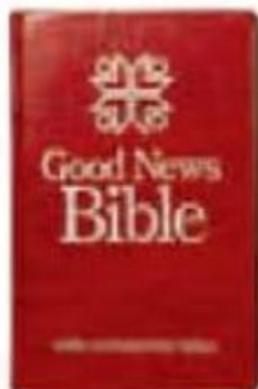




EYEWITNESS BOOKS



CHRISTIANITY

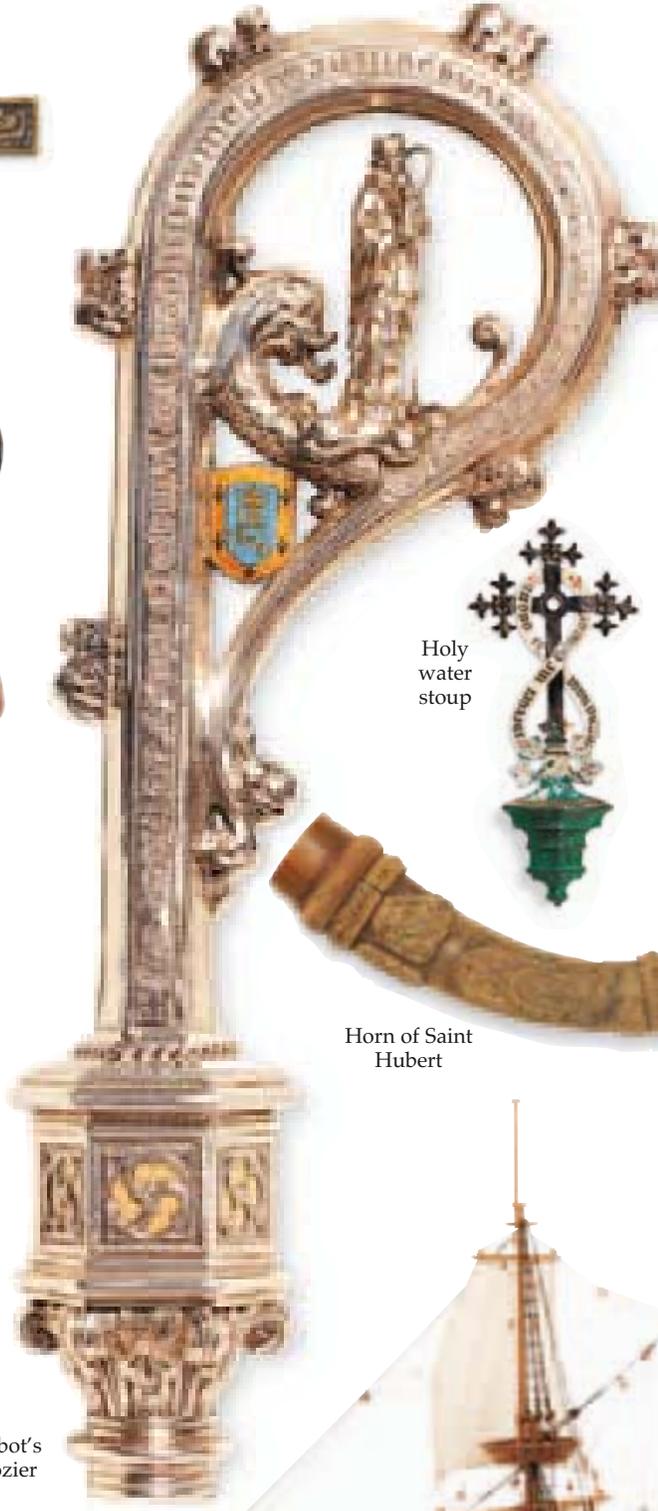
Discover the world of the Christian faith —
from its origins to its role in the 21st century

Eyewitness CHRISTIANITY

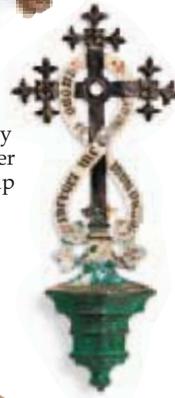




Russian Orthodox icons



Abbot's crozier



Holy water stoup



Stained-glass fragment depicting the Madonna and Child



Horn of Saint Hubert



Salvation Army song leader playing a cornet

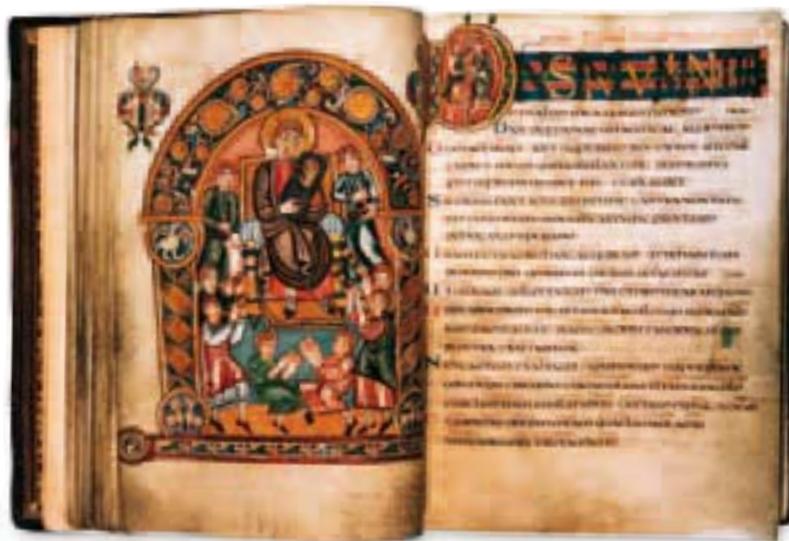


Model of the *Mayflower*

Eyewitness CHRISTIANITY

Written by
PHILIP WILKINSON

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STEVE TEAGUE



Illuminated Latin psalter





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Carving of
an angel
swinging
a censer



Censer and
incense
boat on
stand



Gargoyle



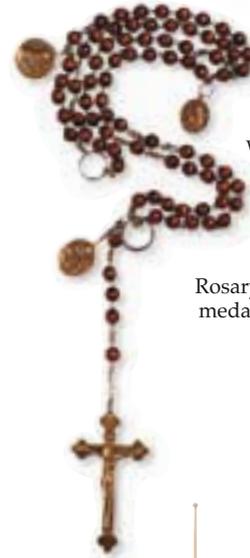
Censer and
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boat on
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Statue of
Saint Joseph



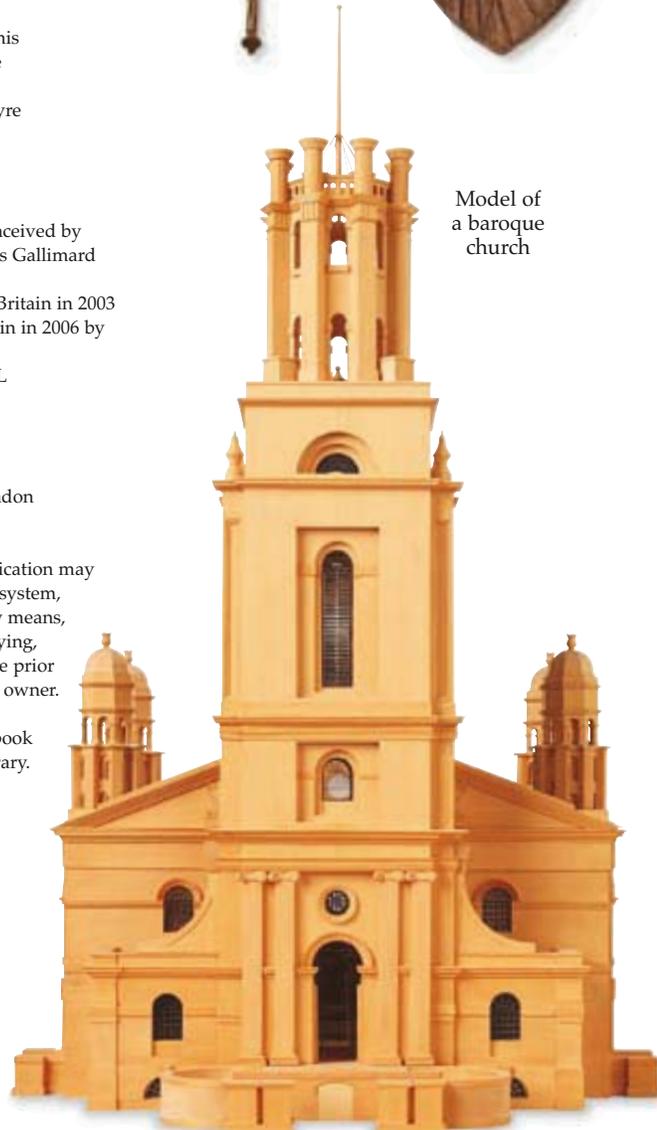
Bread and wine for
Holy Communion



Rosary
with medals



Rosary
medal



Model of
a baroque
church

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Abbot in
ceremonial
robes

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In the beginning

THE BIBLE BEGINS WITH stories of the creation of the world and the early Jewish people. These books, which make up the Old Testament of the Christian Bible, and which are also sacred to the Jews, were written by Jewish scribes long before the birth of Jesus. For the Jews they are important because they describe the covenant, or special relationship, between God and the Jewish people. For Christians the Old Testament has added significance because many of the stories seem to prefigure, or mirror, events that happened later when Jesus came to save humankind from sin.



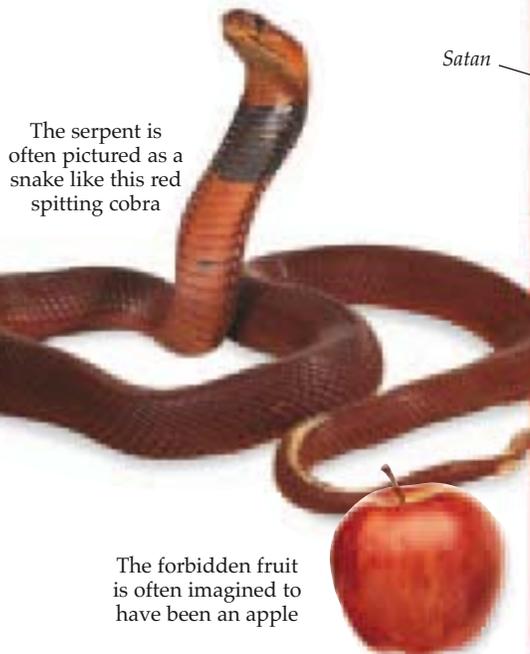
4th-century depiction of Adam and Eve in Eden

FORBIDDEN FRUIT

Genesis, the first book of the Bible (p. 20), tells how God created Heaven and Earth, land and water, animals and birds, and finally Adam and Eve – the first man and woman. God put them in the Garden of Eden, and told them that the only fruit they must not eat was the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.

ENEMY IN EDEN

Satan, who lived in Hell (pp. 26–27), was God’s archenemy. Early Jewish writers said that the serpent in the Garden of Eden, a cunning tempter, was Satan in disguise. In the Book of Genesis, the serpent tempts Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, just as Satan later tempted Jesus in the New Testament.



The serpent is often pictured as a snake like this red spitting cobra

Satan

The forbidden fruit is often imagined to have been an apple

ORIGINAL SIN

The serpent tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, and Adam followed suit. God was angry at their disobedience and threw them out of the Garden of Eden. Christians believe that Adam and Eve, and their descendants, were tainted with this “original sin”. Only the coming of Jesus Christ would eventually offer humankind a way of escaping sin and achieving everlasting life with God.

This 12th-century painting of Satan shows him with Saint Michael

Saint Michael is weighing souls to determine whether they should go to Heaven or Hell





The dove brought Noah a leaf to show that the flood waters were going down

THE GREAT FLOOD

Another story in Genesis tells how God became disenchanted with all the evil in the world, and sent a great flood to destroy much of the wickedness. Only one good man, Noah, was allowed to escape with his family. He built a great boat, the ark, in which he, his sons and their wives, and all the birds and animals took refuge. Christians think of Noah as the second father of the human race, after Adam.

Mosaic of Noah and his family in the ark



“Don’t hurt the boy or do anything to him. Now I know that you honour and obey God.”

GENESIS 22:12
Angel of the Lord to Abraham



God provided a ram for Abraham’s sacrifice

SACRIFICIAL RAM

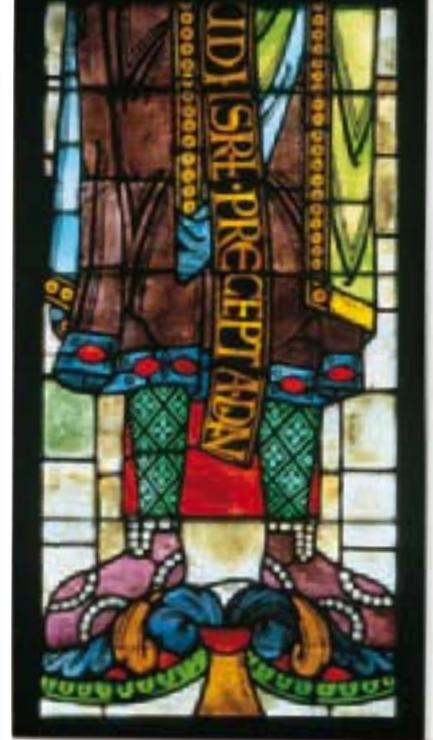
God ordered Abraham to kill his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Abraham was about to obey when an angel told him to stop and kill a ram instead. Christians see this story as a prophecy of the way in which God would sacrifice Jesus.



Daniel window from Augsburg Cathedral in Germany



Isaiah window from Augsburg Cathedral in Germany



Moses window from Augsburg Cathedral in Germany

PROPHETS AND LEADERS

The Old Testament contains stories about Jewish ancestors such as Abraham and the great leader Moses, who guided the Jews from slavery in Egypt back to their homeland. The Old Testament also includes writings about and by prophets such as Isaiah and Daniel, who told of the coming of a Messiah, or saviour.

The birth of Jesus



HUMBLE BEGINNINGS
Mary and Joseph were staying in Bethlehem at the time of the nativity, or birth, of Jesus. All the inns in the town were full, so Jesus had to be born in the humblest of surroundings – a stable.

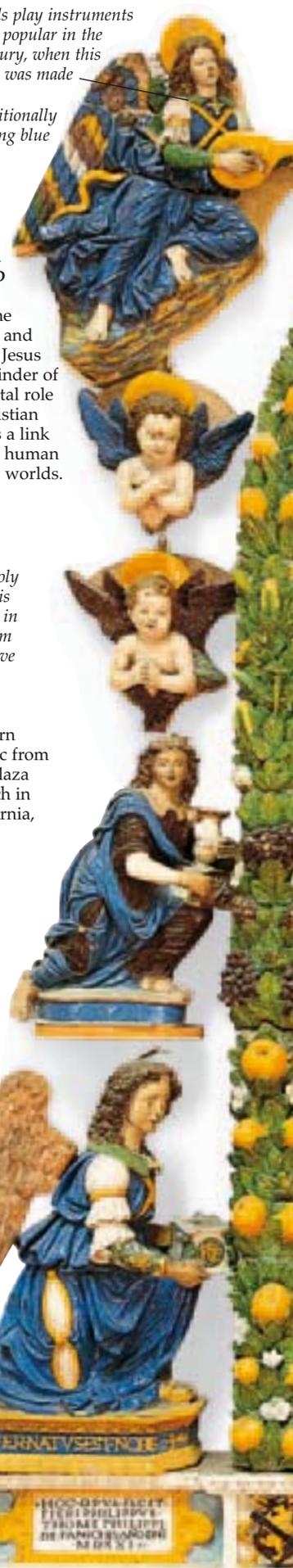
THE GOSPELS (p. 21) tell how a virgin called Mary gave birth to Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. Followers of Christ (Christians) believe that Jesus was God’s son, and that the prophets of the Old Testament had predicted he would come and save humankind from sin. The idea that God became human in this way is called the incarnation, meaning that God’s spirit was made into human flesh. The birth of Jesus marked the origin of the Christian religion.



The angels play instruments that were popular in the 16th century, when this altarpiece was made

Mary is traditionally shown wearing blue

MADONNA AND CHILD
Statues of Mary, or the Madonna, and the infant Jesus are a reminder of Mary’s vital role in the Christian story. She is a link between the human and spiritual worlds.



The Holy Spirit is shown in the form of a dove

Modern mosaic from Old Plaza Church in California, USA



THE ANNUNCIATION

Luke’s Gospel describes how the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to tell her that, even though she was a virgin, she was about to become pregnant. Gabriel announced that Mary would be visited by the Holy Spirit (p. 26) and would give birth to God’s son, who would be a king whose rule would last for ever. Mary was told to call her son Jesus.

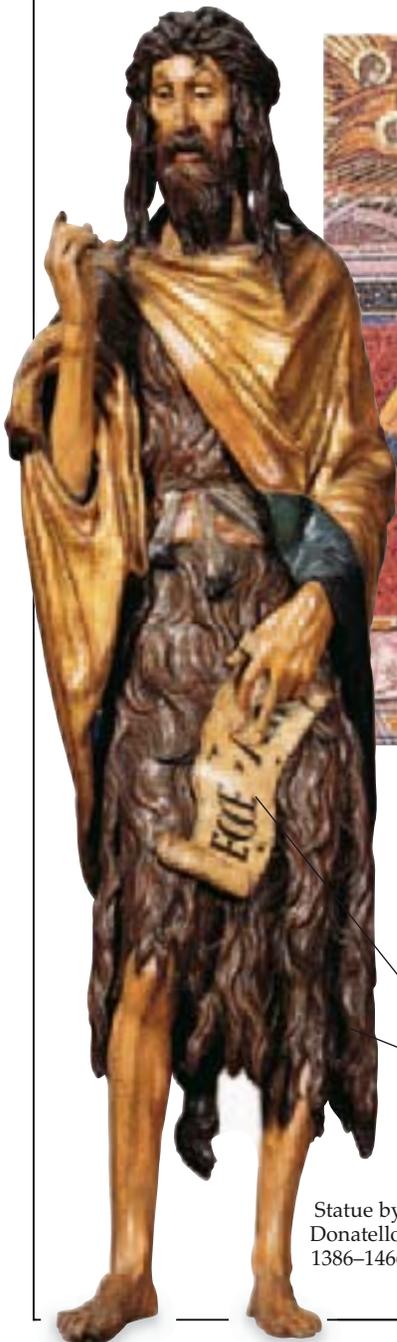
John carries a banner bearing Latin words meaning “Behold the Lamb of God”

John wears camel-hair clothes, the typical garments of a prophet

JOHN THE BAPTIST

John led the life of a prophet and preacher, encouraging people to repent their sins and be baptized. John’s preaching prepared the way for Jesus, and when Jesus grew up he asked John to baptize him in the River Jordan.

Statue by Donatello, 1386–1466



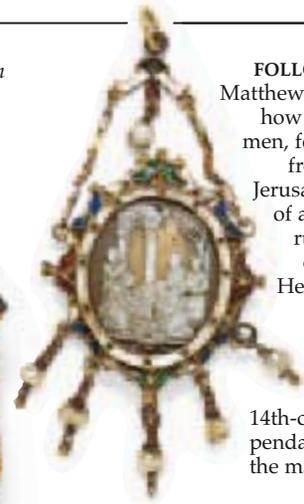
GLAD TIDINGS

Luke’s account of the nativity describes how angels appeared to shepherds in the fields just outside Bethlehem. The angels told them the good news of Jesus’ birth and the shepherds came down from the fields into the town to worship the newborn king. This story shows that Jesus is important to everyone, even “outsiders” like the shepherds.

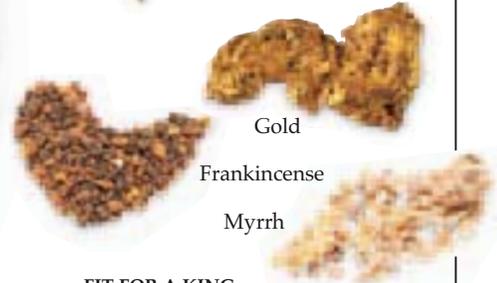


God looks down from Heaven

FOLLOW THE STAR
Matthew's Gospel tells how magi, or wise men, followed a star from the east to Jerusalem in search of a child born to rule the people of Israel. King Herod sent them to Bethlehem, where they found Jesus.



14th-century pendant showing the magi with Jesus



Gold

Frankincense

Myrrh

FIT FOR A KING

The magi worshipped Jesus and gave him three gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The symbolism of these gifts may be interpreted in different ways. One interpretation is that gold represents riches, frankincense kingship, and myrrh a special spiritual calling.

The shepherds watch their flocks of sheep

15th-century stained glass from Ulm Cathedral in Germany



ROYAL RIVALRY

King Herod ruled the Holy Land on behalf of the Romans. According to Matthew, he tried to destroy Jesus, whom he saw as a rival to his throne. Herod told his men to kill all the children in Bethlehem who were less than two years old. God warned Joseph of this, and he escaped with Mary and Jesus to Egypt.

Mary, her husband Joseph, and the baby Jesus

Glazed earthenware altarpiece made by Giovanni della Robbia, 1521



FISHERS OF MEN

As this Italian mosaic shows, Andrew and Simon were fishermen. Jesus called them to be his disciples, telling them that, if they followed him, he would teach them to catch people (enlist new followers of Christ) instead of fish.

The teachings of Jesus

JESUS' MINISTRY – his period of teaching – probably lasted no more than three years, but it had an enormous impact. During this short time he preached, taught, and performed miracles in the Holy Land, especially in the villages around the Sea of Galilee. Jesus was a brilliant teacher who could explain things in ways that everyone could understand. His teachings attracted many followers because they revealed a new way of looking at God's kingdom. He said it was open to all believers who would turn away from their sins, including the poor, the sick, and social outcasts.



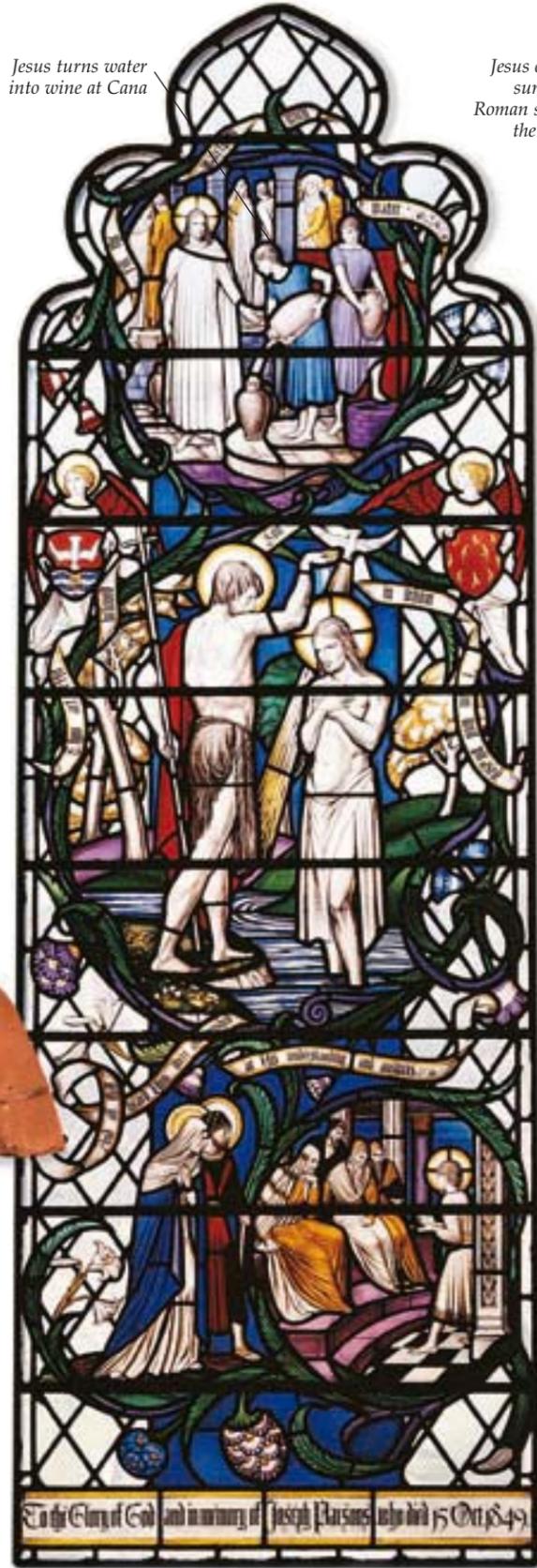
GOD'S OWN SON

The Gospels describe how, when Jesus was baptized (p. 58), the Holy Spirit came down like a dove and God's voice was heard saying, "This is my own dear Son". This momentous event, shown here in a 5th-century mosaic from Ravenna in Italy, marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

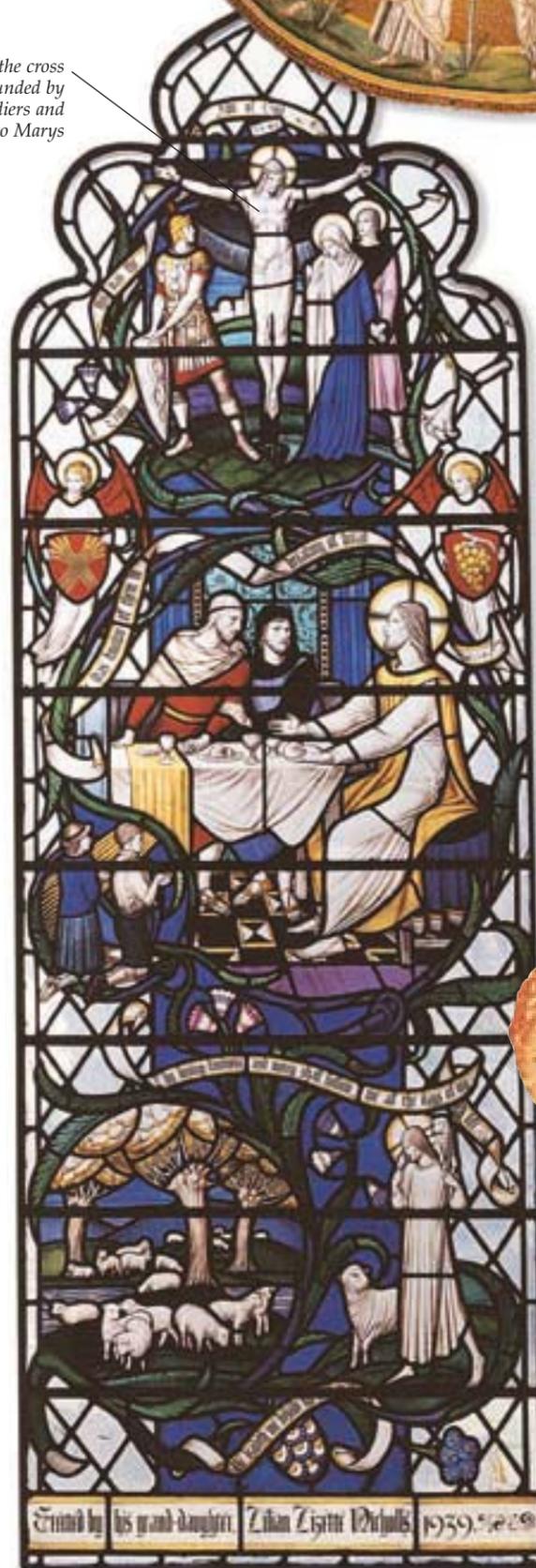


HUMBLE LEADER

Jesus called 12 disciples to be his special companions. They were expected to leave their families and possessions to follow and help Jesus, and carry on his work after his death. When he washed the disciples' feet, as shown on this French manuscript, Jesus was showing them that they should be as humble as their leader.



