

# ***Church History***



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- *Introduction to Church History*
- *The Ancient Church* AD 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries
- *The Rise of Christendom* AD 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries
- *The Early Middle Ages* AD 6<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries
- *The Age of Crusades* AD 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries
- *The Renaissance* AD 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries
- *Conquest and Reformation* AD 16<sup>th</sup> century
- *The Age of Enlightenment* AD 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries
- *The Age of Revolution* AD 19<sup>th</sup> century
- *The Modern Age* AD 20<sup>th</sup> century
- *The Postmodern Age* AD 21<sup>st</sup> century



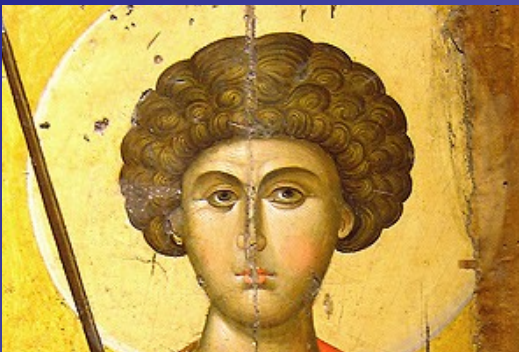
# *The Ancient Church*

- The Third Century was a time of massive crisis in the world

284

Diocletian became emperor

- By 303, he had instigated the largest, most comprehensive persecution of Christians in history, confiscating property, destroying holy books and places of worship, and forcing public sacrifices to the gods of everyone in the Roman Empire
- Even the reigning Pope, Marcellinus, renounced his faith and made burned incense to the gods
- But other martyrs such as Georgias in Nicomedia, and Alban—the first martyr in *Britain*—died for their faith
  - Supposedly, it took *two* executioners to kill Alban, since the *first* one converted to Christianity the moment he saw Alban's faith, and was thus martyred right after him





# *The Ancient Church*

- Funky little teaching moment—
  - We've understandably focused on the Mediterranean churches, and Rome is increasingly dominating the discussion, but Christianity is beginning to thrive in the far East
    - If you'll remember, Thomas planted a church in India way back in the first century
      - It was slow going at first, but in the late *second* century, the Alexandrian theologian, Pantaenus, came to evangelize—specifically to the Brahmans and philosophers
      - By the end of the *third* century, missions efforts by David of Basra and Thomas of Cana were bringing *thousands* to the Lord
        - In fact, Thomas brought 400 missionaries with him from solidly Christian cities like Jerusalem, Nineveh, and Baghdad
          - They were escaping persecution under the new Persian king, Shapur //



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    - This was also the point when Armenia became the first officially Christian kingdom, in 301
      - Armenian king Tiridates III had converted to Christianity in 295, after having been evangelized by Gregory the Illuminator
        - He had thrown Gregory into prison for not sacrificing to the goddess, Anahit, but his court later brought him out to cure the king (who had gone mad after torturing and killing a bunch of proto-nuns, one of whom he'd found attractive enough to try to unsuccessfully force her to marry him)
        - Upon his miraculous healing, the king immediately converted and repented





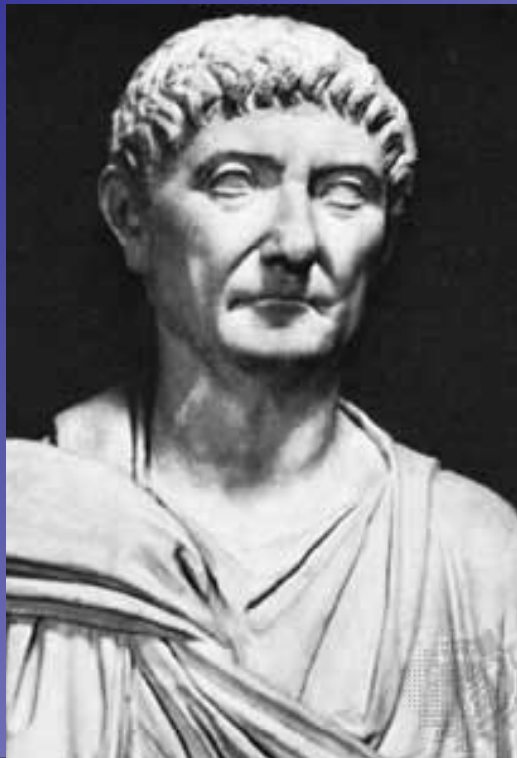
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      - In 287, he had helped the Emperor Aurelian drive King Shapur I and the Persians out of Europe, and had thus become a favorite friend of Rome—which, in turn, ultimately left Rome somewhat more open to friendship with Christianity, after Tiridates' conversion
      - All of this is helpful to remind us that Christianity is a *world* religion, and *not* a *European* one...



