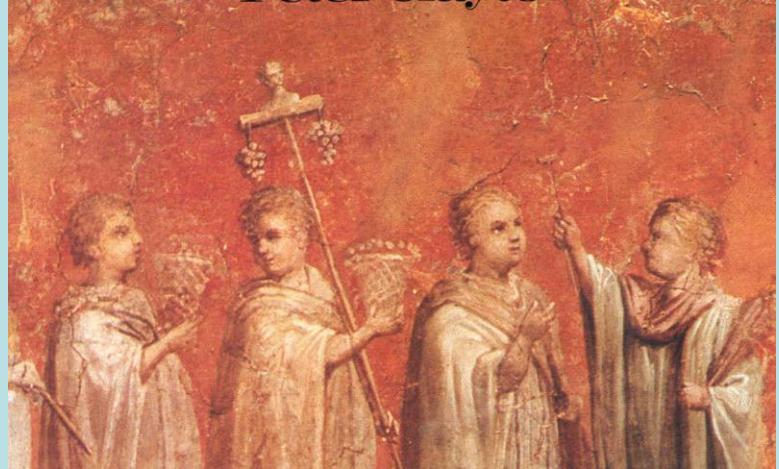
incense

16th Century Procession

4th Century
Procession

Modern Processions



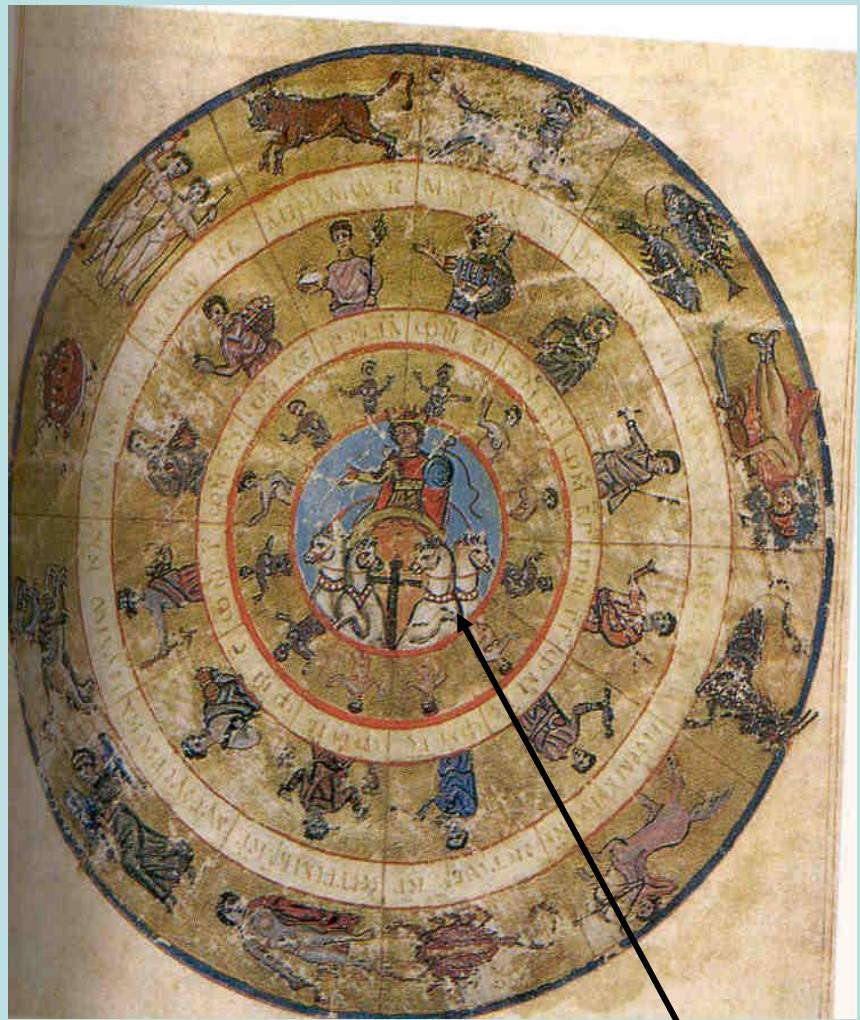


Pagan “Acolytes” Adopted



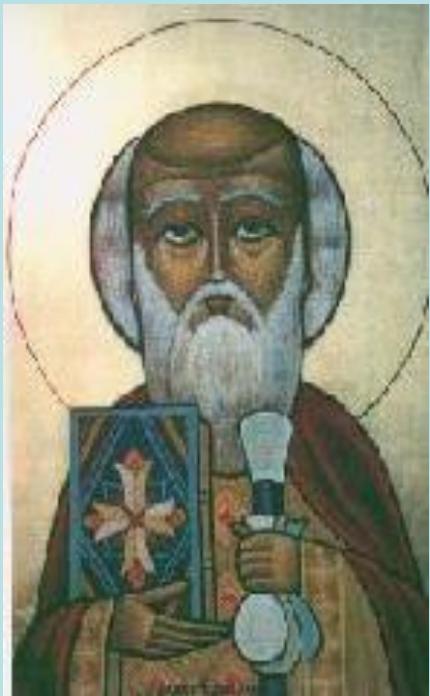
Adoption of Pagan Calendar

- Church calendar with the Christian year begins to be in place.
- Beginning of “saints’ days” to replace pagan feast days. This was largely consciously and intentionally done.
- First saint’s day, Feb 23, birthday of Polycarp.
- Feb 14, St. Valentine’s day was a saint’s day in honor of a martyr who died in 270, for marrying people contrary to the civil law.
- Easter tied to vernal equinox, rather than Jewish Passover
- January/Janus. March/Mars. June/Juno



Mars at center of
“Christian calendar”

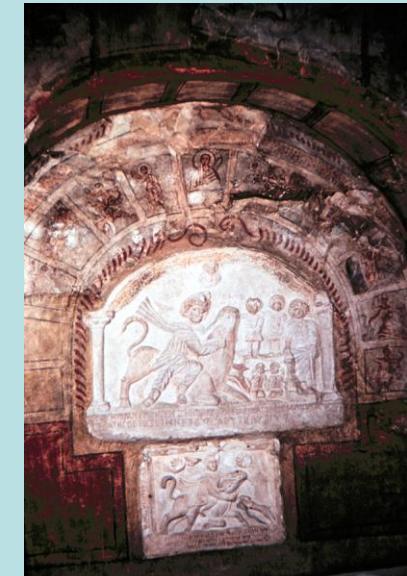
Origin of Christmas and Santa Claus



St.
Nicholas
(St. Nick)

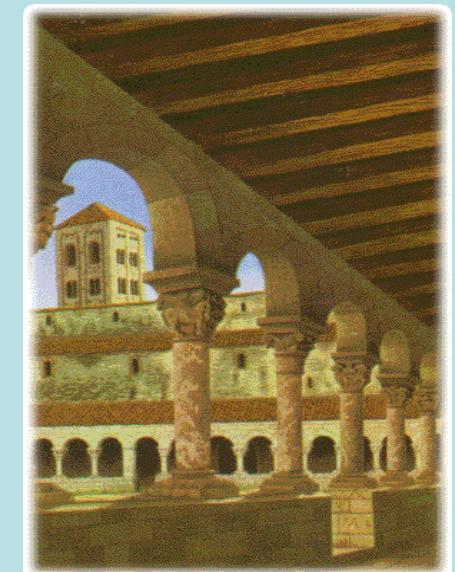
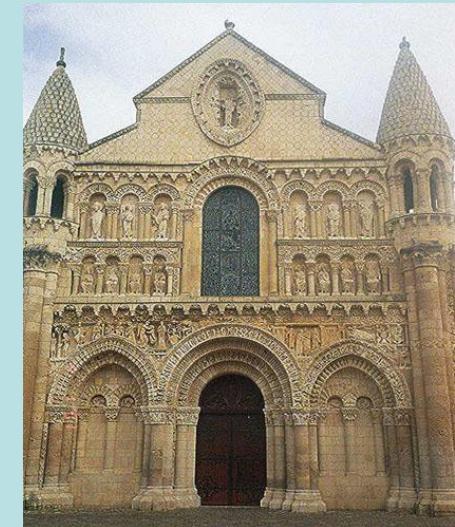
- ▶ Saturnalia's Dec 23 celebration of "Father Time" was adapted for Christmas;
- ▶ Saturnalia was a "merry day" when social standing was eliminated, slaves given the day off, gambling was allowed, gifts were exchanged among family and friends.
- ▶ December 25, celebrated as birth date of pagan god Mithras adapted for birth date of Jesus
- ▶ St. Nick, was bishop of Myra, and known for giving gifts to needy children. He was martyred in 345 and his December saint's day was very popular.

Saturday/Saturn



Mithras

Church Confronts New Forms Of Paganism



Assimilation of Germanic Paganism

- Beliefs, rituals, and mythology of the pre-Christian Germanic peoples, in a geographic area extending from the Black Sea across central Europe and Scandinavia to Iceland and Greenland.
- The religion continued in Scandinavia until the 10th century.
- Germanic religion also encompassed belief in female guardian spirits, elves, and dwarfs.
- Rites were conducted in the open or in groves and forests;
- animal and human sacrifice was practiced.
- Ragnarok is the Germanic doomsday.