Jesus turns water into wine at Cana

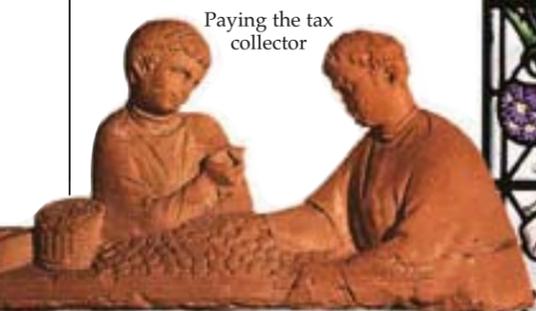


Jesus on the cross surrounded by Roman soldiers and the two Marys

A LIFE IN GLASS

This window from St Albans Cathedral in Hertfordshire, England, shows key episodes from the life of Jesus. It includes his baptism, the water into wine miracle, and the crucifixion. The bottom right-hand panel of the window shows Jesus as a shepherd, a symbol of the way in which he cared for the people around him.

Paying the tax collector



TAX COLLECTORS

Some members of a Jewish group called the Pharisees tried to trick Jesus into criticizing the Roman authorities. They asked him whether it was right that they should pay taxes to the Romans. Jesus showed them the emperor's portrait on the coins and said that they should give



CALMING WATERS

Jesus grew up in Nazareth, but moved to Capernaum, on the banks of the Sea of Galilee, where he began his ministry. Jesus did much of his teaching in this region, and one of his miracles was the calming of a storm on the lake's waters. When he wanted a quiet place to pray, Jesus travelled into the local hills, which can be seen in the background of this photograph of the Sea of Galilee's northern shore.

The miracles

The Gospels describe more than 30 of Jesus' miracles. Some of these involved feeding the needy, others were "nature miracles", such as calming the storm or walking on the water. But the majority involved some sort of healing – either curing people of physical diseases like leprosy and paralysis or "casting out demons" to rid people of mental illness. The Gospels record three occasions when Jesus even raised people from the dead.

WATER INTO WINE

Jesus' first miracle, which is described in John's Gospel, took place at a wedding that he attended at Cana in Galilee. When the wine ran out, Jesus told the servants to fill six large pots with water, and when they poured the liquid out of the pots it had turned into wine. The wine was so good that the guests thought the bridegroom had kept the best until last.



Terracotta jars for storing water



FEEDING THE MULTITUDE

This is the only miracle described in all four of the Gospels. After a long day's preaching, Jesus and the disciples wished to rest, but they were followed by a vast crowd who wanted to hear Jesus speak. Jesus felt sorry that the crowd had no food, and produced enough for all of them from the only available foodstuffs – five small loaves and two fishes.

Parables and lessons

Jesus' favourite way of teaching was to use parables – short stories that make their point by means of a simple comparison. Jesus used these parables to talk about the kingdom of God, and to illustrate how people should behave towards each other. Jesus also preached moral lectures called sermons. The most famous of these was the Sermon on the Mount, in which he explained the key features of the kingdom of God (p. 26) and the Christian way of life. Above all, Jesus said that you should “Do for others what you want them to do for you”.



THE LOST SON

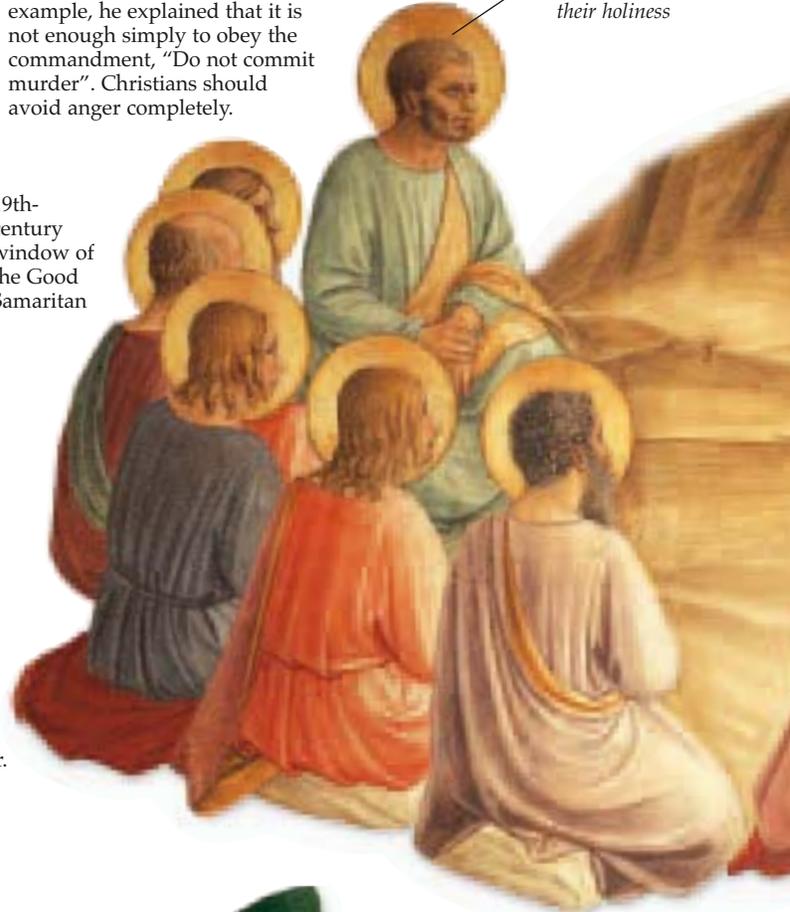
This parable tells of a man who divided his wealth between his two sons. The younger son went off and spent his share, while his brother worked hard at home. When the younger son returned, his father killed his prize calf for a celebratory feast. The elder son objected, but his father said, “He was lost, but now he has been found”. These Chinese illustrations show the story from the handing over of the money to the family feast.

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

In this sermon Jesus said that members of God's kingdom should try to achieve the perfection shown by God. For example, he explained that it is not enough simply to obey the commandment, “Do not commit murder”. Christians should avoid anger completely.

The disciples have haloes, to indicate their holiness

19th-century window of the Good Samaritan



THE GOOD SAMARITAN

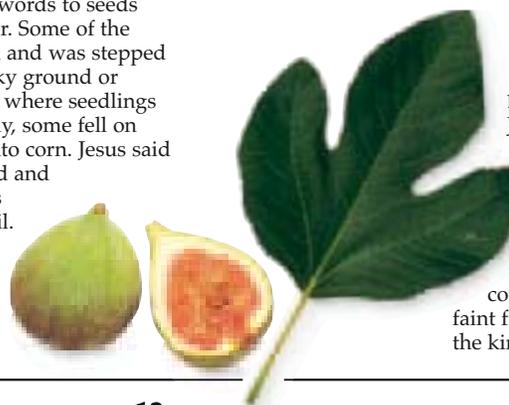
Jesus taught that you should love your neighbour. When someone asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbour?” he told this story: A man was robbed and left for dead. A Jewish priest and a Levite passed, but did not help. Then a Samaritan – a member of a group scorned by the Jews – came by. He helped the injured man and took him to safety. The Samaritan was the true neighbour.

PLANTING WORDS

Jesus compared his words to seeds scattered by a farmer. Some of the seed fell on the path and was stepped on. Some fell on rocky ground or among thorn bushes, where seedlings could not grow. Finally, some fell on good soil and grew into corn. Jesus said that people who heard and understood his words were like the good soil.



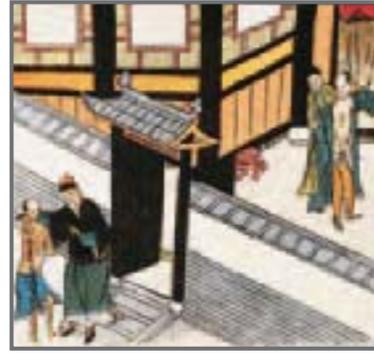
Sower's bag and seeds



Figs and fig leaf

LESSON OF THE FIG TREE

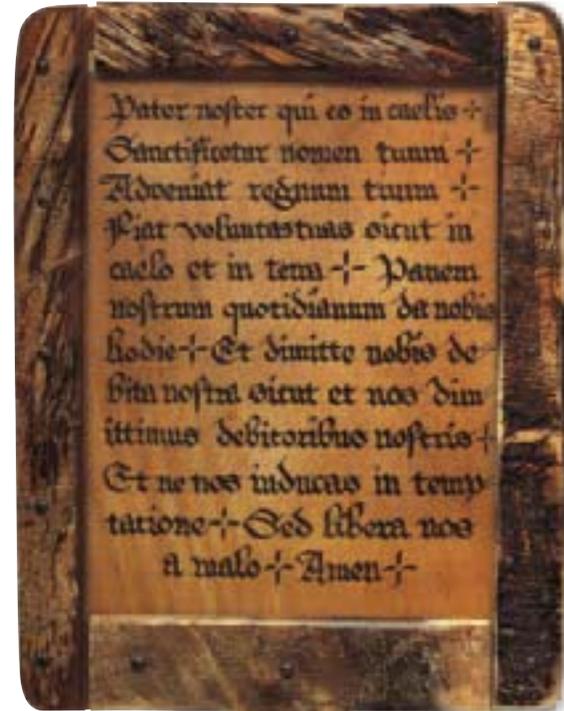
Jesus told people to think of a fig tree. When its leaves start to appear, people know that summer is on its way. Similarly, they should look out for signs of Jesus' second coming. When strange things happen to the moon and stars, when whole countries are in despair, and people are faint from fear, then they will know that the kingdom of God is about to come.



Jesus would probably have sat down to deliver the sermon

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Jesus gave his most important lesson about prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. He told his listeners not to pray ostentatiously with long, elaborate prayers – God knows what you need before you ask. Instead, he gave them the *Lord's Prayer* beginning, "Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name...". It has been translated into languages as diverse as Spanish and Chinese, and is repeated in Christian churches the world over.



Horn book with the text of the *Lord's Prayer* in Latin



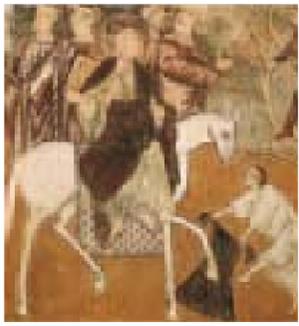
Common poppies

15th-century fresco by Fra Angelico

"Happy are those who are merciful to others; God will be merciful to them! Happy are the pure in heart; they will see God!"

MATTHEW 5:7-8
Jesus' Sermon on the Mount

FLOWERY FINERY
During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told his listeners that they should not care too much about everyday things like food and clothes. Wild flowers do not have fine garments, but they are still beautifully dressed. People should be concerned with God's kingdom, not with possessions or finery.



ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM
Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, as shown in this painting from the Oratory of Saint Pellegrino in Italy. Many people laid down palm leaves, or even their coats, to cover the dusty path in front of him. They were happy because the prophet Zechariah had predicted that their king would arrive on a donkey.

The crucifixion

JESUS WARNED HIS DISCIPLES several times that he would soon die. He told them that the Jewish chief priests would reject him, that he would be killed, and that he would rise again after three days. The disciples failed to understand these warnings, and were unprepared for what happened when Jesus went to Jerusalem. Jesus was put on trial and condemned to death on the cross. This is the most solemn part of the Christian story, but it is also the major turning point – Christians believe Jesus' blood was spilt so that they could be granted eternal life with God.



BODY AND BLOOD

At the last supper with his disciples, Jesus broke the bread and told them to eat it, saying, "This is my body". He then gave them the wine, saying, "This is my blood". When Christians celebrate Communion (pp. 52–53) they remember or recreate these events.

Jesus is shown with the marks of the nails in his palms

Christ looks triumphant, not suffering

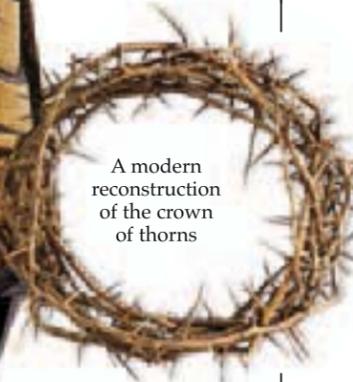
ON THE CROSS
In Jesus' time crucifixion was the normal way in which the Romans imposed the death sentence. Jesus was crucified between two criminals, and the Gospels recall that his death took about three hours – much faster than usual. At the point of Jesus' death the curtain in the Temple in Jerusalem was torn in two and an earthquake shook the ground.

10th-century crucifix from Denmark, made of gilded carved oak

Rosary medal showing Jesus carrying his cross



A modern reconstruction of the crown of thorns



THE ROAD TO CALVARY
Jesus was flogged and mocked before his death. Because he had been called King of the Jews he was forced to wear a crown of thorns. He was made to carry his heavy cross along the steep road to Calvary, the place of crucifixion. Jesus tried but he was too weak, so a spectator, Simon of Cyrene, carried it for him.



Rosary medal showing Jesus wearing the crown of thorns

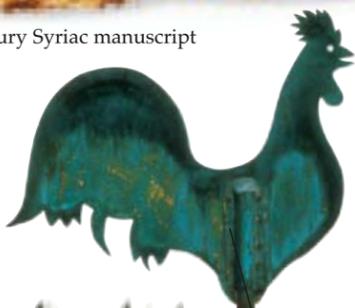
14



13th-century Syriac manuscript

THE LAST SUPPER

At the time of Jesus' arrest it was Passover – the festival that celebrates the freeing of the Jews from slavery and looks forward to the coming of the Messiah. Jesus told his disciples to arrange a Passover meal. He said that this would be the last meal he would share with them and that one of them would soon betray him.



Many churches have a cockerel weather vane to remind us of the denial



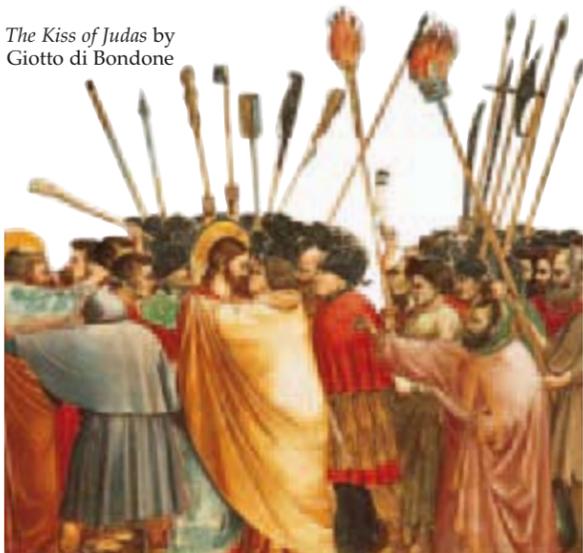
IN DENIAL

Jesus was taken to the High Priest, Caiaphas, and was put before the supreme Jewish council. As the disciple Peter sat outside he was accused three times of being one of Jesus' followers, but he denied it each time. A cockerel crowed as Peter made his third denial. Jesus had told Peter that this would happen.

A CONDEMNED MAN

The council elders took Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, who had the power to impose the death penalty. Jesus was accused of setting himself up as King of the Jews but, when asked about this, Jesus simply said, "So you say". Pilate was unwilling to condemn Jesus, and said the crowd could choose one prisoner to be set free. But they refused to release Jesus.

The Kiss of Judas by Giotto di Bondone



JUDAS KISS

After the last supper, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane. His disciple Judas Iscariot arrived with Roman soldiers and the Jewish Temple guard. Judas greeted Jesus with a kiss – a signal he had agreed with the soldiers. The soldiers arrested Jesus, who told his disciples not to resist but to accept God's will.

15

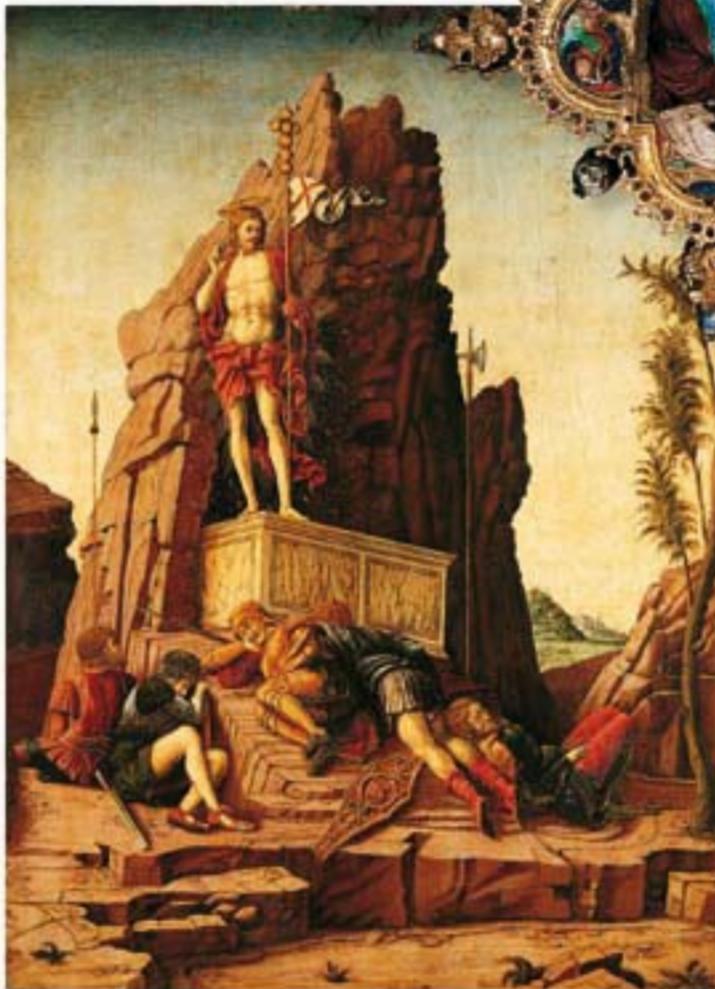


The resurrection

STRONG SYMBOL
The resurrection is one of the most important parts of the Christian story. It is often depicted symbolically, as in the case of this embroidered decoration from a priest's clothing.

his followers behaved. Most Christians believe that Jesus joined God in Heaven, where he will stay until the last judgement (p. 26).

CHRISTIANS BELIEVE that on the third day after his crucifixion Jesus rose from the dead. The Gospels (p. 21) describe how, when he appeared to his disciples after the resurrection, some of them did not recognize him. Jesus' body seemed to have changed, and he apparently was able to appear and disappear at will. Christians believe in the resurrection in different ways. Some are convinced that the risen Jesus was literally alive on Earth. Others believe his presence was a spiritual one, seen only in the ways in which



RISEN FROM THE DEAD
Pontius Pilate ordered soldiers to guard Jesus' tomb in case the disciples came to take away his body. But the Gospels tell how, on the third day after the crucifixion, Jesus rose from the dead while the guards slept. This set of three 15th-century Italian paintings (see also opposite) shows Jesus rising from a Roman-style sarcophagus, or tomb, set into the rocks.

John, whose symbol is an eagle

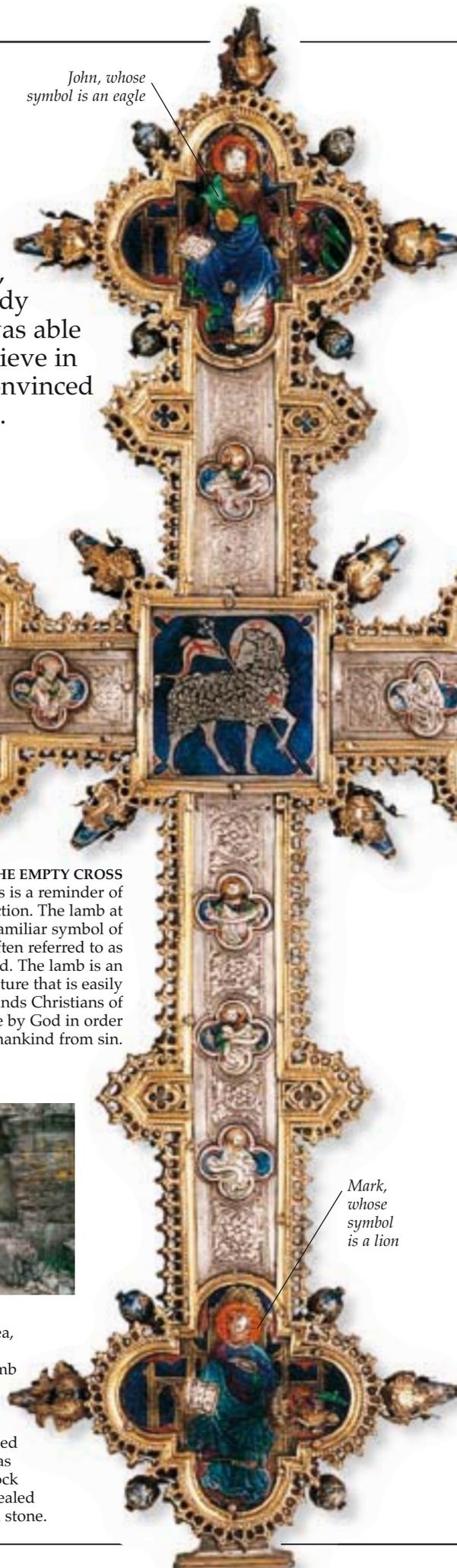
Matthew, whose symbol is a man

Mark, whose symbol is a lion



ROCK TOMB
Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus, offered his own tomb for Jesus' burial. This tomb was probably similar to the one above. Called an arcosolium, it has been cut into the rock of a cliff face and sealed with a large, round stone.

THE EMPTY CROSS
An empty cross is a reminder of Jesus' resurrection. The lamb at the centre is a familiar symbol of Jesus, who is often referred to as the Lamb of God. The lamb is an innocent creature that is easily killed, so it reminds Christians of the sacrifice made by God in order to redeem humankind from sin.





SUPPER AT EMMAUS

Shortly after the resurrection, Jesus met two of his disciples near a village called Emmaus. The pair did not recognize him, but invited him to supper with other disciples. It was only when Jesus broke the bread and blessed it that they recognized him. Then he disappeared from their sight.

Illustration from a 15th-century Italian Bible

Jesus is shown surrounded by clouds and angels

DOUBTING THOMAS

The disciple Thomas said that he would believe in Jesus' resurrection only if he saw the wounds that Jesus had received when he was crucified. John's Gospel recalls that, when Jesus met the disciples, he showed Thomas his wounds.



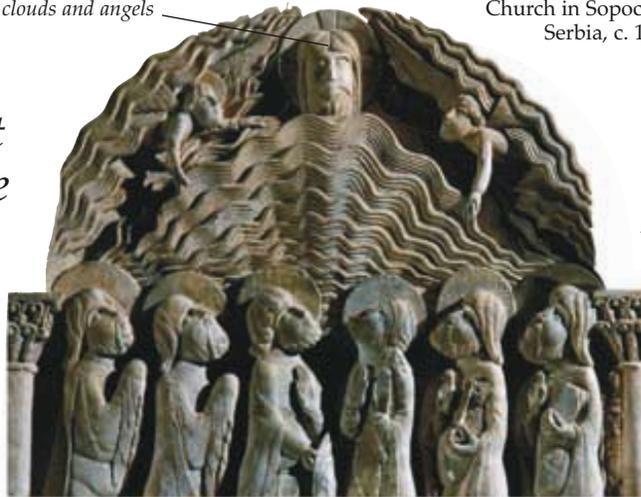
Mural from the Holy Trinity Church in Sopocani, Serbia, c. 1265

"The Messiah must suffer and must rise from death three days later."