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  - 284 Diocletian became emperor
    - Diocletian eventually became very ill, and was forced to abdicate the throne—the first one to retire *voluntarily*—and he took the *Western* emperor, Maximian, with him





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284  
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Diocletian became emperor  
Maxentius became emperor

- In the ensuing power struggle after Diocletian's resignation, Maxentius (Maximian's son) came to power in Rome
  - Interestingly, Maximian repeatedly (but unsuccessfully) tried to oust Maxentius and steal the *whole* empire *back* for *himself* over the next several years
  - As part of that power struggle, a young man named Constantine (whose commoner mother, Helen, was rumored to be a closeted Christian) was *supposed* to take over for Diocletian in the East, but the position was only a figurehead one, and he was mostly ignored by the politicians who truly ran things





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    - In keeping with a show of strength, Maxentius continued Diocletian's persecution of the Christians



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  - 284 Diocletian became emperor
  - 306 Maxentius became emperor
  - During this time, the Synod of Elvira met (in secret) in what is now known as Granada, in Spain, to decide policy on Christian / pagan relations
    - This included relationships with Jews (who, for the first time, are now being considered to be amongst the *pagans*)
      - Christians were not to marry Jews, nor to bless one another's crops, nor to even eat with one another





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  - Other decisions at the synod included:
    - No lapsed Christians were ever to be allowed communion again
    - Clerics were encouraged to remain celibate (even the married ones)
    - The use of any kind of pictures was forbidden in the Church
    - Under unusual circumstances, lay people were to be allowed to perform baptisms



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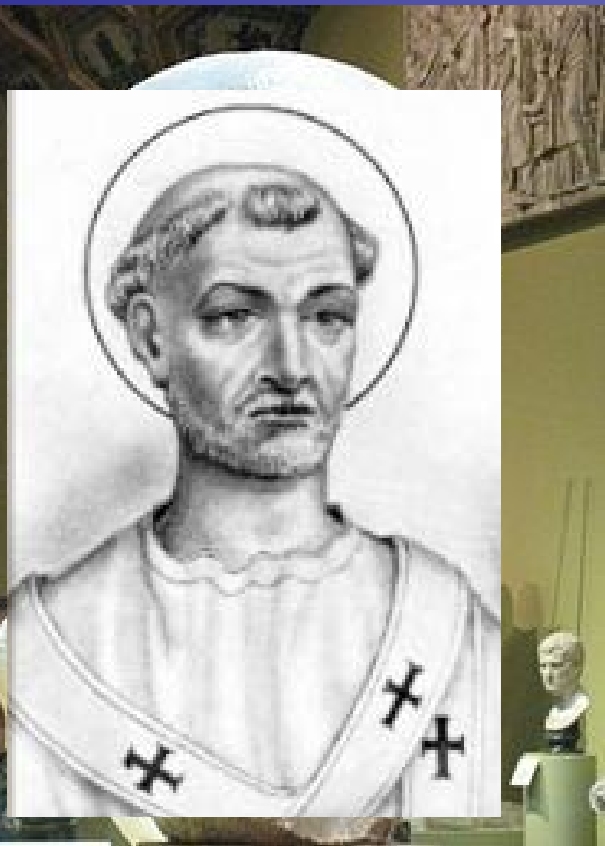
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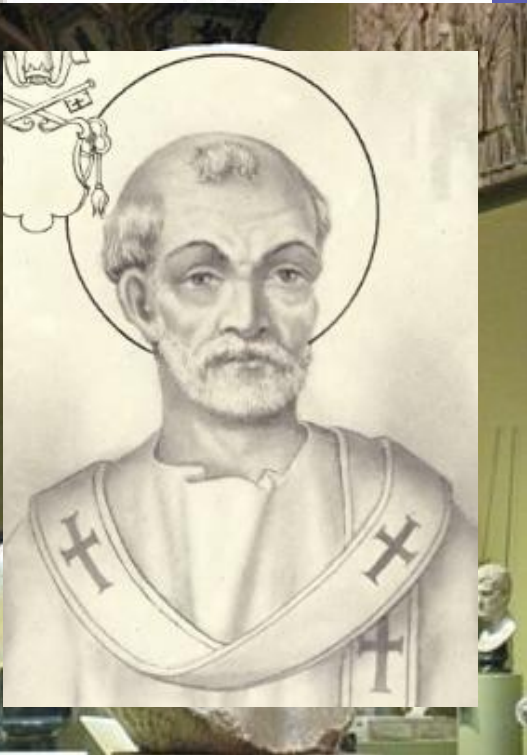
- After a few years, Maxentius realized that he had bigger issues to deal with than policing the Christians, so he began to relax the persecutions somewhat—if only to try to curry the political support of the growing number of Roman Christians
  - In fact, in 308, he allowed Marcellus to take the position of Bishop of Rome, which had been vacant since the execution of Marcellinus, back in 304