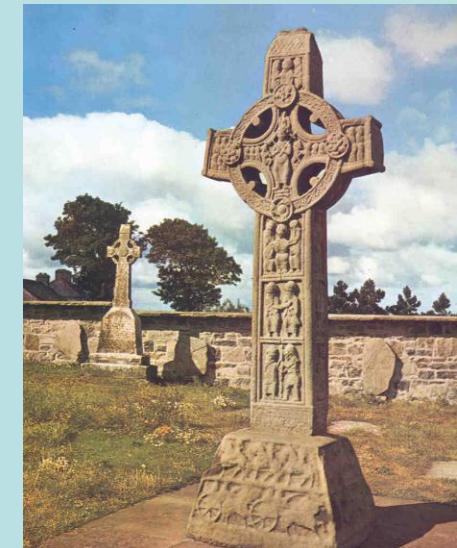
German Pagan Contributions

- Christmas trees
- Reindeer
- Elves & Dwarfs
- Candles in Windows/(Xmas Lights)
- Winter Solstice festival of lights
- Dwarfs
- Jule Logs
- Wednesday (Woden's Day)
- Thursday (Thor's Day)



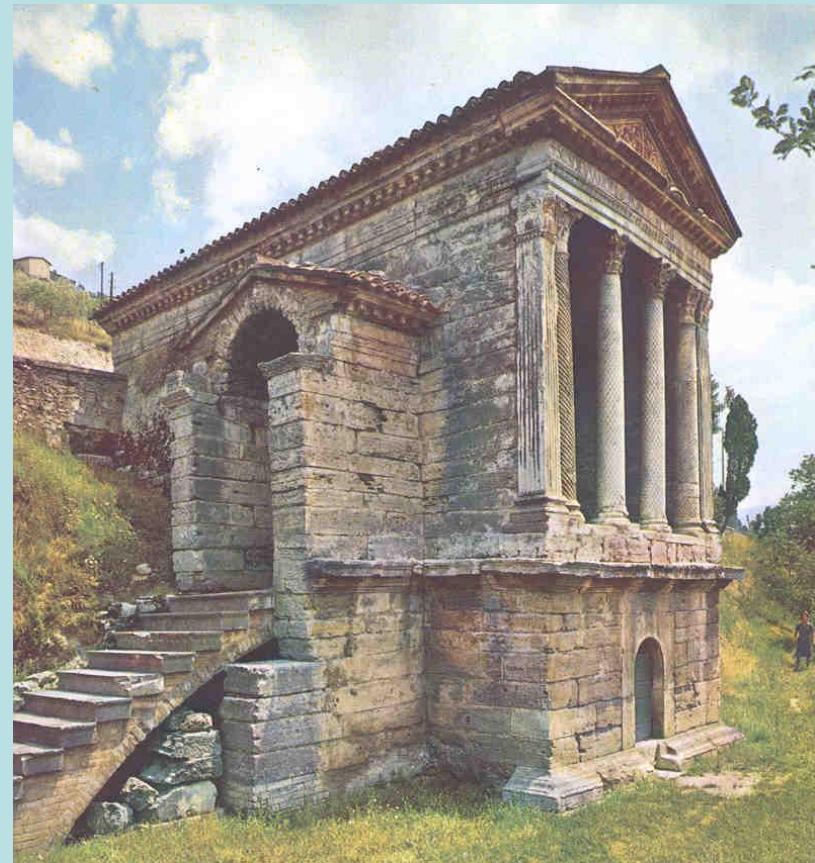
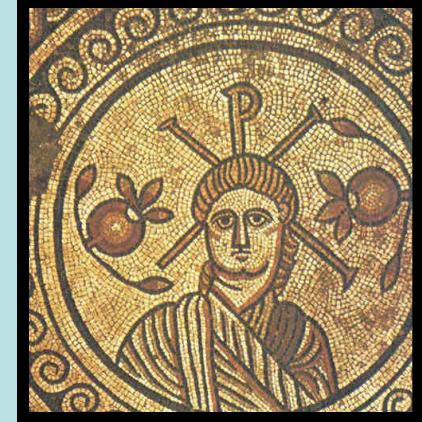
Celtic Pagan Contributions

- Leprechauns
- Fairies
- Stars on Trees
- Pot of Gold at the end of the Rainbow
- Lucky charms/four leaf clovers
- The Gryphon
- Unicorns



Why did this Acculturation Occur?

- Result of Mass Tribal Conversions
- New Converts bring cultural baggage with them
- Christian missionaries tried to build bridges of belief and practice toward pagan religion to ease the difficulty of conversion
- General church acceptance of Greco-Roman culture



Next Week: Creeds and Heretics