LUKE 24:46

Jesus to his disciples

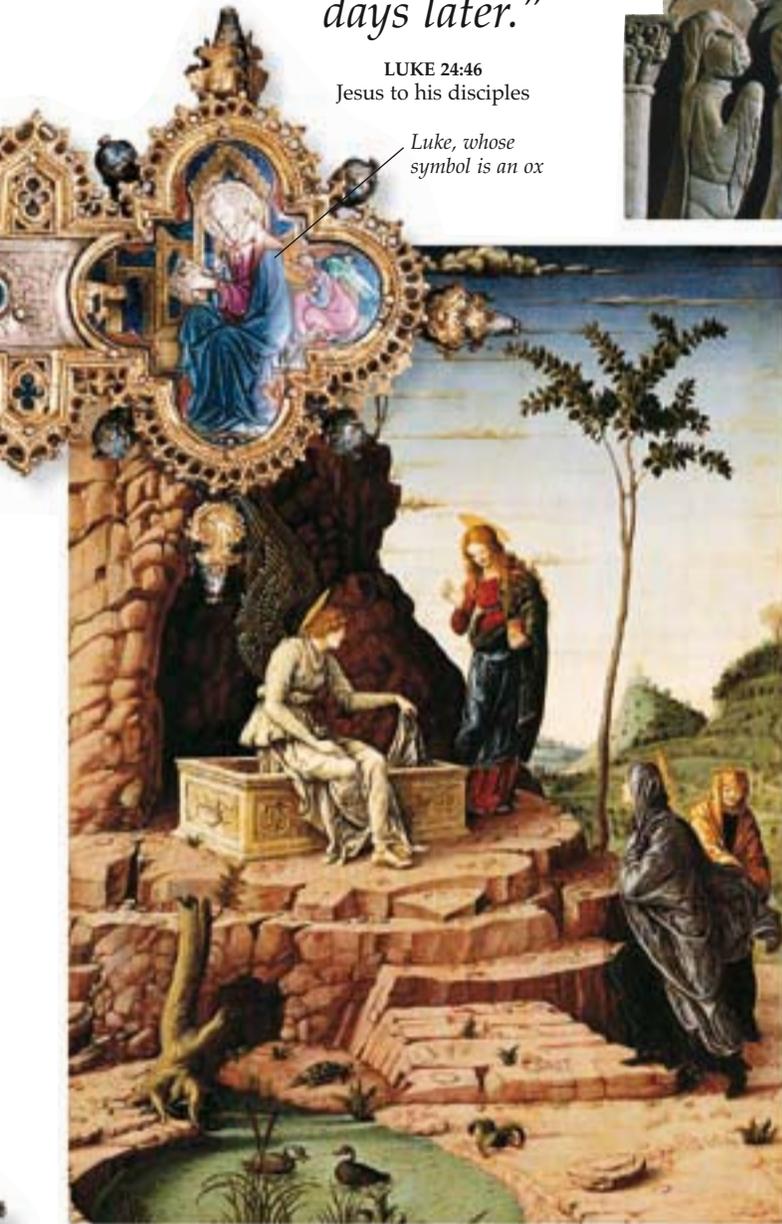
Luke, whose symbol is an ox



THE ASCENSION

The Gospels and another New Testament book called Acts record that, after telling his disciples to spread the word (pp. 18-19), Jesus joined his Father in Heaven. He was raised up into the sky and then vanished behind a cloud.

12th-century stone relief from Saint Dominic's Abbey in Silos, Spain



THE EMPTY TOMB

A group of women, probably including Jesus' follower Mary Magdalene, went to the tomb to anoint his body with spices. When they arrived, they found the tomb open and empty. An angel appeared to them and told them that Jesus had risen from the dead. In Matthew's account of this story, the amazing news was accompanied by an earthquake.



LOOKING FOR JESUS

John's Gospel contains a moving account of Mary Magdalene's search for Jesus' body. As she wept at his disappearance, a man appeared whom Mary believed to be a gardener. But when he spoke her name, she realized immediately that it was Jesus. He said, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet gone back up to the Father".

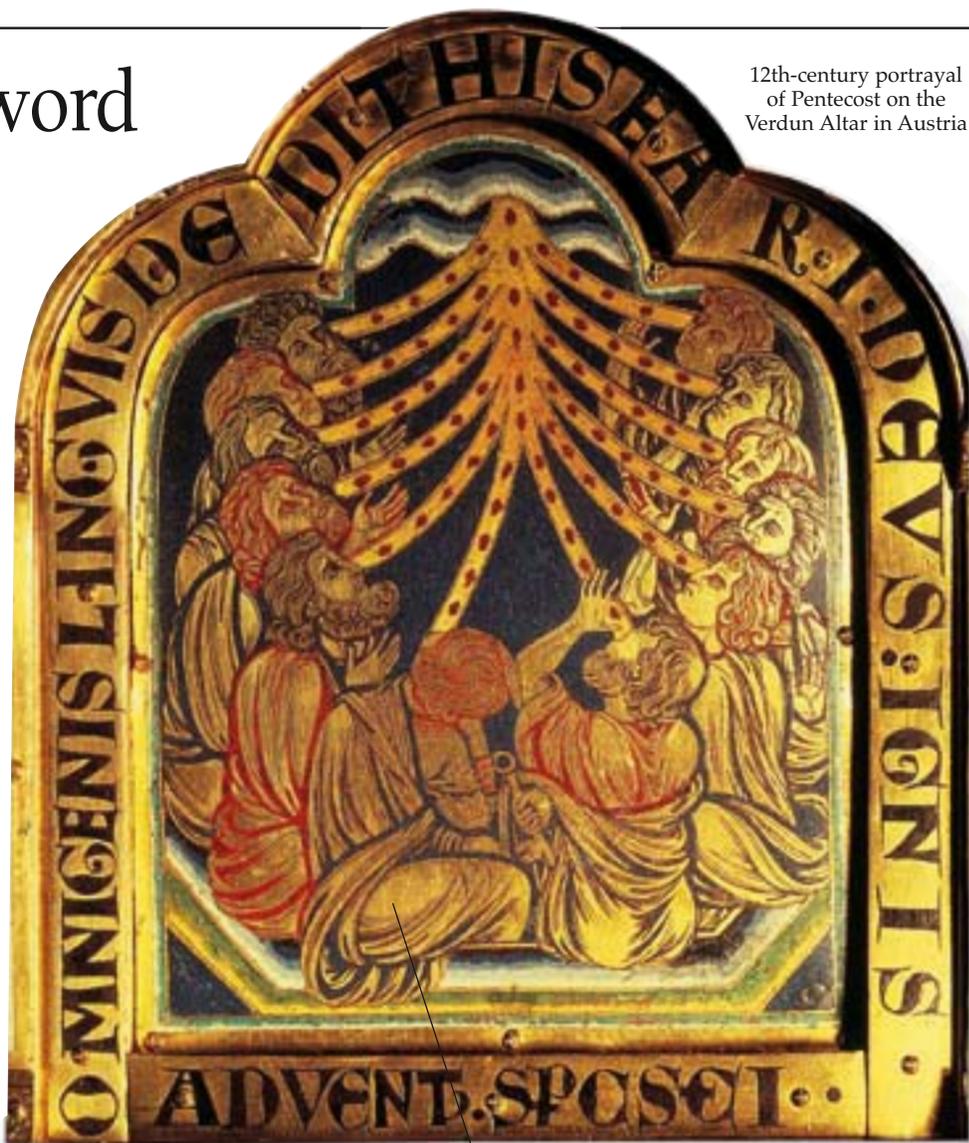
Spreading the word

12th-century portrayal of Pentecost on the Verdun Altar in Austria

IN THE DECADES following Jesus' crucifixion, his disciples continued his work of teaching and preaching. Saint Paul was the most important of these early preachers. He founded churches around the Mediterranean, and his letters to these and other churches make up many of the books of the New Testament. These letters have proved a source of inspiration to the countless others who have come after Paul and who have worked to spread Christianity around the world.

TONGUES LIKE FIRE

The Book of Acts describes how the disciples were gathered together for an ancient Jewish festival called Pentecost. There was a sound like a wind blowing through the room, and tongues like fire spread out and touched each disciple, filling them with the Holy Spirit. Pentecost took on a new significance to Christians after this day.



The seated disciples are surrounded by tongues like flame



PASSIONATE SAINT PETER

Peter, as pictured on this 1430s Italian prayer book, was one of the leaders of the disciples. At Pentecost, he spoke passionately to the others, telling them that they had been visited by the Holy Spirit and saying that Jesus had risen from the dead and was the Messiah promised by God.



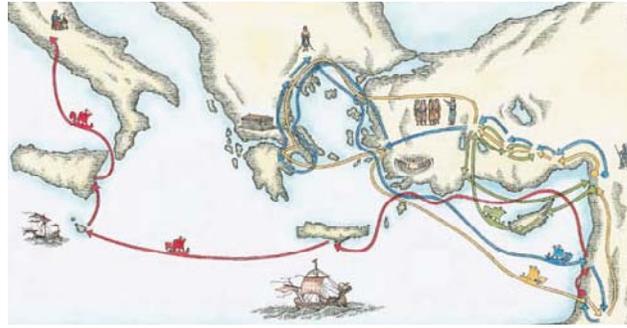
Catacombs of Priscilla, Rome, Italy

PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

After Pentecost, the Christian community started to grow, and Peter began to allow non-Jews to join the church. The Roman authorities did not approve of Christianity, however, and many believers were persecuted. When the faith spread to Rome itself, many Christians kept their beliefs secret, even going down into the catacombs (underground tombs) to worship.

Saint Paul

Saul was a Roman citizen and a Jew. He persecuted Christians and was present at the death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr (someone who dies for their faith). While on a journey to Damascus in Syria, Saul was temporarily blinded by a dazzling light, and he heard the voice of God asking him why he was attacking the church.

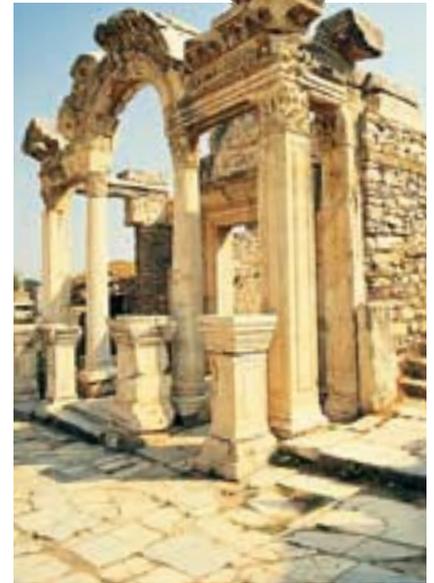


PAUL'S JOURNEYS

After his vision on the road to Damascus, Saul converted to Christianity and took the name Paul. He travelled around the Mediterranean, converting people to Christianity and setting up churches. As shown by this map, Paul's journeys took him to Cyprus, Turkey, Macedonia, and Greece.

ANCIENT EPHESUS

The ancient city of Ephesus (now in Turkey) was the site of one of the most important churches founded by Paul. His letter to the Ephesians encourages unity, and tells believers to follow the Christian path.



THE FIRST CHRISTIANS

For some time, Paul taught in the city of Antioch in Syria, where this church was built many years later. Paul sometimes referred to Jesus as Christ, meaning "the Anointed One", so from this time on believers became known as Christians.

EASTERN EMPEROR

Justinian I, a Christian emperor, ruled the eastern, or Byzantine, empire from 527 to 565. He encouraged religious tolerance, tried to make peace between the rival Christian sects that existed at the time, and built churches in his capital city of Constantinople (now Istanbul in Turkey).



Coin depicting Justinian I

CONSTANTINE THE CONVERT

In 312, Constantine I became emperor of Rome. The following year, he became a Christian and passed the *Edict of Milan*, which proclaimed that Christians should be tolerated not persecuted. The faith could now spread with ease across the vast Roman empire.



Coin depicting Constantine I

SAINT PAUL'S LEGACY

Ever since Saint Paul went on his journeys, Christians have travelled around the world preaching the faith. Much of this missionary activity took place in the 19th century, with Europeans like Charles Creed preaching in countries such as New Zealand, as pictured here.



God's book

WHO WROTE THE BIBLE?

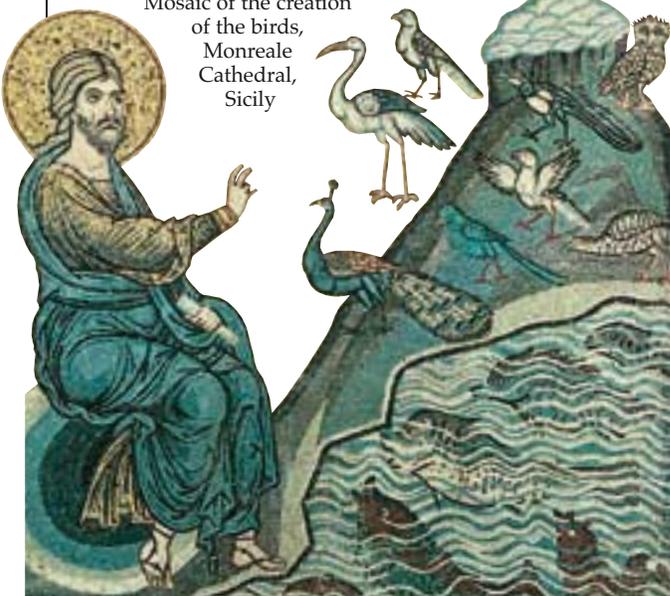
The Bible was actually written by many different people. The books of the Old Testament were written by unknown scribes over hundreds of years. The authors of the New Testament were early Christians. Scribes later made copies of these original texts by hand using quill pens.

Quill pens and ink horns



THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE consists of more than 60 separate books written over many centuries. These books are divided into two main groups. The Old Testament contains the history and sacred writings of the Jewish people before the time of Jesus, which are sacred to Jews as well as to Christians. The New Testament deals mainly with Jesus and his early followers. The original texts (the Old Testament written in Hebrew and Aramaic, and the New in Greek) were translated into modern languages by biblical scholars in the 20th century (pp. 34–35).

Mosaic of the creation of the birds, Monreale Cathedral, Sicily



THE FIRST FIVE

The first five books of the Bible describe the creation of the universe and tell stories of the earliest Jewish ancestors. One of the most important stories relates how the Jewish leader Moses received the tablets of law, or ten commandments, from God. It is sometimes claimed that Moses was the author of these books.

GETTING HISTORICAL

Many of the Old Testament books are historical, following the fate of the Jewish people over hundreds of years. These historical writings describe events in the lives of notable kings, such as Solomon, who was famously visited from afar by the Queen of Sheba and her entourage.

HOLY PLACE

Built by King Solomon, the Temple in Jerusalem was the holiest of all places to the Jews. It was destroyed by the Babylonians, but the Jews eventually restored it. In the Roman period, the Temple was rebuilt again by Herod the Great. Luke's Gospel describes Jesus visiting this temple as a boy.

Artist's impression of Solomon's Temple in the time of Christ



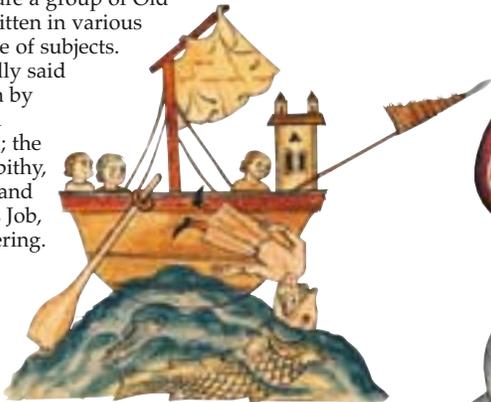
2,500-year-old carved head of a woman from Sheba



13th-century illustration of David playing a harp

WORDS OF WISDOM

The wisdom books are a group of Old Testament books written in various styles and on a range of subjects. The Psalms (originally said to have been written by King David) contain poetry praising God; the Proverbs consist of pithy, instructive sayings; and other books, such as Job, discuss human suffering.



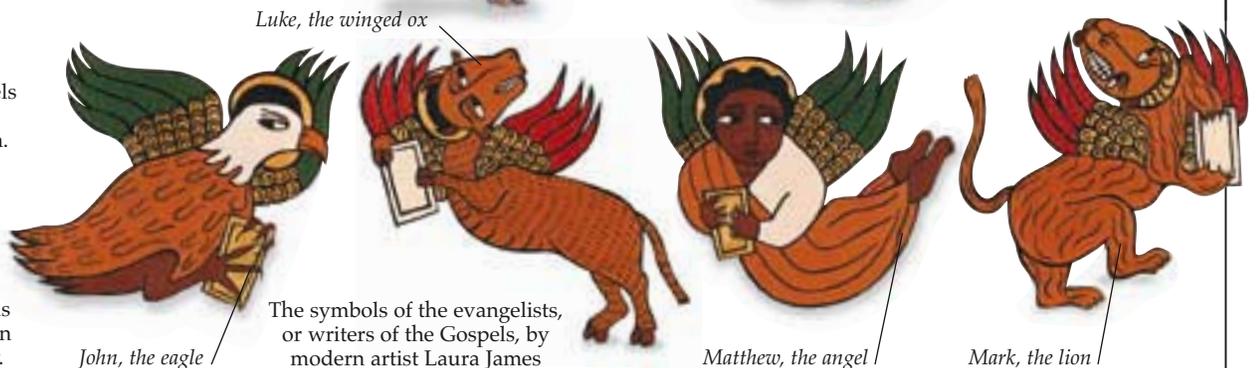
13th-century illustration of Jonah and the fish

STORY WITH A MORAL

God told the prophet Jonah to visit the city of Nineveh to persuade the people to repent their sins. When Jonah refused, God sent a storm. Jonah was thrown overboard from his ship, and was swallowed by a great fish. When the fish finally spewed Jonah onto dry land, the prophet went straight to Nineveh.

SEEING TOGETHER

The first four books of the New Testament – the Gospels – tell the story of Jesus’ life, crucifixion, and resurrection. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are very similar and are known as the “synoptic” (seeing together) Gospels. These were probably written soon after A.D. 65. John’s Gospel is thought to have been written at the end of the 1st century.



John, the eagle

The symbols of the evangelists, or writers of the Gospels, by modern artist Laura James

Matthew, the angel

Mark, the lion



THE WORDS OF THE PROPHETS
A large number of Old Testament books contain the sayings of prophets, such as Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel. These men brought messages from God, telling people about God’s will in relation to everything from everyday life to the future of the Jewish people. To early Christians, many of the prophets’ words seemed to predict the coming of Jesus.

Depiction of Jeremiah from a 12th-century wall painting from Cyprus

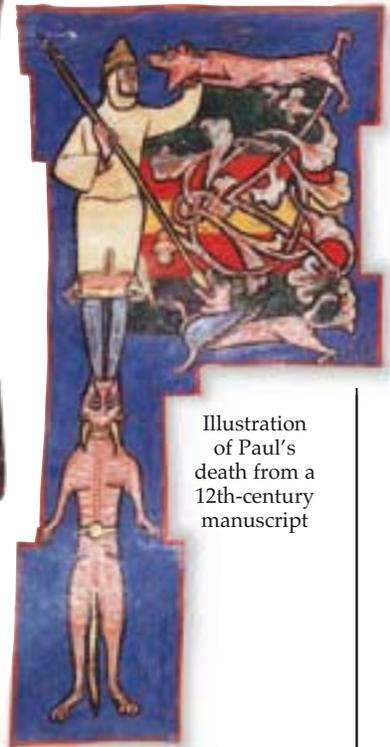


Illustration of Paul’s death from a 12th-century manuscript

WORK OF GOD

The later books of the New Testament are concerned mostly with the work of Jesus’ followers, who carried on his mission after the resurrection. This work is described both in the book of Acts and in the various epistles (letters) written by early church

Early Bible texts

The books of the Bible were first written down by hand in the local languages of the eastern Mediterranean – Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. When different scribes copied out the texts, small variations occurred. The books were then translated into other ancient languages, such as Syriac. As a result, scholars translating the Bible into modern languages have a range of different sources to refer to, which helps them to make their version as close as possible to the original.

GUIDANCE FROM GOD

The Hebrew Bible – the Torah plus other books of narrative, prophecy, and wisdom – also makes up the Old Testament of the Christian Bible. Jesus often referred to these ancient Jewish scriptures, calling them the Law or the Writings. The five books that make up the Torah are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. They are central to the Jewish faith, and Deuteronomy includes 613 commandments that Jews try to follow in their everyday lives.

Crown-like finials, or tips, indicate the importance of the Torah

Tik, or Torah case, commonly used by Spanish and eastern Jews

EARLIEST EXAMPLES

The Dead Sea Scrolls were found at Qumran in Jordan, on the edge of the Dead Sea, in 1947. They contain the earliest surviving manuscripts of most of the books of the Old Testament and also other texts in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic written down as early as the 2nd century B.C.



COVER UP

In the west, the Torah is usually kept in a cloth covering called a mantle. This is often embroidered with religious symbols. On this mantle, the crown is the symbol of the Torah, the Hebrew writing reads "Crown of the Torah", and the lions represent Judah, one of the tribes of Israel.



Pottery scroll jars

HIDDEN TREASURE

The original owners of the Dead Sea Scrolls were members of a Jewish group called the Essenes. They kept the texts in large pottery jars. When their area was overrun by the Romans, the Essenes hid the Scrolls, which lay undiscovered for almost 2,000 years. Most of the Scrolls were damaged, but they have helped modern Bible translators, and taught scholars much about life in the 1st century A.D.

"What gives life is God's spirit; human power is of no use at all. The words I have spoken to you bring God's life-giving spirit."

JOHN 6:63
Jesus to his followers

The text of the Torah is written in Hebrew on a continuous scroll



BOOK BINDER

Underneath the mantle, the Torah is bound with a cloth called a mappah. Beneath this band is the scroll containing the text of the Torah. This Hebrew text is read in all synagogues (Jewish places of worship) and Jews believe that, if they follow the Torah, they are following the guidance of God.



4th-century Greek text of Saint John's Gospel



ALL GREEK

The Gospels were written in the 1st century B.C. in Greek, a language shared by many early Christians. By this time, the Old Testament had been translated into Greek as well. The Greek Old Testament, called the *Septuagint*, was the version used by the earliest Christian communities and referred to in the Gospels.

SIMPLY SYRIAC

Translations of the Bible into Syriac appeared very early – probably in the 1st or 2nd century A.D. Called the *Peshitta* (meaning "simple"), the Syriac Bible has been used ever since in churches in Syria and neighbouring areas, and was the basis for translations into Persian and Arabic.

Later Bible texts

From the 4th to the 15th centuries, monks translated the Bible into Latin, the language of the western church. But the Reformation (pp. 34–35) brought a new demand for vernacular (local or current language) Bibles. People have been translating the Bible ever since, and today's translators try to be as accurate as possible while using words and phrases that are familiar to ordinary people.