# ***The Ancient Church***

- Funky little teaching moment—
  - Marcellus was a strong, Biblical theologian who wanted to clean up the mess that the Roman Church had become in the intervening four years, and to reconnect Christian doctrine with the Bible
    - At the same time that he was trying to reform the Church, lapsed Christians were trying to get back into the Church
    - Marcellus required such severe penance on the part of the *lapsi* to return that there were violent riots in the streets of Rome, with Christians killing Christians
    - As a result, an angry Maxentius had the Pope arrested and sent into exile
      - A new Pope, Eusebius, reigned for four months, and was then exiled by Maxentius *for the exact same reasons*
      - The Church went another two years without a Pope



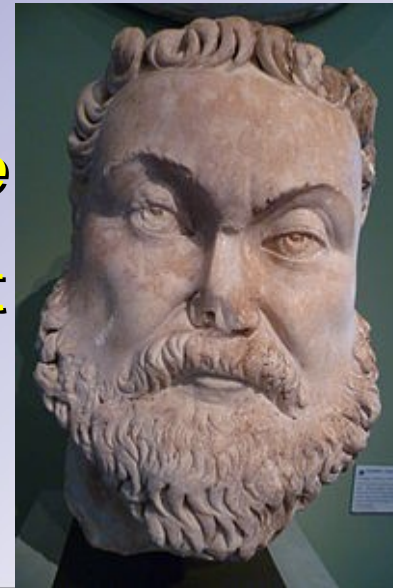
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- Maxentius attempted to take the whole of the Roman Empire for himself—openly taunting Constantine's seemingly weak leadership and his “whore of a mother” and allying himself with—of all people—his *father*, *Maximian*, who had repeatedly tried to depose him over the years
  - Strangely, Maximian turned on his son and attempted to take the throne himself
  - Ironically, it was *Constantine* whose troops captured a fleeing Maximian in hiding at Marseilles, offering him clemency for his crimes
    - Instead, Maximian chose to hang himself





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- In response, an increasingly unpopular Maxentius accused Constantine of *murdering* his father, and went to war against him (as a pretext for taking over the *Eastern Empire* as well as the West)
  - He allowed his generals to nip at Constantine in the field, while he fortified Rome and awaited either victory or a prolonged (and certainly to be unsuccessful) siege of Rome



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- But the more battles Constantine won in the field, the more popular he became amongst the people
  - Even the citizens within the walls of Rome were daily taunting Maxentius for being a weak and ridiculous ruler
- In 312, at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (the one bridge across the Tiber into Rome that Maxentius hadn't *completely* destroyed to protect the routes into Rome), a desperate Maxentius went out to engage Constantine, while his troops still outnumbered Constantine's 2 to 1
  - The night before the battle, Constantine had a vision...





# ***The Ancient Church***

- Funky little teaching moment—
  - Constantine was told in his dream that he should put the “heavenly sign” on his men's shields, and that “*in hoc signo vinces*” (“in this sign, you will conquer”), and then he was shown the sign...
  - Eusebius described it this way—
  - Lactantius described it this way—
  - *Either way, it's what we call the “Chi-Rho”*



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- **X** or “*Chi*”
- **P** or “*Rho*”
  - The first two letters in the Greek word, *Χριστός* (or “Christ”)





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    - Interestingly, after using the *Chi-Rho* as its own standard for years, the Roman Church later changed its use to the use of the *christogram*—

IHS

- Based on the Latinized transliteration of the first three letters in the Greek name, “*Ἰησοῦς*” (i.e.; “*IHSOVS*”)



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  - **Constantine followed the directions, put the sign on everyone’s shields, and won the day against Maxentius, using his cavalry to push the emperor’s troops into the Tiber, drowning Maxentius**





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    - They fished the emperor’s body out of the river, chopped off his head, and carried it through the streets of Rome, with everyone in the city cheering them on
    - Maxentius was declared a “tyrant” by the Senate, and all of his decisions and public works were either rescinded or rededicated to Constantine, as the new emperor of Rome



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- Though he didn't declare himself a Christian until 314, he *did* issue the Edict of Milan in 313, which officially ended all persecution against the Church and extended an open and welcoming tolerance toward Christianity as a valid religion on a empire-wide level
  - For the first time, the Church had a strong, Christian emperor and official legal status *at the same time*—and we can rightfully say that Christendom had dawned...