Illuminated Bible with Latin text

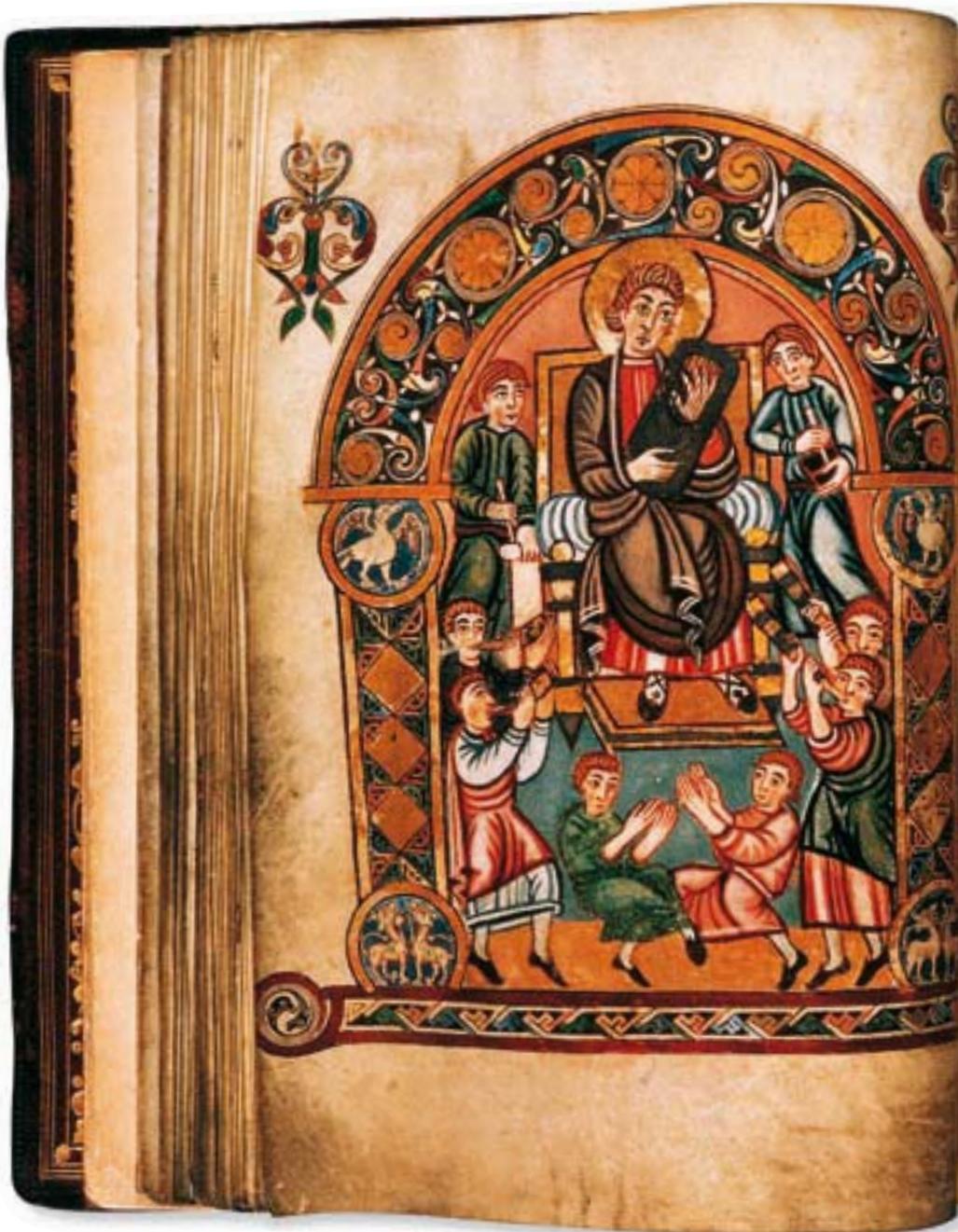
THE ONE AND ONLY

Several Latin translations of the Bible were made, but the most famous was the one called the Vulgate, made by Saint Jerome in the late-4th century at the request of the pope. In 1546, the Council of Trent, a meeting of church leaders, declared the Vulgate to be the only authentic Latin text of the Bible.

The text of the Gutenberg Bible is the Latin Vulgate translation



The coloured decorations in the Gutenberg Bible were added by hand after the text was printed

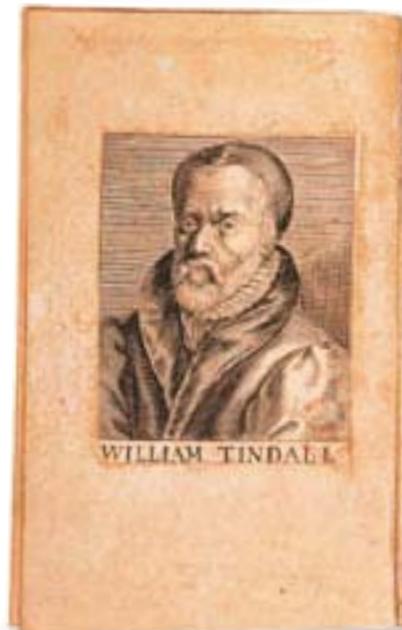


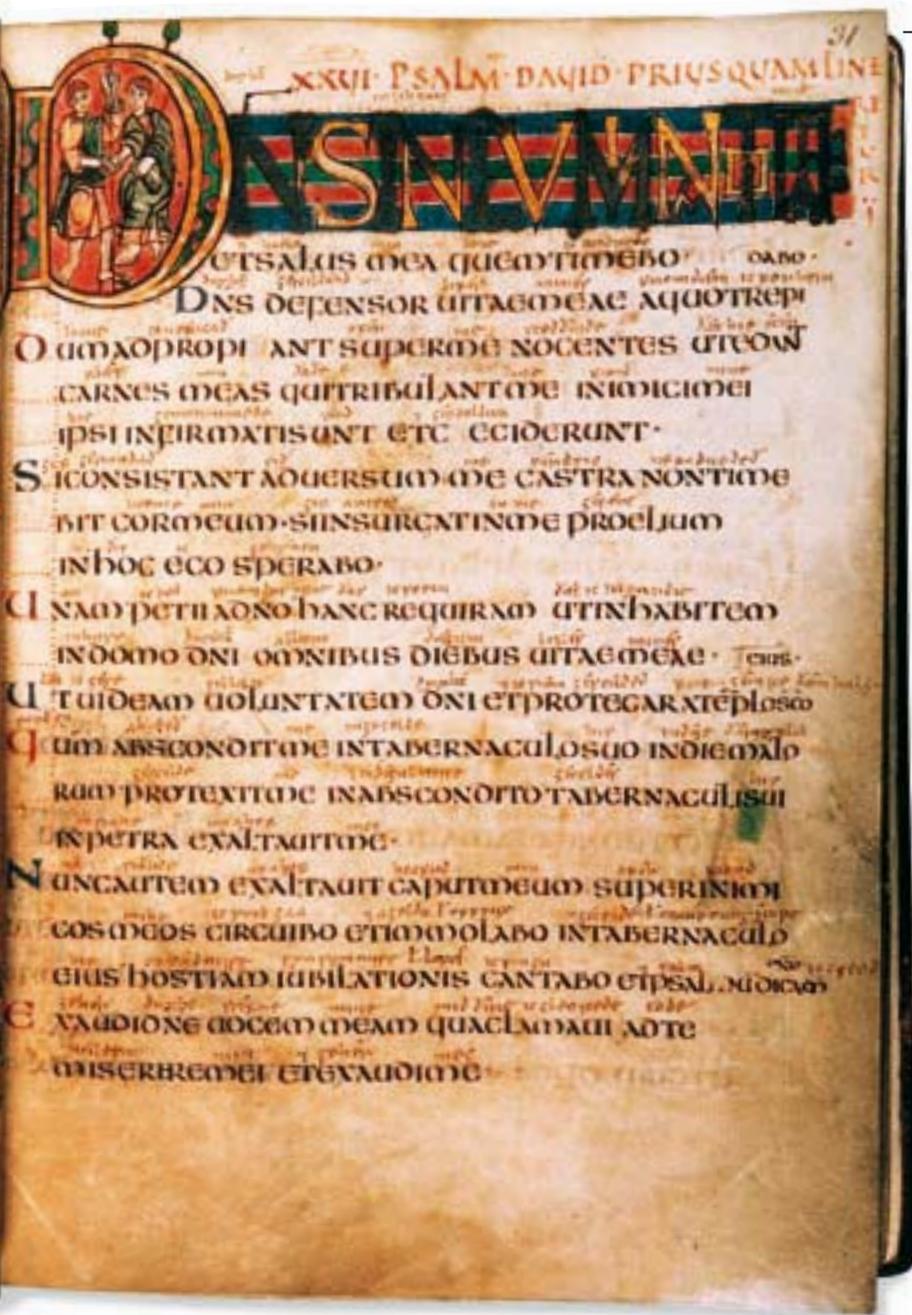
HANDY WORK

In the days before printing, monks wrote out the Latin texts of the books of the Bible by hand, often decorating the pages with beautiful illustrations. Psalters, which contain the words of the Psalms, were in great demand for use in services. This one includes an Old English translation between the lines of Latin text.

IN PRINT

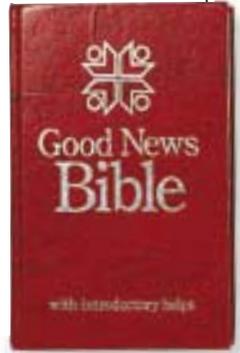
Johannes Gutenberg (p. 34) produced the first printed edition of the entire Bible in Germany in 1455. Suddenly, it became possible to produce large numbers of Bibles quickly, bringing knowledge of the actual words of the Bible to more people than ever before.





Illustrations help bring the text to life

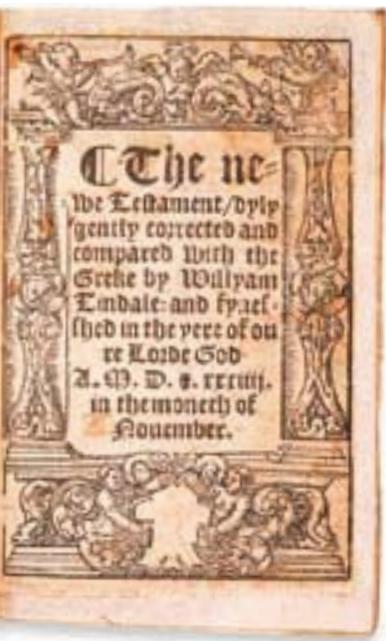
GOOD NEWS
By the 20th century, most translations of the Bible seemed old-fashioned, and demand for Bibles written in modern languages grew. The *Good News Bible* and the *New International Version*, translated into modern English from the best Hebrew and Greek sources, met this need and have sold millions of copies.



Modern German Bible

AHEAD OF THEIR TIME

German theologians translated parts of the Bible into their native language throughout the Middle Ages. The whole Bible was translated by about 1400, but the church frowned on vernacular Bibles, and these were not widely available until after the Reformation (pp. 34–35).



The different languages are divided into columns and blocks

LOTS OF LANGUAGES

The interest in Bible translation, and the need to compare different texts, led to the production of polyglot Bibles, in which the text is printed side-by-side in several different languages. These pages come from an early polyglot Bible of 1516, with the text in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Arabic.

A GOOD INFLUENCE

In the early-16th century, reformer William Tyndale wanted to translate the Bible into English. The English church would not allow this, so Tyndale moved to Germany, where he published his New Testament in English in 1525. This copy is a revised version, printed in 1534. It greatly influenced later Bible translators.

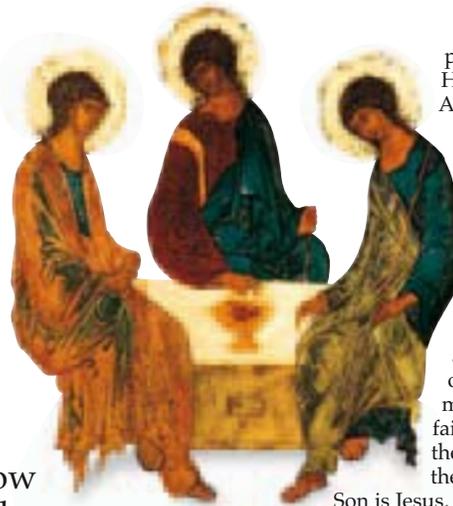
Heaven and Hell



12th-century icon from Saint Catherine's Monastery in Sinai, Egypt, depicting the last judgement

ALL CHRISTIANS believe in one eternal and almighty God, who exists as three beings – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that he lived on Earth as the son of the Virgin Mary, and that he was crucified and rose from the dead.

Christians have faith that if they follow the teachings of Jesus and repent their sins they will be rewarded after death with everlasting life in Heaven – the traditional name for God's eternal kingdom. Its opposite, the place or state without God, is known as Hell.



14th-century painting of the Holy Trinity by Andrei Rublev

THREE IN ONE
The idea of the Holy Trinity, the one God who exists as three beings, is one of the deepest mysteries of Christian faith. God the Father is the almighty creator of the universe. God the

Son is Jesus, God made human. God the Holy Spirit is God's power on Earth. The Bible describes Jesus as sitting at God's right hand in Heaven.



This medieval illustration shows angels blowing their trumpets as the dead rise from their graves

LAST JUDGEMENT

Christians look forward to a time when Jesus will return to Earth. They believe that he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. Jesus will reward the righteous with eternal life, and the kingdom of God will truly exist and have no end.

Ivory counter showing human figures fighting off the demons of Hell to ascend to Heaven, 1120

IN HEAVEN

For some, Heaven is a literal place, a paradise where God dwells. Others emphasize that Heaven is not a place, but a state of being with God for ever. Catholics (pp. 28–31) believe that a person's soul goes first to a third place, called Purgatory, where it is purified before entering Heaven.



Angel carrying a golden censer

WINGED MESSENGERS

The Bible refers to angels as spiritual beings who live with God in Heaven. They act as messengers, bringing God's words and judgements to people on Earth and providing spiritual guidance. The Bible gives few clues about what angels look like, but they are traditionally portrayed as winged beings with human bodies.



JACOB'S LADDER

The life of Jacob, one of the ancestors of the people of Israel, is described in the Book of Genesis. Jacob had a dream in which he saw a ladder connecting Heaven and Earth. As Jacob watched angels passing up and down the ladder, God spoke and promised that the land where he slept would one day belong to him and his descendants.

Relief of Jacob's ladder, west front of Bath Abbey, England

Angel carrying a casket that may contain saintly relics (pp. 42-43)



Angel carrying a model church

Angels are often portrayed with shining, golden wings



THE FALL OF SATAN

According to the Book of Revelation, Satan – a member of the highest rank of angels, the archangels – started a war with God. As a result he was thrown out of Heaven and started his own evil kingdom in Hell. Some Christians believe Hell to be a place of pain, where Satan and his demons torture the souls of the damned, forcing them to endure everlasting fire.

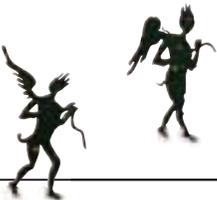


DEVILISH DEPICTIONS

Since medieval times, artists have portrayed Satan and his demons as grotesque creatures, human in form but with horns, tails, and cloven hoofs. Most Christians today are less concerned with the appearance of Satan and Hell, and are more likely to think of the torture of Hell as the agony of an existence without the love of God.



Modern Mexican stamp depicting a devil



Catholicism

PAPAL SYMBOL

The papal symbol of the keys can be seen on Catholic buildings in many places around the world. This example is on the Hospital de los Venerables in Seville, Spain.



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH is the largest of the Christian churches. Catholics place special stress on the Eucharist, or Mass (pp. 52–53), and are expected to go to Mass every Sunday. One distinctive feature of Catholic worship is commemoration of the saints. There is also a stress on devotional practices such as praying the rosary (p. 30) and making pilgrimages to shrines (pp. 42–43). In addition to the New Testament, Catholics are guided in their lives by the teachings of the church, which produces instruction on a range of topics from social justice to the church's contact with other faiths.



Golden angels face into the centre of the monstrance

DISPLAY CASE

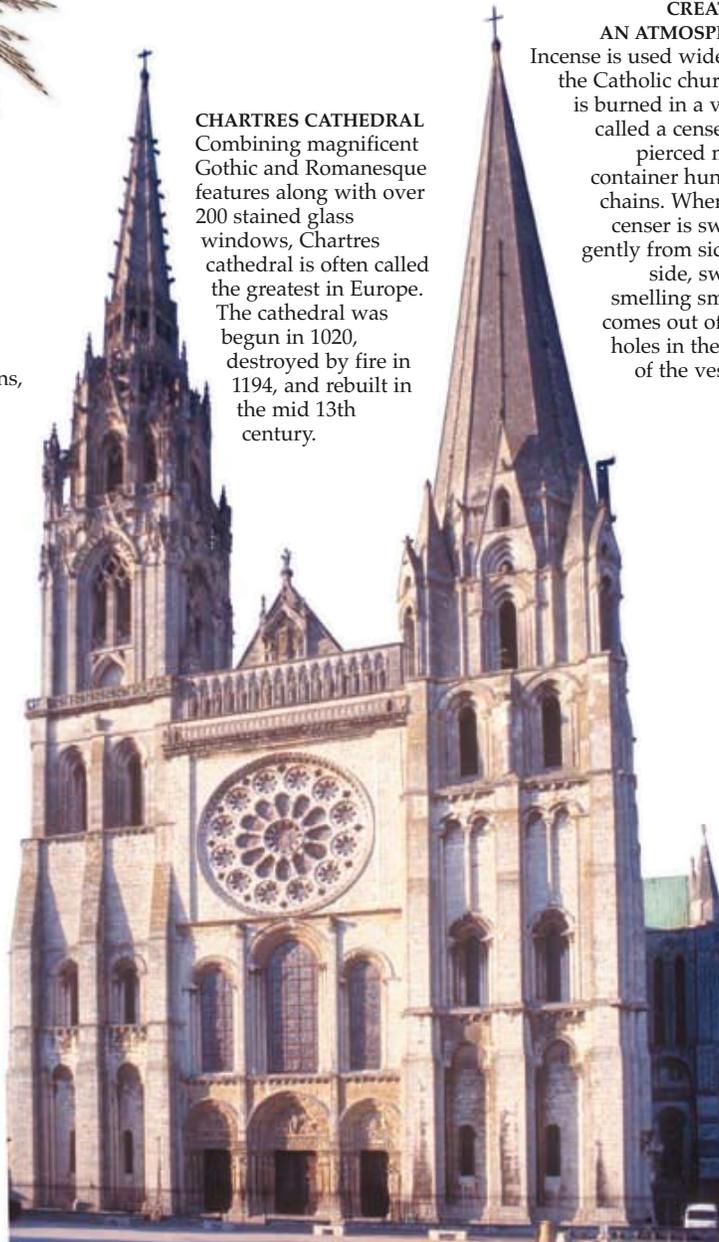
This vessel, known as a monstrance, is used to display the host (the consecrated bread used during Mass). It consists of a glass-covered compartment surrounded by a metal frame with outward-spreading rays. It is used when the host is carried in processions, during a service called Benediction, and when the host is displayed for the purposes of devotion.

Baroque confessional box from Vienna in Austria



CONFESSIONS

Catholics are expected to confess their sins regularly to a priest, who sits in a box-like structure called a confessional. The priest acts as an intermediary between God and the sinner, and pronounces God's willingness to forgive. The sinner may be asked to perform a penance – an action to show that they are truly sorry for their sin.



CHARTRES CATHEDRAL
Combining magnificent Gothic and Romanesque features along with over 200 stained glass windows, Chartres cathedral is often called the greatest in Europe. The cathedral was begun in 1020, destroyed by fire in 1194, and rebuilt in the mid 13th century.

CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE

Incense is used widely in the Catholic church. It is burned in a vessel called a censer – a pierced metal container hung on chains. When the censer is swung gently from side to side, sweet-smelling smoke comes out of the holes in the top of the vessel.



Censer stand is shaped like a crozier (p. 31)

The lid lifts up so that the censer can be filled

Bird's-eye view of an incense boat



Incense boat



Charcoal



Incense



Benedictine monk sprinkling holy water



Aspergillum

The pope

The Catholic church is led by the pope, whom Catholics believe to be the direct successor of the disciple Peter – the first pope. Because Peter’s authority came direct from Jesus, Catholics believe the pope’s decisions on faith and morality to be infallible. The pope’s teachings, explained in his letters and other documents, therefore have a huge influence on Catholics all over the world.



BADGE OF OFFICE

The ring is one of the pope’s badges of office. This one belonged to Eugenius IV (pope from 1431 to 1437). In those days, popes were famed for their fine robes and jewellery. Modern popes are more often known for their moral guidance and wide contacts with the world’s churches.

TIME TO BURN

Incense, which may be kept in an incense boat, is burned by being put into a censer along with hot charcoal. Incense is often used in the procession during which the priest enters the church. It may also be used at other times, such as the elevation of the host during Mass.

SOLEMN RITES

Water that has been blessed may be sprinkled during solemn rites such as blessings, exorcisms (the banishing of evil spirits), and burials. People may also be sprinkled with holy water during Mass. The sprinkling device, called an aspergillum, is a rod tipped with a bulb or brush.

CATHOLIC HEADQUARTERS

As well as being leader of the church, the pope is the Bishop of Rome, and lives in the Vatican City – a tiny independent state within Rome itself. The Vatican City is the headquarters of the Catholic church and contains Saint Peter’s Basilica, the main church in the Catholic world.

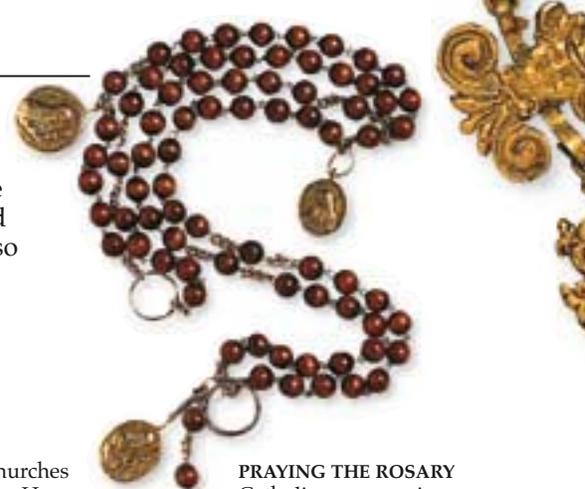




14th-century bishops wearing full vestments

Leadership and spirituality

The leadership of the Catholic church is provided by both the pope and by a hierarchy of clergy – archbishops, bishops, and priests. Bishops and priests lead by spiritual example, and also by teaching their flock about all areas of the Catholic faith. It is their job to educate members of the Catholic church on everything from the meaning of Mass (pp. 52–53) to the importance of prayer and reverence for the Virgin Mary.



PRAYING THE ROSARY
Catholics use rosaries as an aid to prayer. Three different prayers – the *Hail Mary*, the *Our Father* or *Lord's Prayer*, and the *Glory to the Father* – are repeated as the person meditates on the key stages of the Christian story. The rosary beads are used to count the prayers.

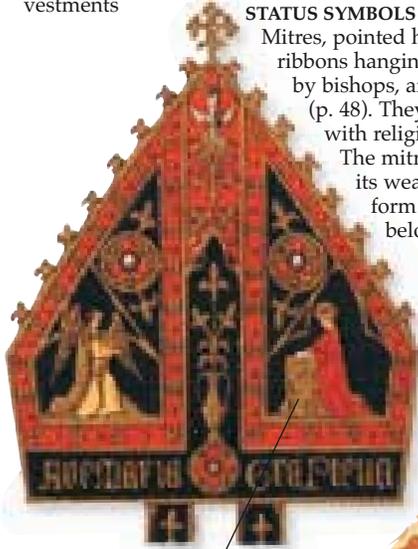
Rosary with medals showing saints for contemplation

A BISHOP'S WORK

A bishop oversees the churches and priests in his diocese. He preaches, writes advisory letters to the local clergy, and directs the training of priests and the religious instruction given in Catholic schools. Bishops also belong to local or national groups called Bishops' Conferences, which meet to discuss collective policies.

STATUS SYMBOLS

Mitres, pointed headdresses with two ribbons hanging at the back, are worn by bishops, archbishops, and abbots (p. 48). They are usually decorated with religious symbols or scenes. The mitre's tall shape is a sign of its wearer's status, the highest form of sacred ministry below that of the pope.



Depiction of the Annunciation

14th-century designs for mitres

Mary being crowned

Jesus raising his hand in blessing

14th-century French mitre showing the coronation of the Virgin

PRIESTLY JEWELS

This chain was worn by a priest in 15th-century Italy. Modern priests rarely wear elaborate regalia like this, but they share the roles and values of their predecessors. Catholic priests must be male and are usually unmarried. They celebrate the sacraments, preach, provide instruction in the faith, and care spiritually for the people in their parish, or district.

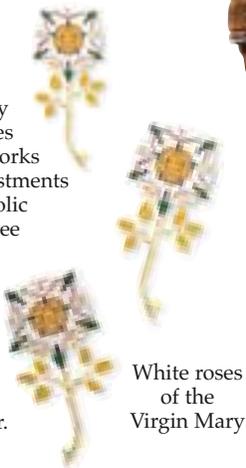
Link made of gilded bronze

Sapphire mounted in chain

Pendant with nativity scene



THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
Catholics regard the Virgin Mary with special devotion, and scenes from her life appear on many works of religious art, as well as on vestments and everyday objects. The Catholic church teaches that Mary was free from original sin and that at the end of her life on Earth she was taken up, body and soul, into Heaven – an event referred to as the Assumption. Because Mary is so revered, several festivals associated with her are held throughout the church year.



White roses of the Virgin Mary

*“Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with you;
blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit
of your womb, Jesus.”*

THE HAIL MARY

Medieval crozier used by a bishop

Virgin Mary

Angel Gabriel

Enamelled and gilded decoration



Madonna and Child, painted wood, c. 1320
Gothic



ORTHODOX CHURCHES

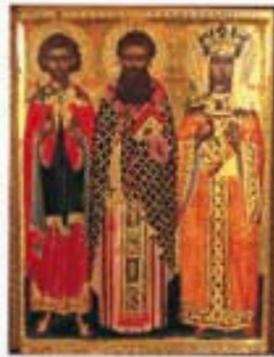
The Orthodox church is a group of individual churches, each led by a patriarch, or senior bishop. Saint Basil's Cathedral in Moscow, Russia – with its striking onion domes – is under the leadership of the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia.

The Orthodox church

THE FORM OF CHRISTIANITY that is strongest in eastern Europe and western Asia is known as the Orthodox church. It developed between the 9th and 11th centuries as a result of a split between eastern and western Christians, and claims to be closest to the faith as originally practised by Jesus' disciples. Like the Catholics, Orthodox Christians recognize several sacraments and venerate the Virgin Mary, but they do not recognize the authority of the pope. They place a heavy stress on holy tradition as revealed through the Bible and the collective decisions and teachings of the early church leaders.



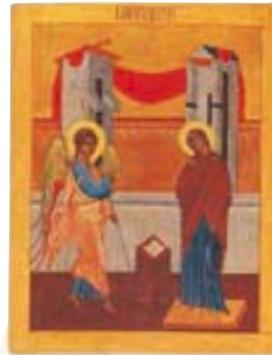
Orthodox priests often have long beards and long hair



Greek icon showing three saints

HOLY FOCUS

Icons – usually small paintings of Jesus, Mary, or the saints – play a key part in Orthodox worship. Orthodox Christians see icons as reminders that God became human in the form of Jesus. They use them to help focus their prayers and devotions.



Russian annunciation icon



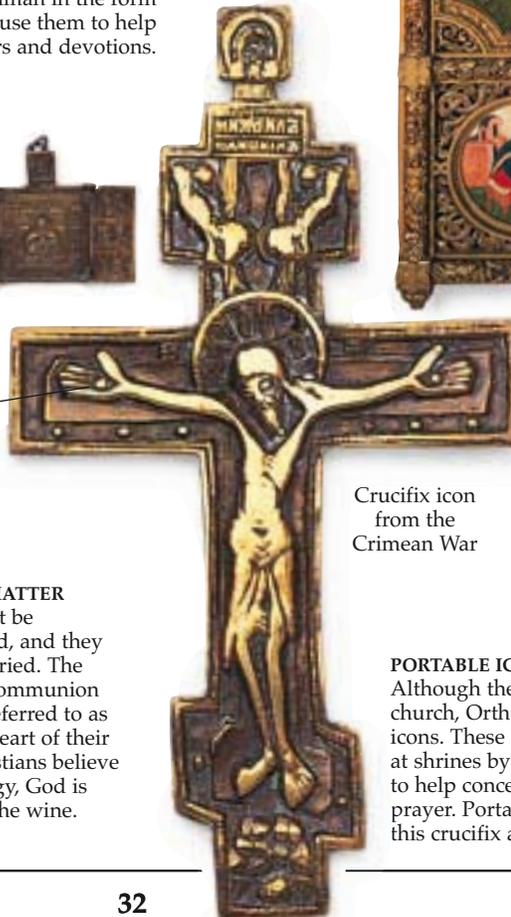
ROYAL DOORS

In Orthodox churches, the sanctuary (the area containing the altar) is hidden by a screen called the iconostasis. The screen has a pair of doors called the royal doors, which are frequently beautifully decorated. These royal doors from the Russian Orthodox church in London, England, are decorated with images of the annunciation and the evangelists.

Portable icon designed to be worn as a pendant



The nails in Christ's hands are clearly visible



Crucifix icon from the Crimean War

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Orthodox priests must be more than 30 years old, and they are allowed to be married. The celebration of Holy Communion (pp. 52–53), usually referred to as the Liturgy, is at the heart of their work. Orthodox Christians believe that, during the Liturgy, God is especially present in the wine.

PORTABLE ICONS

Although the main place to display icons is in church, Orthodox Christians also use portable icons. These can be carried in processions, hung at shrines by the roadside, or used at home to help concentrate the mind during private prayer. Portable icons and similar items like this crucifix are especially popular in Russia.

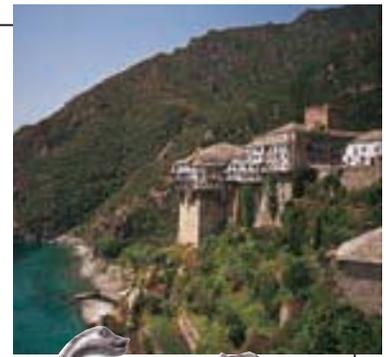


OIL OF GLADNESS

When infants are baptized in the Orthodox church the priest immerses them three times in the font before anointing them with the "oil of gladness". The priest then performs the ceremony of chrismation, anointing the child on the head, eyes, nose, ears, and mouth. Chrismation in the Orthodox church is the equivalent to the western ceremony of confirmation (p. 58).

Stoles were originally made of wool to symbolize the flock for which priests are responsible

ORTHODOX MONASTICISM
 Monasticism (pp. 44–47) began in the east, in areas such as Egypt and Syria, and is still an important part of Orthodox religious life. Orthodox Christians believe that the presence of the Holy Spirit is revealed in the lives of monks and nuns. The most famous Orthodox monasteries are on Mount Athos in Greece, a monastic republic where monks have lived since the 10th century.



The crozier symbolizes the priest's power over his flock



Cuff symbolizes the power of God's right hand

BISHOP'S BUSINESS

All bishops are equal in the Orthodox church. They do have an overall leader – the Patriarch of Constantinople (Istanbul) – but he has no authority over the others. The main authority comes from synods, or meetings, of bishops held in each of the Orthodox churches to make decisions on matters affecting the church as a whole. Orthodox bishops are not permitted to marry, so bishops begin their calling as monks not priests.

Orthodox bishop's vestments

The Reformation

DURING THE 14th and 15th centuries, many people in Europe were worried that the Catholic church was becoming corrupt. In the early-16th century three men – Martin Luther from Germany, Ulrich Zwingli from Switzerland, and John Calvin from France – spearheaded the reform of the church across Europe. In the movement now known as the Reformation, they and their followers founded new, Protestant churches. These churches rejected the control of the pope and bishops and stressed the importance of the Bible and preaching God’s word.



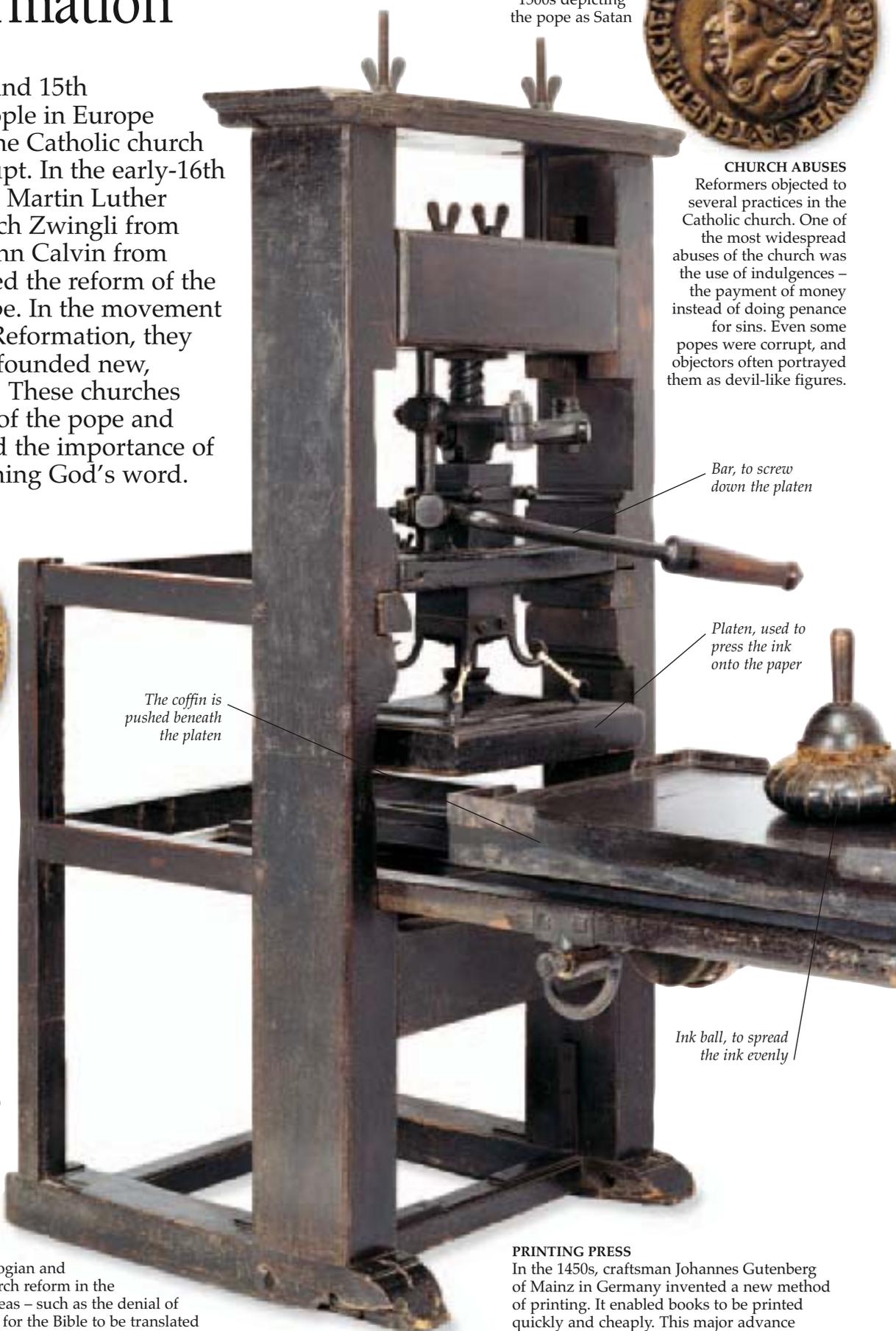
AGAINST CORRUPTION
This coin was made in honour of Jan Hus, a Czech priest who became a reformer in the early-1400s. He spoke out against the corruption of the church but, despite support from ordinary people, was prevented from preaching, excommunicated, forced to leave Prague, and eventually burned at the stake.

EARLY IDEAS
Englishman John Wyclif, a theologian and politician, began to demand church reform in the late-14th century. Many of his ideas – such as the denial of the pope’s authority and the call for the Bible to be translated into modern European languages – were taken up by later reformers all over Europe. In this painting by Ford Madox Brown, Wyclif is reading from his translation of the Bible.

Medal from the 1500s depicting the pope as Satan



CHURCH ABUSES
Reformers objected to several practices in the Catholic church. One of the most widespread abuses of the church was the use of indulgences – the payment of money instead of doing penance for sins. Even some popes were corrupt, and objectors often portrayed them as devil-like figures.



Bar, to screw down the platen

Platen, used to press the ink onto the paper

The coffin is pushed beneath the platen

Ink ball, to spread the ink evenly

PRINTING PRESS
In the 1450s, craftsman Johannes Gutenberg of Mainz in Germany invented a new method of printing. It enabled books to be printed quickly and cheaply. This major advance allowed the ideas of the Reformation to travel around Europe at great speed.



VOICE OF REASON

Education developed rapidly at the time of the Reformation through the work of teachers like Desiderius Erasmus, shown here in a painting by Hans Holbein. His methods were different from Luther's passionate, revolutionary approach – he hoped to reform the church through reason and scholarship. Erasmus edited the Greek New Testament, which was a great help to the scholars who would later translate the Bible into modern European languages.

FAMOUS THESES

In October 1517, Martin Luther posted 95 theses (arguments against indulgences) on a church door in Wittenberg, Germany. He followed this with several books about reform. He argued that salvation came from God's grace through the individual's faith in Christ, and could not be bought.



MOTHER TONGUE

In 1549, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, published the *Book of Common Prayer* – a church service book in English. It enabled English people to hold services in their own language for the first time. When England briefly returned to Catholicism, under Queen Mary I in 1553, Cranmer was executed.



Full- and pocket-sized copies of the *Book of Common Prayer*

Tympan, where the paper is put



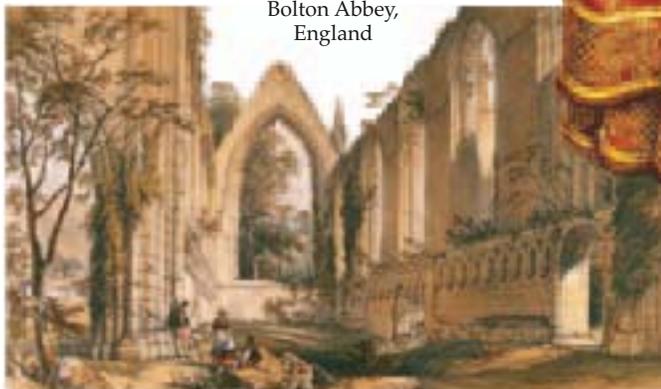
Gallows, to support the tympan

CHURCH LEADER

In 1534, King Henry VIII forced the English church to break from Rome because the pope would not allow him to divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon. Henry himself became leader of the English church although, apart from his rejection of the pope, he remained Catholic in his beliefs. Despite this, he began the process that brought Protestantism to England.



16th-century portrait of Henry VIII by Hans Holbein the younger



Bolton Abbey, England

DISSOLUTION OF THE MONASTERIES

Henry VIII ordered his chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, to compile a report on the monasteries in England. Cromwell concluded that many were rich and corrupt, so Henry ordered all the monasteries to be dissolved (closed). He seized the wealth of the monasteries and gave many of their lands to his lords. Most of the monastery buildings, like Bolton Abbey, were left to become ruins.

Protestantism

SINCE THE REFORMATION, many different Protestant churches have been founded, all stressing the Bible as the source of their beliefs, and many advocating that salvation comes by God's grace, which is given to the believer through faith. Protestant churches range from huge international organizations, such as the Methodist, Anglican (p. 52), and Lutheran (pp. 34–35) churches to smaller groups like the Quakers, Shakers, and Seventh Day Adventists.



PURE AND SIMPLE
Protestant church buildings, like the one pictured above, tend to be plain with little of the decoration so common in Catholic and Orthodox interiors. The seats are arranged so that everyone can hear the sermons (p. 54) and readings.



Woman in 17th-century Puritan dress

PERSECUTED PURITANS

The Puritans were 17th-century English Protestants who wanted to cleanse the church of elements that they saw as Catholic, or "Popish" – such as vestments and bishops. Puritans, who stood out because of their plain clothes, were persecuted at home, so many moved abroad.

Model of the *Mayflower*



Quaker meeting house, Cornwall, England



17th-century Quaker

The ship was only 40 m (132 ft) long

The cramped accommodation below deck was home to 102 pilgrims for 67 days

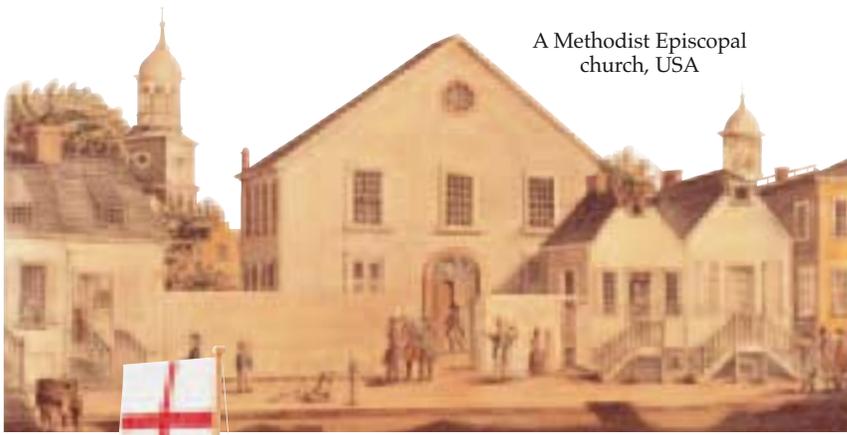
MOVING MEETINGS

The Quakers worship in unadorned buildings called meeting houses. A typical Quaker meeting is simple and does not follow a set pattern. There are periods of meditation and silence until the Holy Spirit moves one or more of those present to speak or pray.

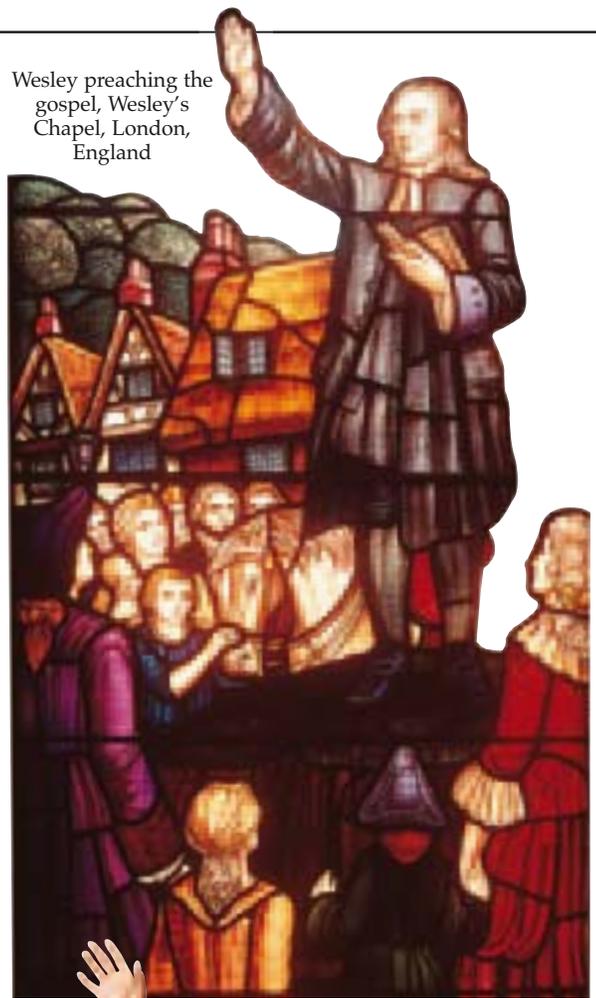
FRIENDS OF SOCIETY

The Quakers, originally called the Religious Society of Friends, were founded during the 17th century in England by George Fox. They have no Creed (p. 52), no sacraments, and their ministers are not ordained (pp. 48–49). Quakers are committed to peace, equality, and other social improvements, and played a major role in the abolition of slavery.

A Methodist Episcopal church, USA



Wesley preaching the gospel, Wesley's Chapel, London, England



WORLDWIDE WORSHIP

The first Methodist churches were founded by the British preacher John Wesley in the mid-18th century. Since then, Methodism has spread all over the world. With independent branches like the Methodist Episcopal church in North America, Methodism has grown to become one of the largest Protestant groups.

TOURING PREACHER

Wesley was originally an Anglican clergyman who preached outside so that large numbers of people could hear him. He toured widely, preaching in both Britain and North America. This led to the founding of Methodist churches – groups of Christians who aimed to achieve holiness through the “method” laid down in the Bible.

Cross of Saint George – the English flag



Methodist Communion in Harare, Zimbabwe



JOYFUL WORSHIP

Worship in Methodist churches follows a pattern similar to that in Anglican and other Protestant churches, with hymns, prayers, Bible-readings, a sermon, and the recital of the Creed. Within this framework, individuals in some churches stand up to affirm their faith with a joyful voice.

THE VOYAGE OF THE MAYFLOWER

In 1620, a group of Puritans from England and Holland sailed to America on the *Mayflower*. After a hard voyage, the group, later known as the Pilgrims, landed in Massachusetts, USA. Here they set up Plymouth Colony, a community where they could live and worship in their own way without fear of persecution.

Shaker meeting with leader Mother Ann Lee, 1774

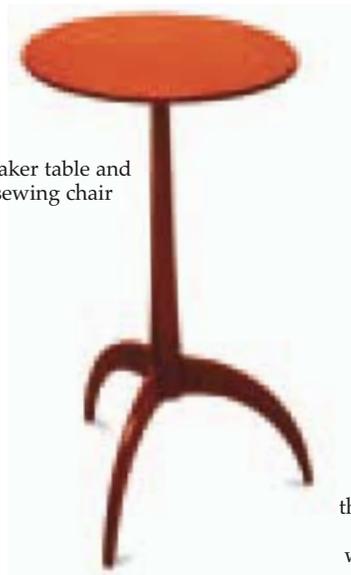


THE SIMPLE LIFE

The Shaker movement reached its peak in the 19th century, and now there are very few Shakers. Members follow a simple lifestyle; they dress plainly, avoid alcohol and tobacco, and live in communities set apart from the outside world. Shakers are famous for their simple, well-made furniture that seems to sum up their way of life.



Shaker table and sewing chair



Member of the Salvation Army saluting God

SEEKING SALVATION
Methodist minister William Booth founded the Salvation Army in the late-19th century, and it has since become a worldwide organization. The Salvation Army is famous for its outdoor preaching, its tuneful music, and its work to help the poor and needy. It preaches a Bible-based Christianity centred on the immortality of the soul and salvation by faith through grace.

RESPECT YOUR ELDERS
There are a number of Presbyterian churches around the world, and they share one key feature – they are governed by presbyters, or elders, who may be either ministers or lay people. This kind of organization was based on the ideas of reformer John Calvin. Worship is simple and centres on preaching and – as shown in this 19th-century painting – study of the scriptures.



Salvation Army badge





Salvation Army songster leader playing the cornet

Salvation Army tie



Modern Salvation Army man's hat



Victorian Salvation Army woman's bonnet



Modern Salvation Army woman's hat

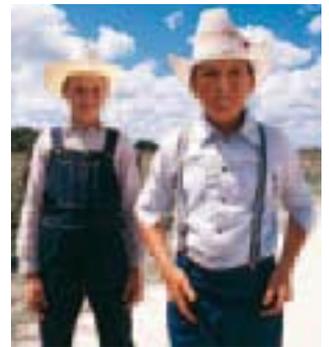
Red shield badge

SOLDIERS OF GOD

The Salvation Army is organized along military lines. It is led by a "general", other church leaders are known as "officers", and members, or "soldiers", wear a distinctive uniform. Those who enroll sign a declaration of faith known as the "Articles of War". All members are entitled to bear the organization's red shield.

THE HOLY LIFE

Founded by a follower of the reformer Zwingli, Mennonites aim to live a life of holiness, set apart from the world in self-contained communities. They are pacifists, and they carry out relief work in many parts of the world.



Mennonite children in Belize



SEVENTH HEAVEN

Seventh Day Adventists, like this couple in Mozambique, believe that the time will come when they will be taken to Heaven for 1,000 years while Satan rules on Earth. At the end of this time, Jesus will return, destroy Satan, and create a new Earth. Adventists operate schools and a network of hospitals and clinics.

LIMITLESS WORSHIP

All Christians consider the work of evangelism, or spreading the Gospel, to be part of their faith. Many Protestants, like these in Guatemala, are very active evangelists. They often worship and preach outdoors, so their congregations are not limited by the size of a church building, and everyone who passes by can hear their message.



The Christian life

CHRISTIANS TRY TO FOLLOW Jesus' teachings and apply them to their own lives. All such believers are said to be part of the "community of saints". But some go to exceptional lengths for their faith, enduring suffering or persecution, or even becoming martyrs. Some of these men and women who have lived lives of special holiness are declared saints by the church. Saints are especially revered in the Catholic and Orthodox churches, where it is believed they can act as intermediaries between individual Christians and God.

Ivory relief of George and the dragon



DRAGON SLAYER
George is thought to have been a 3rd-century soldier from the eastern Mediterranean. The best-known story about him tells how a dragon was terrorizing the neighbourhood and was about to devour the king's daughter. George said he would kill the monster if the people would believe in Jesus and be baptized. After killing the beast he would take no reward, but simply asked the king to help the church.

The palm is a symbol of the victory of the faithful over the enemies of the soul, and is often associated with martyrs

Medieval gilded plaque of Saint Lucy



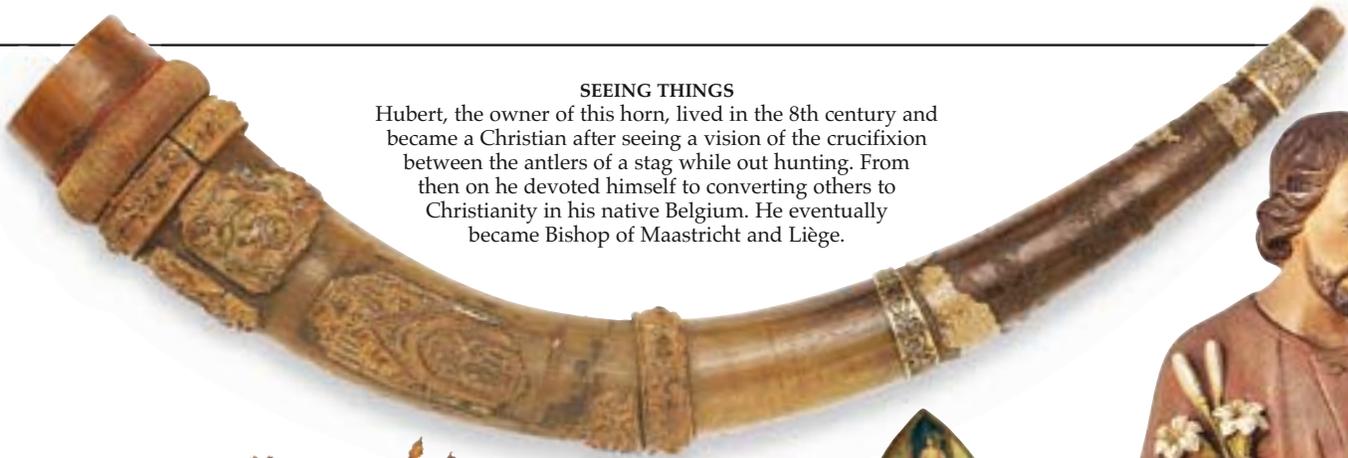
Eyes on a platter



The cross of Saint Brigid

FEEDING THE HUNGRY
Born in Ireland in the 6th century, Brigid became a nun and helped to spread Christianity by founding a monastery in Kildare. Brigid was famous for helping the poor, and was said to be able miraculously to make food multiply.

CHEATING DEATH
One of the many Christians who were persecuted by the Romans, Lucy remained true to her faith and gave away her possessions to the poor. The Romans were said to have tried to kill her by burning and by putting out her eyes. Lucy miraculously survived, and her eyes were restored. She was finally put to death by the sword.



SEEING THINGS

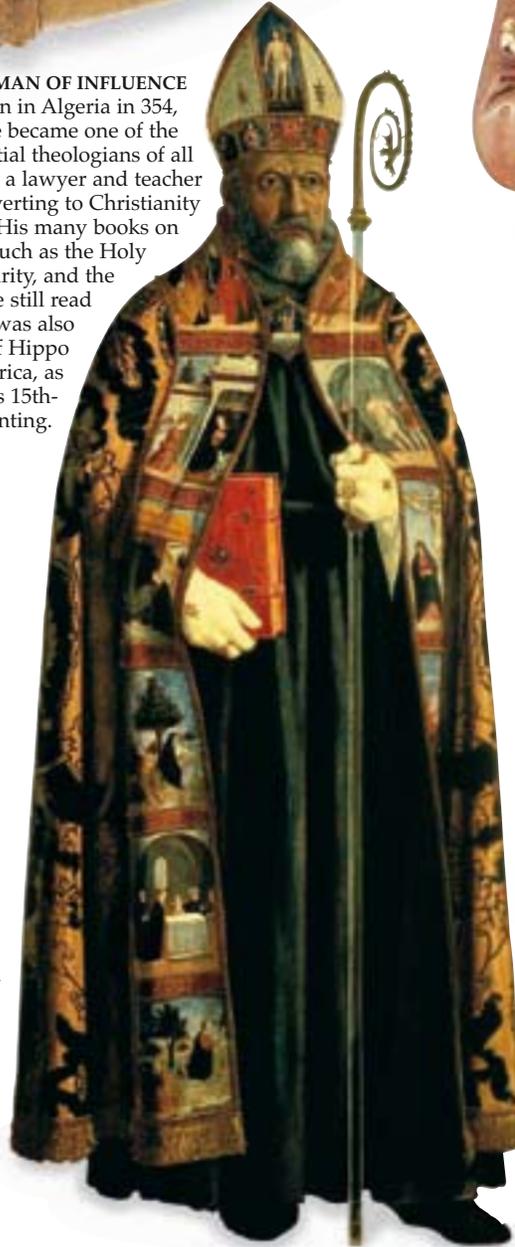
Hubert, the owner of this horn, lived in the 8th century and became a Christian after seeing a vision of the crucifixion between the antlers of a stag while out hunting. From then on he devoted himself to converting others to Christianity in his native Belgium. He eventually became Bishop of Maastricht and Liège.

Plaster statue of Saint Joseph



JOSEPH THE PROTECTOR
As protector of the holy family, Joseph plays a vital part in the Christian story, and is especially revered in the Catholic church. Joseph is celebrated as the patron saint of fathers, carpenters, the dying, social justice, and the universal church.

A MAN OF INFLUENCE
Born in Algeria in 354, Augustine became one of the most influential theologians of all time. He was a lawyer and teacher before converting to Christianity in his 30s. His many books on subjects such as the Holy Trinity, charity, and the Psalms are still read today. He was also Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, as shown in this 15th-century painting.



HELPING HAND
Jesus told his followers to love their neighbours and give their wealth to the poor. Christians may follow these instructions through individual acts of kindness or through organizations that work to relieve suffering throughout the world.

Orphaned children helped by the Christian charity Tearfund



16th-century painting of Saints Erasmus and Maurice

POPULAR SAINTS

Maurice, a soldier from Egypt, and Erasmus, a Syrian bishop, were martyred in the late-3rd century. Although little is known of their lives, they were included in books of martyrs and became popular saints in the Middle Ages.



20TH-CENTURY SAINT

Italian Padre Pio was convinced of his "calling" as a child. When he became a Franciscan friar, he experienced visions of Jesus and received the stigmata – the miraculous appearance of wounds like those received by Jesus on the cross. Padre Pio endured his pain bravely, and devoted his life to prayer and serving God. He was declared a saint in 2002, 34 years after his death.



FAMILY LIFE

The family has a central role in Christian life. The Christian story begins with a family – Mary, Joseph, and Jesus – so it is seen by Christians as the ideal environment in which to raise children. This illustration shows a family walking to church on Christmas Eve.



Santiago de Compostela



The Virgin Mary at Lourdes

PILGRIMAGE PLACES

Compostela in Spain and Lourdes in south-western France are two of Europe's best-known pilgrimage sites. Compostela is said to be the burial-place of Saint James, one of Jesus' disciples. Lourdes is a more recent shrine, the place where Saint Bernadette had a series of visions in the 19th century, and where many apparently miraculous healings have taken place.

Pilgrimages and relics

A pilgrimage is a journey to a place of religious significance. Many Christians, especially Roman Catholics, go on pilgrimages. They do so for various reasons – to visit places that are important for their faith, as an act of penance for their sins, to ask for help, or to give thanks to God. The most popular pilgrimage destinations are shrines. A shrine is a place linked to a particular saint, often housing their relics, or remains. Many sick people make pilgrimages to shrines such as Lourdes in the hope of a miraculous cure, but pilgrims are just as likely to travel in search of spiritual growth as physical healing.



Crown of semi-precious stones

Head is made of silver, but gilding gives it a golden colour

The base of the casket is decorated with holy figures

Ornate outer case for the relics of Saint Eustace

The top lifted off to reveal the remains stored within



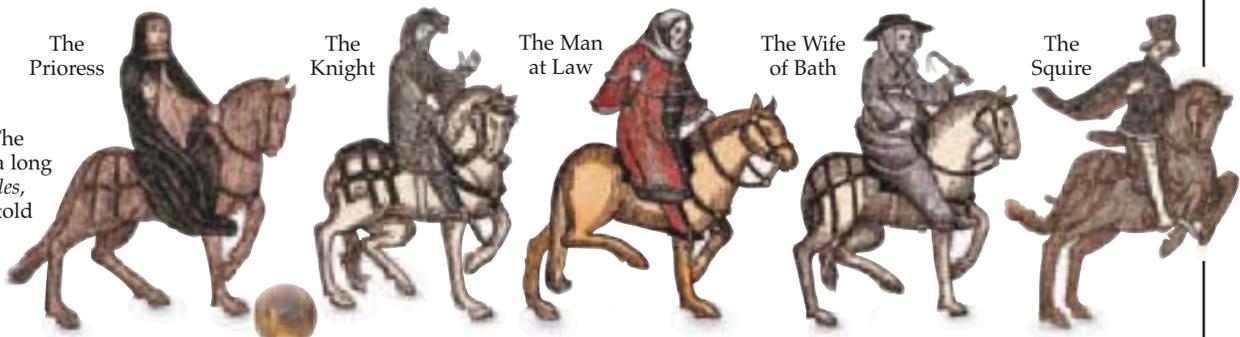
Wooden inner case – the true receptacle for the relics of Saint Eustace

INSIDE STORY

This elaborate reliquary was made in about 1240 to hold remains. These included some of the bones of Saint Eustace, an early Christian who converted to the faith after seeing a vision of the crucifixion. The shining metal outer covering and wooden inner box did not contain Saint Eustace's whole skull, but held a number of bones, which were said to belong to several different saints.

CHAUCEER'S PILGRIMS

In medieval England the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket at Canterbury was the most popular place of pilgrimage. The poet Geoffrey Chaucer wrote a long poem called *The Canterbury Tales*, made up of a series of stories told by a group of pilgrims as they travelled on horseback from London to Canterbury.



BECKET'S BONES
Thomas Becket was Archbishop of Canterbury in England during the reign of Henry II in the 12th century. When Becket fell out with the king, four of Henry's knights murdered him in Canterbury Cathedral. A shrine was soon built in the cathedral, and Becket's remains were kept in this beautiful casket.



Pewter badge of Saint Thomas Becket

Scallop-shaped ampulla, or flask, for holy water



MARK OF THE PILGRIM
In the Middle Ages, people often wore badges to show that they had been on a pilgrimage. The scallop shell, originally the badge of Compostela but later worn by pilgrims to any shrine, was the most common, but many places had their own badges.



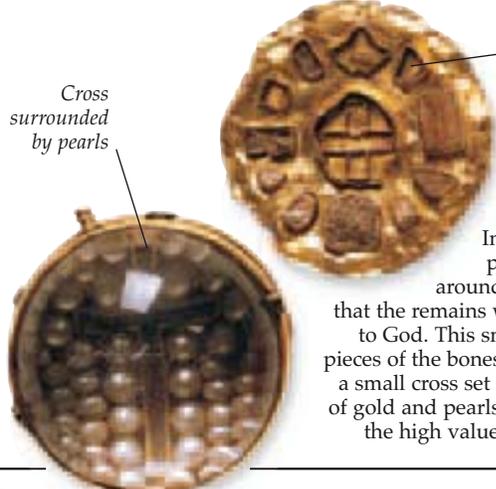
INTO BATTLE
This reliquary, said to contain saintly bones, was carried into battle by the Abbot of Arbroath Abbey in Scotland. The occasion was the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, when the Scots, under their leader Robert Bruce, defeated the English.



Fragments of bone, wood, and fabric are beautifully displayed

TREASURED REMAINS
Relics do not have to be actual human remains. Fragments of objects that played a part in the Christian story are also revered. This collection of tiny relics, kept at a British Benedictine abbey, is said to include fragments of the cross, Jesus' crib, and the veil of the Virgin Mary, as well as relics of several saints.

One of the king's knights slices off Becket's head



Cross surrounded by pearls

Pieces of bone set in gold

PORTABLE RELICS
In the Middle Ages, some people carried holy relics around with them, in the hope that the remains would bring them closer to God. This small reliquary holds tiny pieces of the bones of saints, together with a small cross set amongst pearls. The use of gold and pearls in the reliquary reflects the high value of the items it contains.



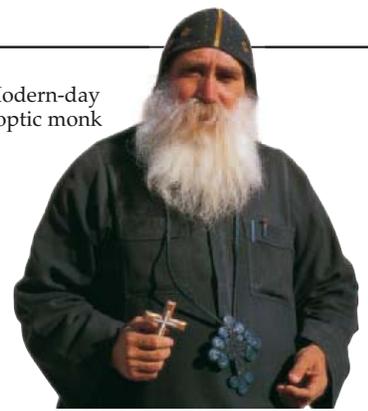
Monks and nuns

FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS, some Christians have felt the need to live separately from the rest of society, in special communities devoted to serving God. Such communities are called monasteries, and their inhabitants – monks or nuns – live a life that is harsher and stricter than normal. They make solemn vows to God of poverty, chastity, and obedience – promising to give up personal possessions and sexual relations and to obey both the head of the monastery (the abbot or abbess) and the set of rules by which they live.

Monasticism plays an especially important part in the Catholic and Orthodox churches.

NUN AND MONK
In the Middle Ages, new orders of monks and nuns were often founded because people felt the need to live by stricter rules than those governing other monasteries. Members of different orders, like this Servite nun and Slavonic monk, can often be distinguished by the colour of their clothes.

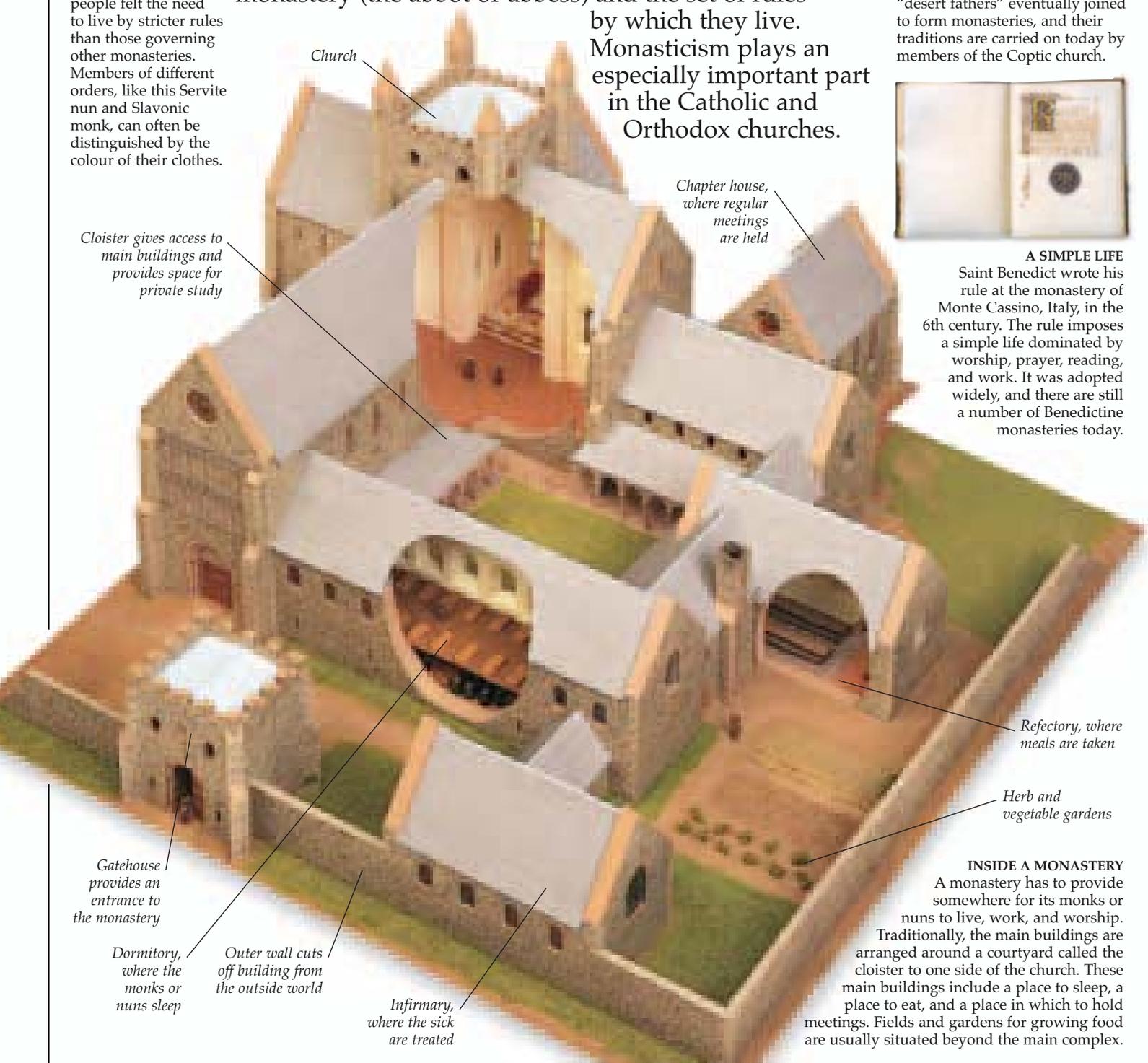
Modern-day Coptic monk



DESERT FATHERS
Monasticism began in Egypt in the 3rd century, when men such as Saint Antony withdrew to the desert to live as hermits. These “desert fathers” eventually joined to form monasteries, and their traditions are carried on today by members of the Coptic church.



A SIMPLE LIFE
Saint Benedict wrote his rule at the monastery of Monte Cassino, Italy, in the 6th century. The rule imposes a simple life dominated by worship, prayer, reading, and work. It was adopted widely, and there are still a number of Benedictine monasteries today.



Church

Chapter house, where regular meetings are held

Cloister gives access to main buildings and provides space for private study

Refectory, where meals are taken

Herb and vegetable gardens

Gatehouse provides an entrance to the monastery

Dormitory, where the monks or nuns sleep

Outer wall cuts off building from the outside world

Infirmary, where the sick are treated

INSIDE A MONASTERY
A monastery has to provide somewhere for its monks or nuns to live, work, and worship. Traditionally, the main buildings are arranged around a courtyard called the cloister to one side of the church. These main buildings include a place to sleep, a place to eat, and a place in which to hold meetings. Fields and gardens for growing food are usually situated beyond the main complex.



THE WORK OF GOD
The most important activity for a monk or nun is regular religious observance at set hours of the day. Saint Benedict called this the "Work of God", but it is also known as the divine office. Everyone in the monastery meets eight times every day to pray, read lessons from the Bible, and sing hymns and Psalms.

FIGHTING MONKS

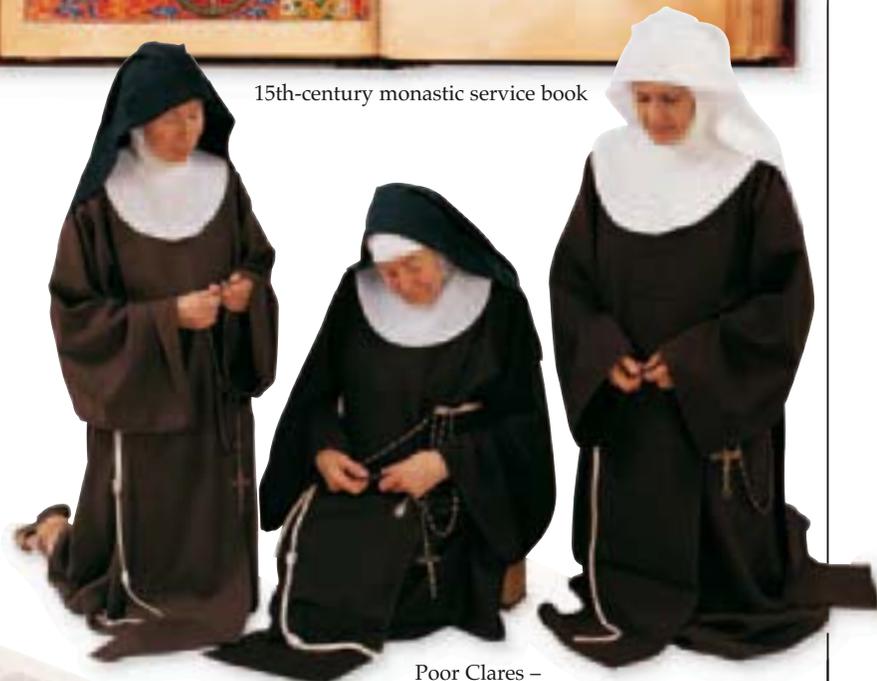
In the Middle Ages there were specialized orders of "fighting monks", who lived by monastic rules and gave armed protection to pilgrims in the Holy Land. This gunpowder flask bears the emblem of one such order, the Knights of Saint John.



15th-century monastic service book



Benedictine monk in quiet contemplation



Poor Clares – Franciscan nuns

PRIVATE PRAYER

Individual worship plays a vital part in the daily life of all monks and nuns. These Franciscan nuns – known as Poor Clares after their founder, Saint Clare – are praying the rosary. Some orders count their prayers using knots on a piece of rope instead of rosary beads.

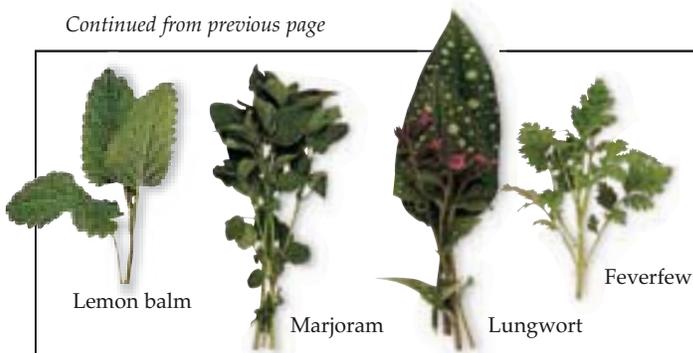


DIVINE LIGHT

Several of the "hours" of the divine office are celebrated when it is dark. Mattins takes place at 2 am, vespers during the evening, and compline before bed-time. Traditionally, worship at such times had to be celebrated by candlelight. The candles would also have reminded those taking part of the idea of Jesus as a divine light shining in the world.

HOLY READING

Benedictine monks are encouraged to read the Bible (and other religious writings) in a devotional, contemplative way to bring them into close communion with God. This activity, known as *Lectio Divina* (holy reading), does not involve analysing the text, as some Bible-reading does. The reader should simply absorb the words and allow God's message to filter through.



Lemon balm

Marjoram

Lungwort

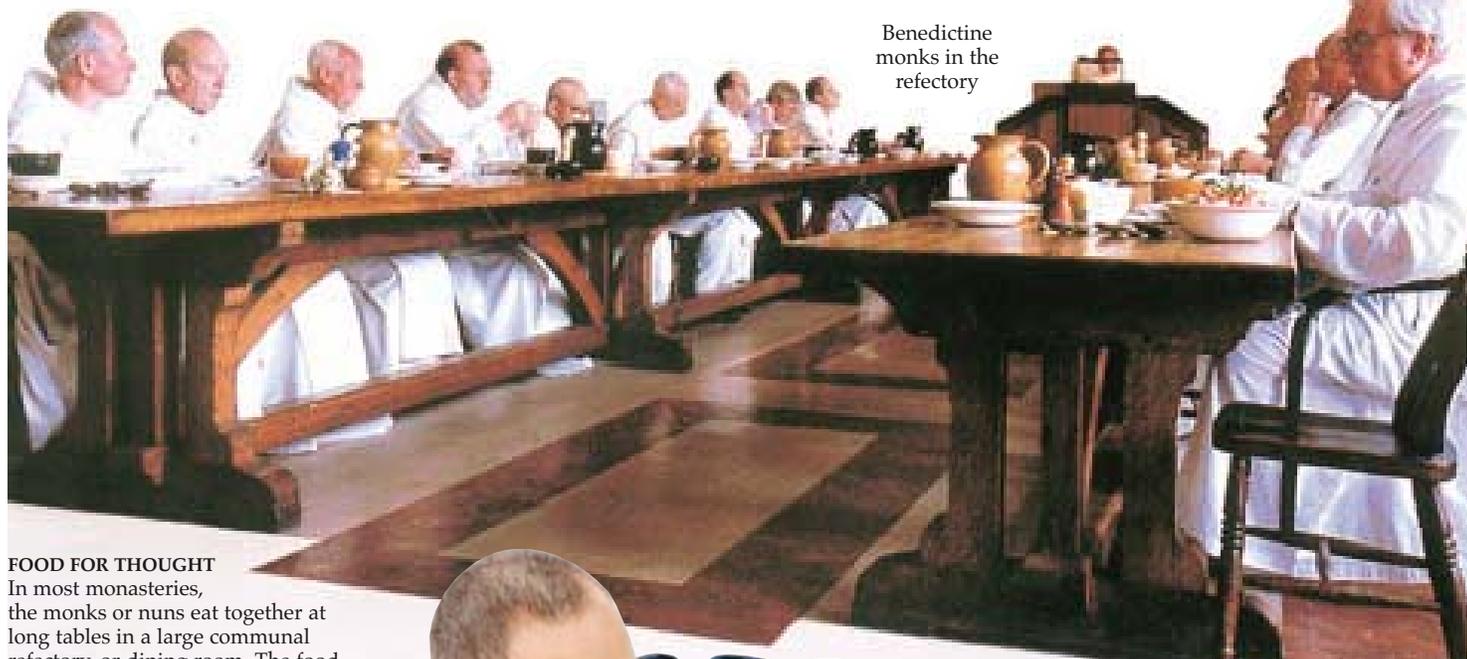
Feverfew

HEALING HERBS

In the Middle Ages, monks grew plants like feverfew, lungwort, lemon balm, and marjoram to make medicines for ailments such as headaches and respiratory disorders. The monks wrote down their discoveries about the healing powers of plants in books called herbals. Herbs are still grown alongside other food plants in many monastery gardens today.

Everyday life and work

Although the divine office and prayer are at the heart of monastic life, monks and nuns are also expected to work hard to support themselves and their community. Monasteries often try to be as self-sufficient as possible, with many producing their own food, and some making items for sale. With their atmosphere of quiet contemplation, monasteries have always been centres of learning. In the Middle Ages, they provided Europe's only education and health services, and today many monks and nuns still teach in schools. They may also work in the wider community, giving aid to the sick, poor, and needy.



Benedictine monks in the refectory

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In most monasteries, the monks or nuns eat together at long tables in a large communal refectory, or dining room. The food is simple but nourishing. Religious devotion even continues at meal times – everyone is expected to eat in silence while one of their number reads passages from the Bible.

SCENTED SERVICES

Incense – a substance that makes a sweet scent when it is burned – is used widely during services in both the Catholic and Orthodox churches. Some monasteries make incense, both for use in their own church and for sale to raise money.



1 NATURALLY SWEET
The naturally sweet-smelling raw olibanum gum is ground into smaller pieces. The monk then measures out a small amount of concentrated perfume oil and mixes this thoroughly with the ground gum.

2 DRYING OUT
The monk places shovels of the scented, ground gum into a large, wooden tray with a wire bottom and spreads it out evenly. He leaves the incense mixture until it is dry and then packs it up ready for sale.

Rubber gloves provide protection from the highly concentrated oil



Raw olibanum gum

Ground raw olibanum gum

Finished incense

Wafer press and wafers decorated with Christian symbols

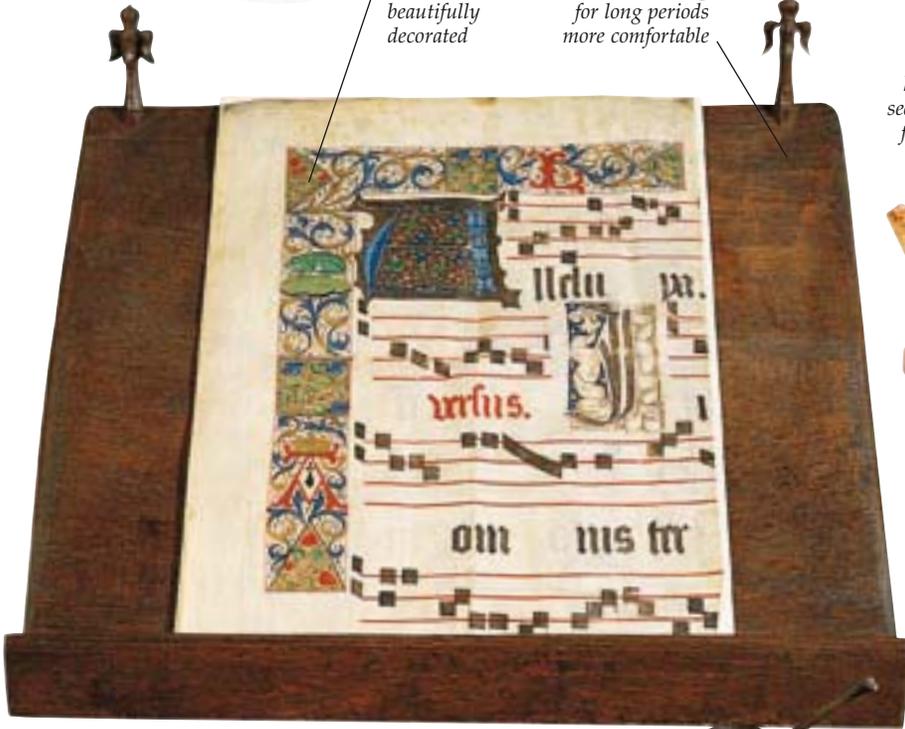


FLAT BREAD

In many churches, specially made wafers – traditionally manufactured in monasteries – are used instead of ordinary bread during Communion (pp. 52–53). The process starts with a bread dough mix. This is pressed into thin sheets, often marked with a Christian symbol, and cut into small discs. The finished wafers are then packaged and supplied to churches all over the world.

The text is in Latin and is beautifully decorated

The desk slopes to make writing for long periods more comfortable



WRITING FOR GOD

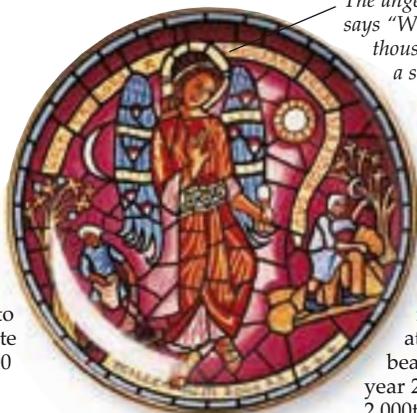
In the Middle Ages, monks and nuns were among the few people who produced books. They wrote out each page by hand and decorated them to produce results like this beautiful music manuscript. Today, some monks preserve these ancient skills, while others are notable scholars. They write books on subjects such as the Bible, theology, and the history of the church.



Wax tablet for writing holy passages on



Monastic scribe's desk



The angel's banner says "With the Lord a thousand years is a single day"

Plate made to commemorate the year 2000

CHRISTIAN CROCKERY

The pottery founded by the Benedictine monks of Prinknash Abbey in England produces simple wares for everyday use, and more decorative ceramics that are especially attractive to visitors. Their millennium plate bears a picture of an angel, a reminder that the year 2000 was, above all, a Christian event – the 2,000th anniversary of Jesus' birth.

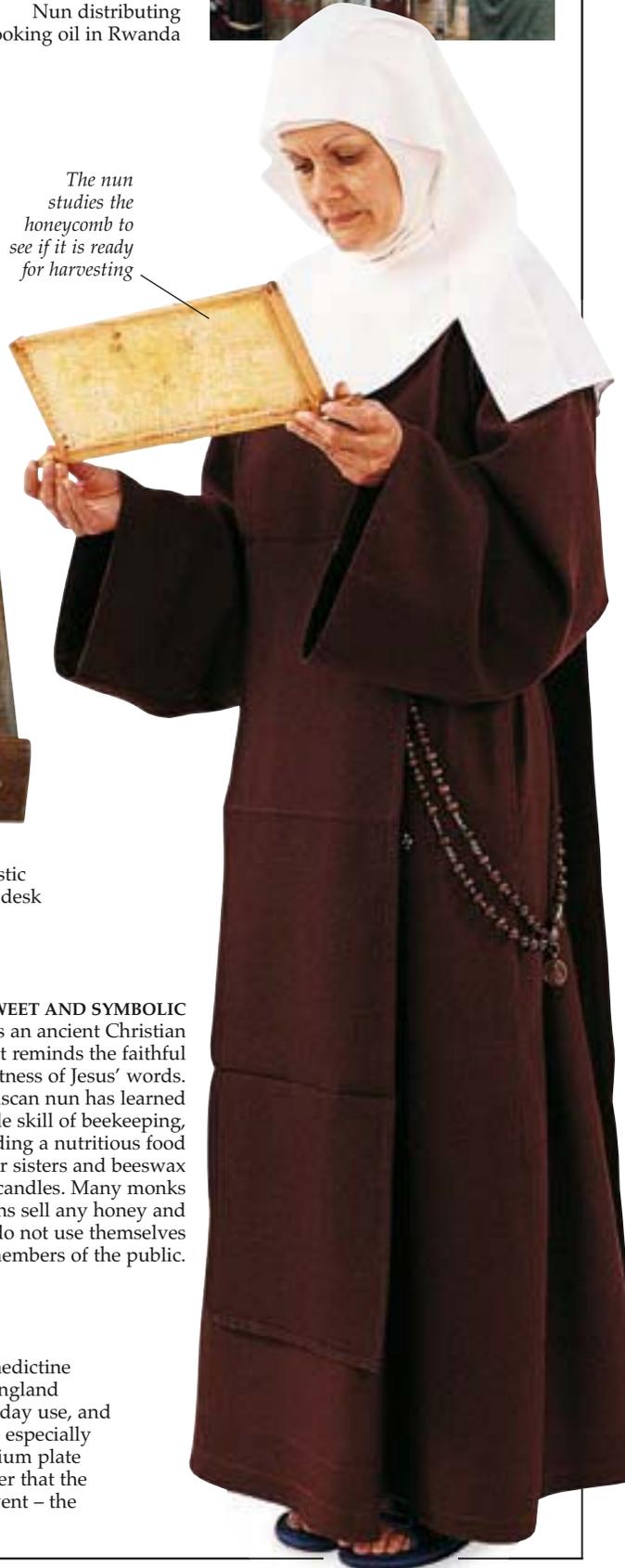
FAR FROM HOME

Many monks and nuns travel long distances to take part in aid programmes in areas that are affected by drought, war, famine, or other disasters. Members of monastic orders help to save lives and bring education to areas where there are no state schools.



Nun distributing cooking oil in Rwanda

The nun studies the honeycomb to see if it is ready for harvesting



SWEET AND SYMBOLIC

Honey is an ancient Christian symbol that reminds the faithful of the sweetness of Jesus' words. This Franciscan nun has learned the valuable skill of beekeeping, providing a nutritious food source for her sisters and beeswax for making candles. Many monks and nuns sell any honey and wax they do not use themselves to members of the public.



HOLY LEADERS
This ancient ivory chesspiece shows a bishop – a senior Catholic, Orthodox, or Anglican clergyman who oversees the work of other priests.

The priesthood

PRIESTS, AND ministers – their equal in many Protestant churches, provide spiritual teaching, celebrate the sacraments, and play the leading role in rituals and worship. They also care for people in their parish, or area, for example by visiting the sick and caring for those with special needs. Being a priest is demanding, and most people who take on the role do so because they feel a spiritual “calling”. In the Catholic and Orthodox churches, ordination, or admission, is a sacrament and is permanently binding, whereas in the Protestant churches it is not.

RELIGIOUS PRIESTS

An abbot is a priest who is the leader of a monastery. He and the monks in his charge are known in the Catholic church as “religious priests”. The other members of the Catholic clergy – such as bishops and parish priests – are referred to as “secular priests”.

Rear view of abbot's vestments



Mitre shows that the wearer is an abbot

Early-20th-century silver crozier, carried only by higher members of the clergy

Cowl, or hood

Red cope worn on major feast days, such as Pentecost, Easter, and Christmas

Ornamental cross

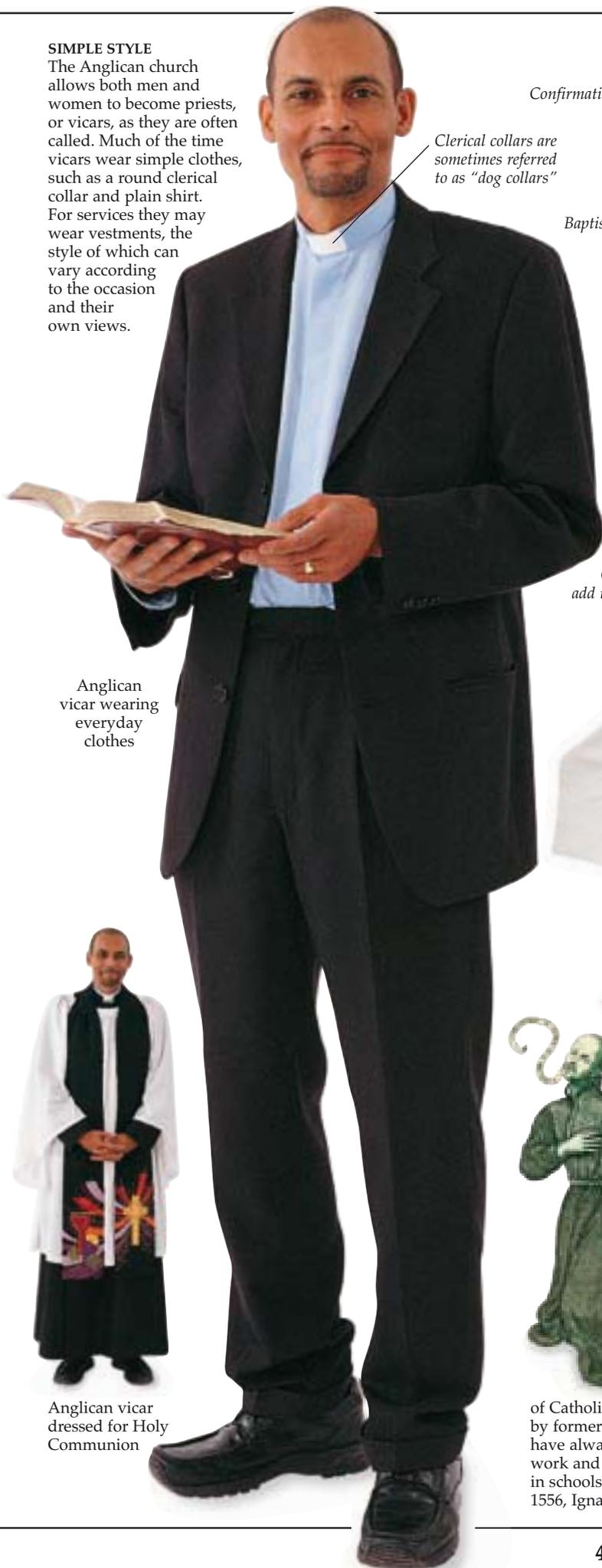
Surplice, or alb, worn beneath cope

Habit, or tunic, worn beneath vestments

Benedictine abbot in ceremonial vestments

SIMPLE STYLE

The Anglican church allows both men and women to become priests, or vicars, as they are often called. Much of the time vicars wear simple clothes, such as a round clerical collar and plain shirt. For services they may wear vestments, the style of which can vary according to the occasion and their own views.



Anglican vicar wearing everyday clothes



Anglican vicar dressed for Holy Communion

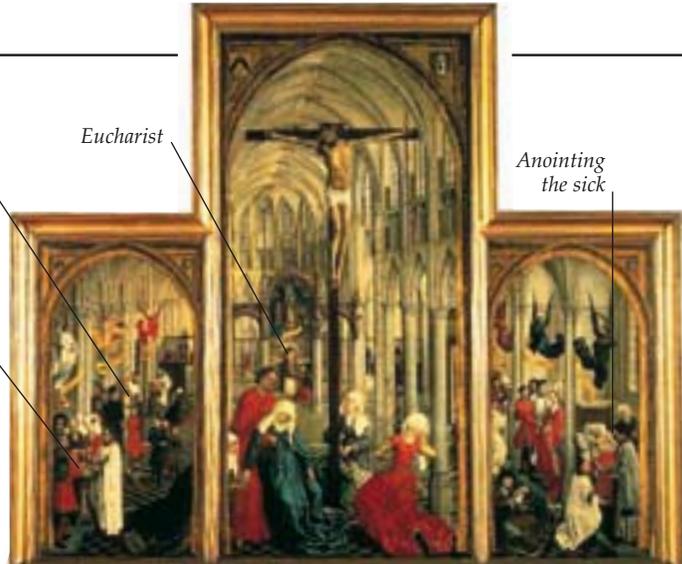
Clerical collars are sometimes referred to as "dog collars"

Confirmation

Eucharist

Anointing the sick

Baptism



SEVEN SACRAMENTS

The Catholic and Orthodox churches celebrate seven sacraments – rites that constitute a visible sign of the inward grace of God. The sacraments on this 15th-century altarpiece are ordination, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, anointing the sick, baptism, and marriage. Many Protestant churches recognize only two sacraments: baptism and Communion.

Gold trimmings add to the splendour of the outfit



Saint Ignatius of Loyola



TEACHING PRIESTS

The Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, are an order of Catholic priests founded in the 16th century by former soldier Ignatius of Loyola. The Jesuits have always been committed to missionary work and education, and priests often teach in schools or universities. After his death in 1556, Ignatius of Loyola was made a saint.

IN UNIFORM

When celebrating the sacraments, priests wear special clothes called vestments. These garments are similar in design to those worn by early Christians in ancient Rome. They consist of several layers, including a white tunic called an alb, a coloured overgarment called a chasuble, and a long, scarf-like stole.



PRAYER IN PRIVATE

The earliest churches were often small and very simple in design. This 6th-century building in Ireland is an oratory, a place where someone can pray in private rather than a church for a large congregation. It has sloping stone walls, a single door, and no windows.

The church

THE WORD CHURCH means a community of Christian believers, but it is also used to refer to a building in which Christians worship. Churches vary widely, but most have a large main space – often called the nave – for the congregation. Many churches also have a chancel or sanctuary, which houses the altar (p. 52); side chapels, used for private prayer; a vestry, where the priest prepares for services; and a space in which baptisms take place.



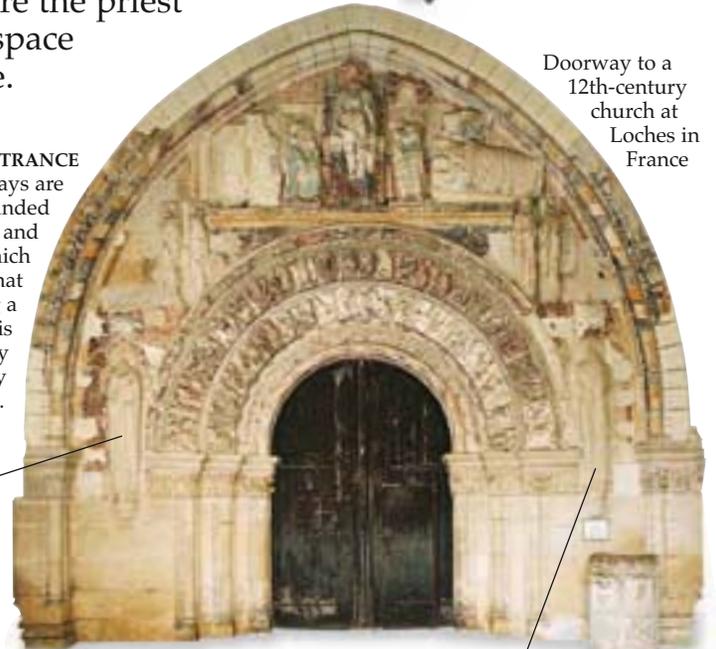
Ornate holy water stoup

HOLY WATER
In many churches there is a stoup, or basin, near the door. This contains holy water with which people can cross or sprinkle themselves as they enter the building, as a way of affirming their baptism (p. 58).



18th-century church, San Ignacio, Mexico

MAKING AN ENTRANCE
Church doorways are sometimes surrounded by statues of saints and biblical scenes, which remind people that they are entering a sacred building. This doorway is topped by a carving of the baby Jesus and the magi.



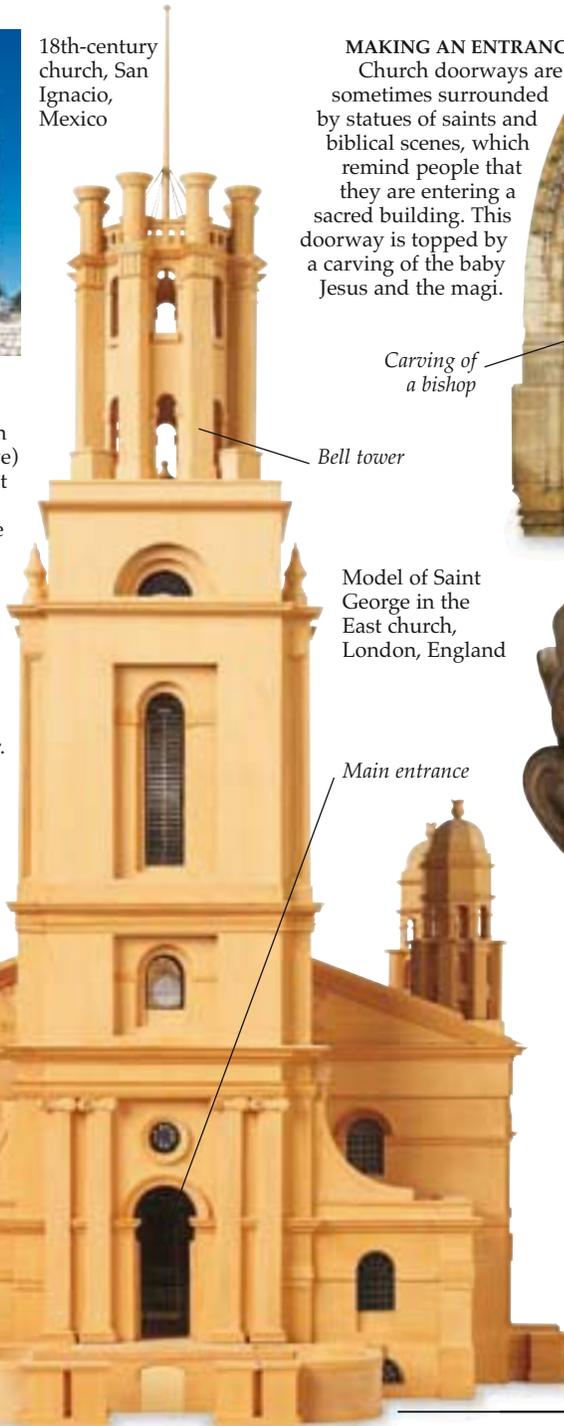
Doorway to a 12th-century church at Loches in France

Carving of a bishop

Carving of Saint Peter

ALL SHAPES AND SIZES

There are many different church designs. The mission church at San Ignacio (above) and Saint George in the East (right) are in the baroque style, which uses decorative features adapted from buildings in ancient Rome. Both have a bell tower and a large door leading to the nave. Elaborate architecture like this is common in Catholic churches, but Protestant buildings tend to be plainer.



Bell tower

Model of Saint George in the East church, London, England

Main entrance



A WORLD OF HORROR
In the Middle Ages, builders often placed carvings of ugly faces, monsters, and other weird beasts on the outside walls of churches. People looking at these grotesque carvings knew that when they went inside the church they were leaving behind the world of horror and the evil that went with it.

GOSPELS IN GLASS
In ancient churches, stained glass was a way of teaching Bible stories to ordinary people, most of whom were not able to read or write. Christian symbols like this fish from Prinknash Abbey in Gloucestershire, England, are particularly popular in modern churches.





15th-century
German
altarpiece

FOCAL POINT

Behind the altar in many churches there may be an altarpiece. This is a screen, painting, or carved relief that focuses attention on the altar itself. An altarpiece may be decorated with scenes from the Bible, images of saints, or representations of everyday life, as in this example that shows a family caring for a newborn child.



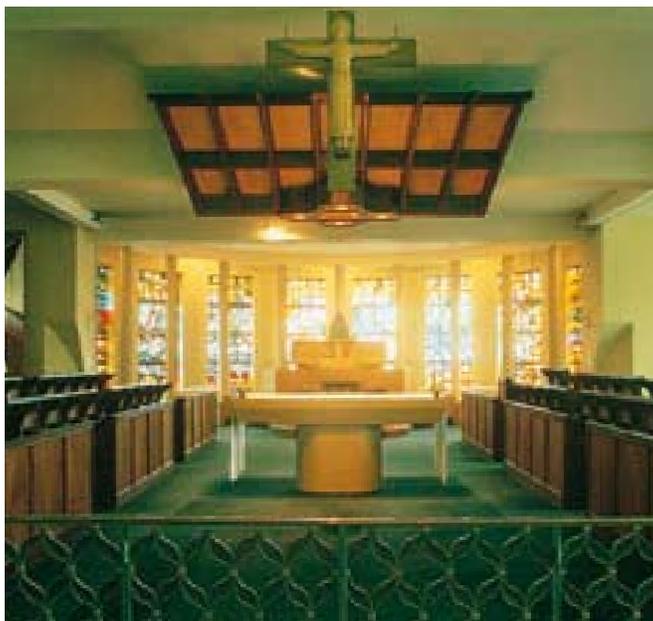
Lectern Bible



Medieval lectern

CHURCH READINGS

The word of God is central to the Christian faith and Bible-readings are part of almost every service. Most churches keep a large Bible on a stand called a lectern. Lecterns are often made in the shape of an eagle, the emblem of Saint John the Evangelist.



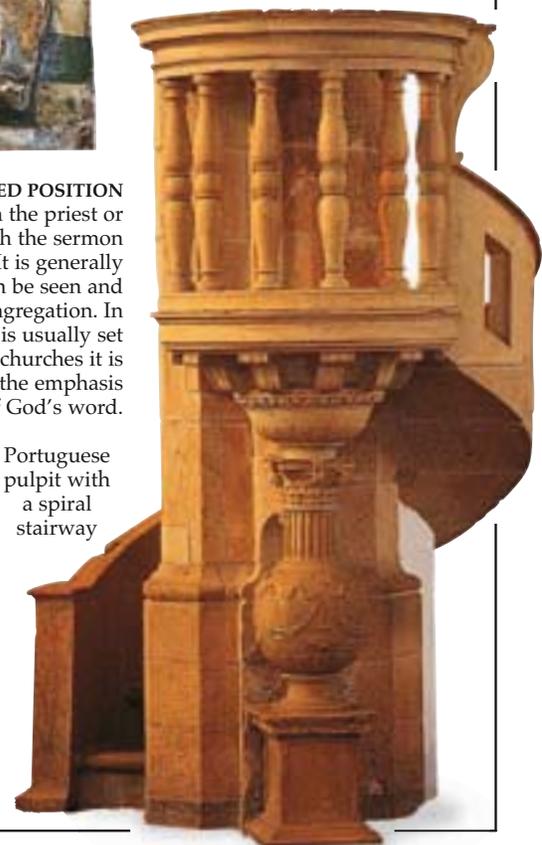
ELEVATED POSITION

The structure in which the priest or minister stands to preach the sermon (p. 54) is called the pulpit. It is generally raised so the preacher can be seen and heard by everyone in the congregation. In Catholic churches the pulpit is usually set to one side, but in Protestant churches it is often central – reinforcing the emphasis on the importance of God's word.

SITTING COMFORTABLY

In a Catholic church like this English monastic chapel, the congregation sits in pews in front of the altar, which is the main focus. In Orthodox churches the altar is hidden behind a screen and there are few seats, so most of the worshippers stand. Congregations in Protestant churches tend to sit facing the pulpit.

Portuguese pulpit with a spiral stairway





Holy Communion

The design on this kneeler combines the bread and wine with *chi* and *rho*, the first letters of the word Christ in Greek.

FOR MOST CHRISTIANS, the church's supreme rite is the re-enactment of the last supper, when participants receive the consecrated, or blessed, bread and wine. Catholics know this as the Mass or Eucharist, Orthodox Christians call it the Holy Liturgy, and Protestants may call it the Holy Communion or the Lord's

Supper. In all churches, the bread and wine are identified with the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Protestants see the two elements as reminders of Jesus' sacrifice. Catholics believe that Christ's body and blood are actually present in the elements of the Mass.

THE ANGLICAN WAY

The various branches of the Christian church celebrate Holy Communion in different ways. These two pages show how Communion is celebrated in an Anglican church. The first part of the service focuses on the word (p. 54). It includes prayers, one or more Bible-readings, a sermon, the Creed (the statement of belief in God), and the Peace ("The Peace of the Lord be always with you").



1 TAKE THE BREAD
After the Peace, a hymn, and an offering, the priest's words recall the last supper. He takes the bread from the Communion table, which may also be referred to as the Lord's table or altar.



2 GIVE THANKS FOR THE BREAD
The priest gives thanks to God for the bread, echoing as he does so the description in the Gospels of how Jesus blessed the bread at the



3 BREAK THE BREAD
Again following the actions of Jesus at the last supper, the priest breaks the bread. This is so that those present may "share in the body of Christ".



4 RECEIVE THE BREAD
The priest invites the congregation to take Communion, and prays that their bodies will be cleansed through Jesus' body. The priest then takes and eats part of the consecrated bread. (Some priests receive the bread after blessing the wine.)



5 TAKE THE WINE
Next, the priest takes the wine from the Communion table. The wine is usually contained in a special goblet, or cup, called a chalice. The chalice represents the vessel that would have held the wine at the last supper.



The priest raises his right hand in a gesture of blessing



The priest offers the bread to the member of the congregation kneeling before him



6 GIVE THANKS FOR THE WINE
The priest blesses the wine. By giving thanks in this way, he has prayed that the souls of both clergy and congregation may be washed with Jesus' "most precious blood".

7 RECEIVE THE WINE
Raising the chalice to his lips, the priest receives the wine. He is now ready to offer Holy Communion to those members of the congregation who have come forwards to take it.

8 GIVE THE BREAD
When enough bread for the congregation to share has been broken, it is distributed to those present. In some churches, the bread may take the form of small, unleavened wafers.

9 GIVE THE WINE
Then members of the congregation take the wine from the chalice in turn. Afterwards, they say a further prayer of thanksgiving before the final hymn, prayer, and blessing bring the service of Holy Communion to an end.

HOLY CUP
This 16th-century chalice is made of silver, and is beautifully decorated with the heads of saints. Although similar chalices are still used today, in some churches, especially those with large congregations, tiny individual cups are handed round instead.

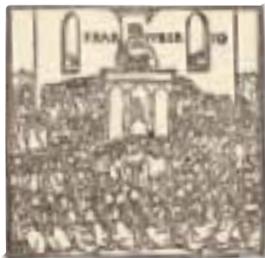
PRECIOUS PLATE
The consecrated bread at Holy Communion is placed on a plate, known as a paten, which usually matches the chalice. Because the bread and wine are so important, both the paten and the chalice are often made of precious metals, such as silver or gold.



SMALL SCALE
Although the usual place to celebrate Holy Communion is in church, it may also take place elsewhere. If a priest or vicar is celebrating Holy Communion with a sick person, he or she will take a portable Communion set consisting of a box for consecrated bread or wafers, a bottle for wine, and a scaled-down paten and chalice.

THE WORD

Religious speeches known as sermons became popular in the Middle Ages, as shown by this 1491 woodcut, and are still a vital part of many church services. The preacher often takes a passage from the Bible as a starting point for the sermon, and uses it to explain a Christian message.



Ways to worship

COMMUNAL WORSHIP IS at the heart of the Christian faith, and many Christians come together regularly to praise God, confess their sins, and show that they are followers of Jesus Christ. Worship can involve all sorts of activities. Reading the Bible, singing hymns, songs and Psalms, praying, and listening to sermons are all aspects of Christian worship used in church services the world over. These services may vary widely in tone and mood, but most contain several of these key elements. For committed Christians, however, worship does not begin and end in church – they dedicate their whole life to God.



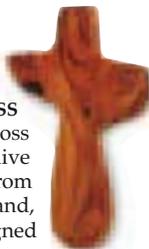
DAILY SERVICE

A breviary is a book used in the Catholic church that contains daily services for the canonical hours – services that are held at regular times each day. Each service consists of a short prayer, a hymn, three Psalms, a lesson, and final prayers. Modern breviaries contain services for morning, daytime, evening, and night time.

Medieval breviary

HOLDING CROSS

This simple cross is made of olive tree wood from the Holy Land, and is designed to be held in one hand during worship. Its rounded, smooth shape makes it comfortable and easy for a sick or elderly person to grip.



Representation of God resting on the Sabbath



THE SABBATH DAY

For thousands of years, the Jews have observed their Sabbath – a day set aside for rest and religious observance to mark God's day of rest after the creation – on a Saturday. The early Christians decided to make Sunday their Sabbath, and this day is still a day of rest in Christian countries.



POPULAR PSALMS

Books of Psalms called psalters, like this 700-year-old example, were some of the most beautiful volumes in the Middle Ages. Psalms are still sung, chanted, or spoken out loud today, and are widely used as the basis for popular hymns and prayers.



ANCIENT AND MODERN

Carols are songs that express religious joy, most widely sung at Christmas. Carols first became popular in the 15th century, but new ones are still being written, sung, and enjoyed alongside the old.

The words to the songs are in Latin



Antiphonal, or song book



Crossed keys are the symbol of Saint Peter

CHRISTIAN CUSHION

People usually kneel or bow their heads when they pray, and some churches provide cushions on which to kneel. These are often embroidered with Christian symbols or scenes. Adopting a special posture for prayer can help concentration, and shows reverence, or respect, when communicating with God.



BEAUTIFUL BOOKS

In medieval Europe many rich people owned a Book of Hours. These beautifully illustrated books contained the words of short religious services to be performed in church or recited at home as part of a person's private religious observance.



Carved angel from the altar at Saint Michael's Cathedral, Chicago, USA

LET US PRAY

Christians pray for all sorts of reasons. They pray to give thanks to God for the creation and for the route to everlasting life given through Jesus Christ. They may also pray to ask for forgiveness for sins, and to ask for God's help in the lives of individuals, groups, or the world as a whole.

Selection of metal and wooden organ pipes

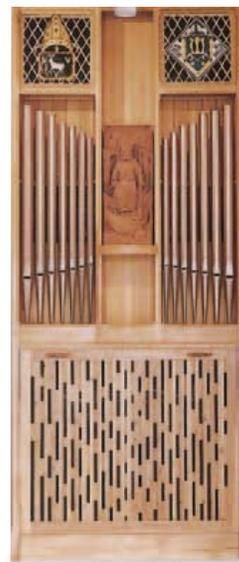


PIPED MUSIC

A vast instrument capable of a huge range of sounds, the organ has been used to accompany singing in churches for hundreds of years. A traditional organ works by blowing air into a series of pipes, which vary in size and so produce notes of different pitches. Each note is controlled by one of a series of keys and pedals, operated by the organist's hands and feet.

PERFECT HARMONY

This abbot from a Benedictine monastery is wearing a habit called a choir cowl. He is singing from an antiphonal, a book of songs designed to be sung by two groups during worship. The music of one group responds to that of the other in a kind of echo. The two groups, who may stand on either side of the church, combine in beautiful harmony.



Modern organ

Christian calendar

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR is dominated by two major cycles, or groups of festivals. The first, at the beginning of the church year, starts with Advent and leads to Christmas. But, at the heart of the Christian calendar, is the observance of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. This begins with the period of Lent, followed by Holy Week, the mourning of Jesus' death on Good Friday, and the celebration of his resurrection on Easter Sunday. The other major Christian festival is Pentecost, which marks the gift of the Holy Spirit to Jesus' disciples.



Priest wearing coloured stoles

CALENDAR COLOURS

Many priests wear different coloured vestments at different times in the church calendar. The colours vary, but red is often worn for Pentecost and green for the Sundays after Epiphany and Trinity, when the Holy Trinity is honoured.



Satsumas and walnuts

Coal sweets

GIFTS FOR THE GOOD

Epiphany, on 6 January, marks the visit of the magi to Bethlehem – the first time that Jesus was revealed to non-Jews. In Spain, children believe that the magi come to give them presents. They put out fruit and nuts for “the magi”, who leave behind gifts for well-behaved children and sweets that look like coal for those who have misbehaved.

Spanish girl with chocolate models of the magi



German Advent calendar

“This very day in David’s town your Saviour was born – Christ the Lord!”

LUKE 2:11

Angel of the Lord to the shepherds

COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS

To most Christians, Advent is the period leading up to Christmas, including the four Sundays before 25 December. During this season, Christians celebrate the arrival of John the Baptist, the coming of the Messiah, and Jesus' future second coming. Calendars offering a treat to eat on each day of Advent are traditional in many homes.



American Christmas meal

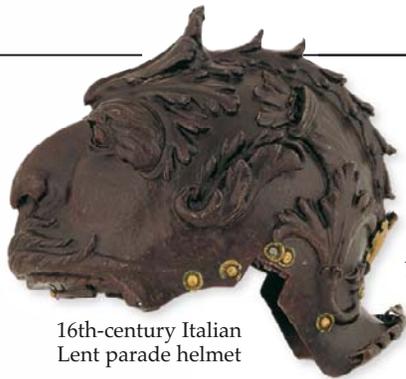
FESTIVE FUN

Jesus' birth is celebrated on 25 December in most branches of the Christian church. People attend joyful services, decorate their homes, exchange presents, and eat festive meals. In the west, a traditional Christmas dinner consists of roast turkey with a selection of vegetables and sauces.



VISUAL REMINDER

A crib is a model of the stable where Jesus was born, featuring the holy family, shepherds, animals, and magi. This example comes from El Salvador. Cribs are a good visual aid for teaching children about the Christmas story – and are a reminder to all of the Christmas message.



16th-century Italian Lent parade helmet

A SOLEMN TIME

Shrove Tuesday is traditionally a time for people to confess their sins and use up rich foods before Lent – the 40-day period preceding Easter. Lent is a time of solemnity, penance, and devotion to God. It was originally a time of fasting, but today most Christians fast only on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

PALM SUNDAY

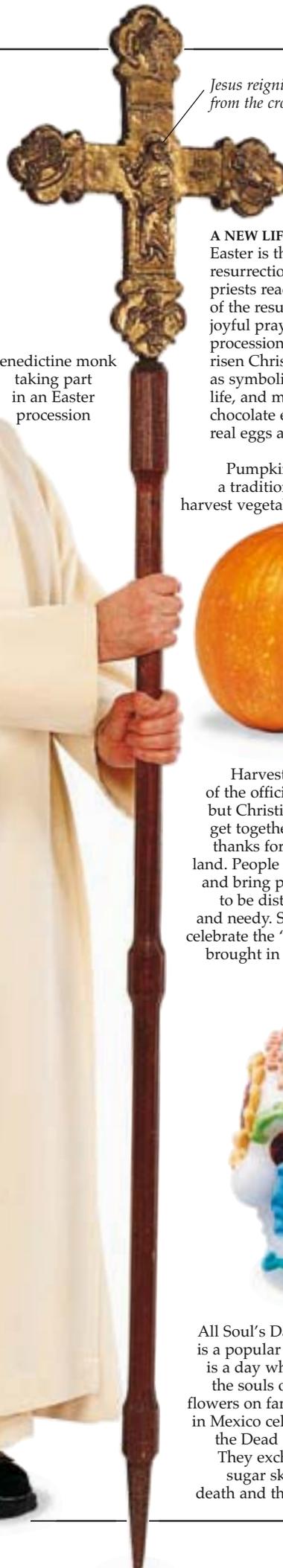
On the Sunday before Easter, Christians commemorate Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. People take part in processions carrying, wearing, and waving palm leaves and palm crosses. Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week, the time when people remember the events that led up to the crucifixion.

Palm leaf crown



Ethiopian boy in Palm Sunday dress

Palm ring



Benedictine monk taking part in an Easter procession

Jesus reigning from the cross

A NEW LIFE

Easter is the feast of Jesus' resurrection. In church, priests read the Gospel story of the resurrection and lead joyful prayers, hymns, and processions to celebrate the risen Christ. Eggs are seen as symbolic of Jesus' new life, and many people eat chocolate eggs or decorate real eggs at Easter time.

Pumpkin – a traditional harvest vegetable



GIVING THANKS

Harvest festival is not part of the official church calendar, but Christians in many places get together each year to give thanks for the produce of the land. People sing special hymns and bring produce to churches to be distributed to the poor and needy. Some seaside towns celebrate the "harvest of the sea" brought in by local fishermen.



LIFE AND DEATH

All Soul's Day, on 2 November, is a popular Catholic festival. It is a day when people pray for the souls of the dead and put flowers on family graves. People in Mexico celebrate two Days of the Dead at this time of year. They exchange gifts like this sugar skull as reminders of death and the continuity of life.

The cycle of life

AS A CHRISTIAN passes through the key stages of life, their relationship with the church develops. This development is marked with rites such as baptism (when a person enters into the church), confirmation (when they confirm their faith), marriage (when a couple are united in the eyes of the church), and funeral services (when a person dies). Baptism, together with confirmation and marriage in the Catholic church, is a sacrament, an outward sign of God's inward and spiritual grace.

Kneeling cushion with a design for a confirmation service



MAKING A COMMITMENT
When an infant is baptized, the parents and godparents make a commitment to Christianity on the baby's behalf. When old enough, the child confirms their faith. After a preparatory course, the candidate for confirmation vows to leave evil behind and to be a committed Christian. The bishop lays his hands on the candidate's head and blesses them.

The baby is dressed in white as a symbol of purity

Anglican priest baptizing a baby



Portable font filled with holy water



BORN AGAIN
In the Baptist church, and some other churches, people are baptized only when they are old enough to decide for themselves that they believe in God. In this "believer's baptism", the person confesses their faith and is completely immersed in water. The baptism symbolizes being washed clean and born again in Jesus.



THE BAPTISM OF JESUS
It is the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the River Jordan that has led several Protestant churches to follow this practice. The total immersion is considered to be symbolic of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

BABY BAPTISM
When an Anglican priest baptizes a baby, she brings the child to the font, reads from the Gospels, says a prayer, and addresses its carers about its Christian upbringing. She then baptizes the child, pouring holy water over its head and saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit". In the Catholic church, the baby is also anointed with consecrated oil, called chrism.

The bride traditionally wears a veil, a symbol of chastity

'TIL DEATH US DO PART

Christians see marriage as a lifelong partnership and some churches, such as the Catholic church, do not recognize divorce. A wedding is therefore both a happy event and a serious one. Weddings are full of symbolism. Orthodox couples, for example, are crowned with wreaths to show that they are rulers of their kingdom – the family.

Lilies are symbols of purity; they also represent the Virgin Mary



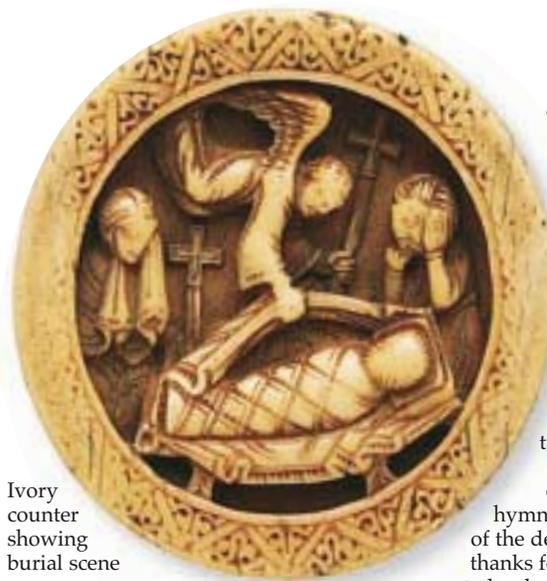
WEDDING CEREMONIES

Churches all over the world hold wedding ceremonies. These are joyful occasions often attended by many guests. The priest establishes that the couple are free to marry, vows and rings are exchanged, and the union is blessed.



The dove reminds couples of the presence of the Holy Spirit

Wedding kneeler



Ivory counter showing burial scene



Mourning brooches from the mid-1800s

CELEBRATING A LIFE

When someone dies, their body is placed in a coffin and taken to church, where mourners gather to celebrate the life of the deceased. Prayers, readings, and hymns remind mourners that the soul of the dead person will live on, and give thanks for this. Finally the body is either cremated or buried in a consecrated graveyard.

White wedding dresses have been popular since the 19th century

DEATH CEREMONIES

Funerals vary widely in style, from solemn and contemplative to noisy and expressive. Protestant funerals include prayers, Bible-readings, hymns, and a eulogy, or speech, commemorating the deceased before the burial or cremation. Catholics pray for the soul of the dead person and may hold a special Requiem Mass in their honour.



Jazz funeral, New Orleans, USA

PUBLIC PRAYER

Many Christians pray at home, but people will also pray in public at times of trouble or prior to performing an important task. Before her race, this athlete asks God for help and dedicates her efforts to God.



“...in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:6
Paul in his letter to the church at Philippi

Christian culture

ARTISTS, WRITERS, AND MUSICIANS have been responding to the Christian message for 2,000 years. Very early in the history of Christianity, people were decorating church walls and writing music for use during services. Soon, much of the art produced in the western world was Christian, and as the faith spread around the world, its influence on art followed. Although there are fewer Christian artists today, Christianity still influences both our art and lives. We swear oaths in court, listen to gospel music, watch films based on Bible stories, and see paintings, statues, and buildings that rework Christian subjects in exciting new ways.



SOLEMN PROMISES
In Christian cultures, the most solemn, binding promise is an oath sworn on the Bible, “by almighty God”. A court official like this judge swears to do his job to the best of his ability. A witness in court swears to tell the entire truth.

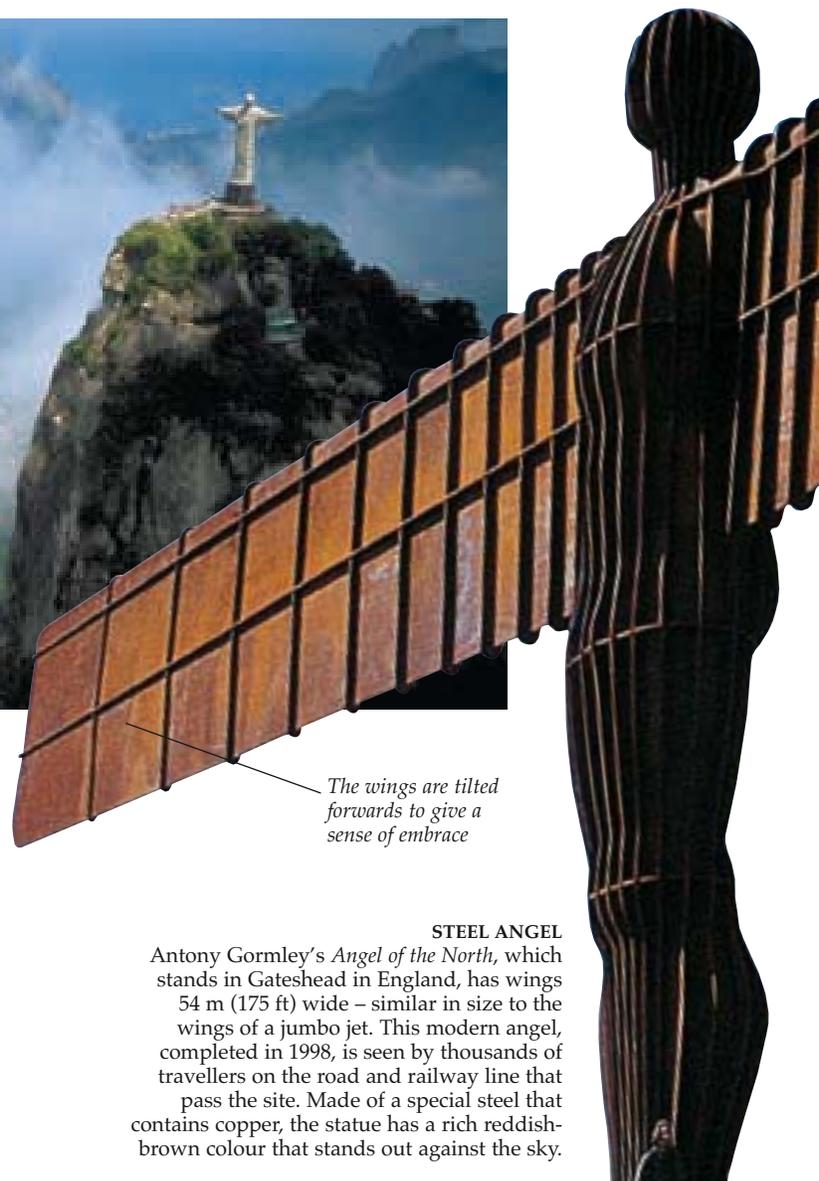


The visual arts

From paintings and statues of Jesus to soaring cathedrals that seem to reach to the heavens, Christianity has had a huge impact on the visual arts. Most famous examples date from earlier times, but visual artists are still being inspired by the faith. Some make art to adorn churches, and others draw on Christian imagery to produce works for a wider public.

CHRIST OF RIO

Completed in 1931, *Christ the Redeemer* stands more than 30 m (100 ft) tall and overlooks Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. It was designed by artist Carlos Oswaldo and carved from soapstone, which, although quite soft, is resistant to weather damage. From the top of the rocky outcrop of Corcovado, the statue dominates the city and has become known the world over as a symbol of Rio.



The wings are tilted forwards to give a sense of embrace

STEEL ANGEL

Antony Gormley's *Angel of the North*, which stands in Gateshead in England, has wings 54 m (175 ft) wide – similar in size to the wings of a jumbo jet. This modern angel, completed in 1998, is seen by thousands of travellers on the road and railway line that pass the site. Made of a special steel that contains copper, the statue has a rich reddish-brown colour that stands out against the sky.

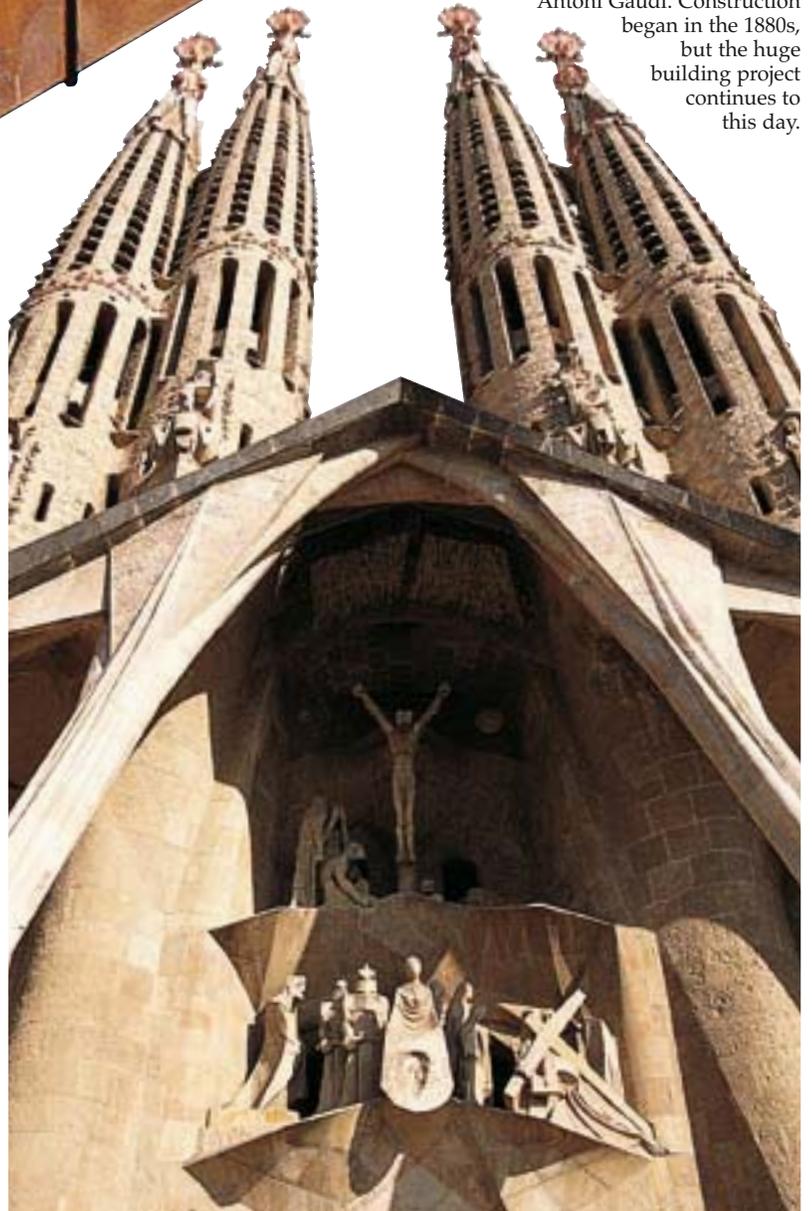
GLASSY GLORY

Popular since the early Middle Ages, stained glass windows flood the interiors of many churches with beautiful coloured light. This spectacular spiral window, leading the eye up towards the heavens, is a modern take on this old tradition. Installed in 1996 at Thanksgiving Chapel in Dallas in the USA, the *Glory Window* was designed by French artist Gabriel Loire.



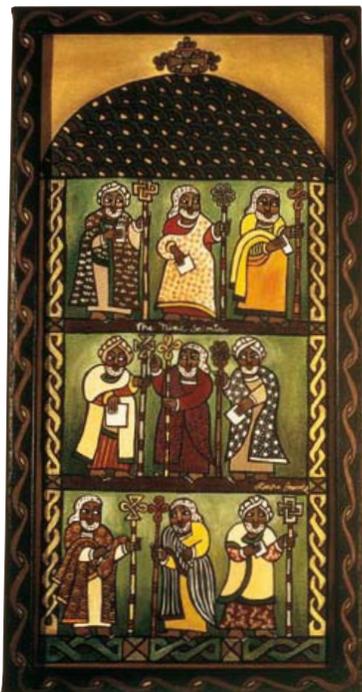
UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Most of the world's cathedrals were finished long ago, but a few are still being built. Barcelona's vast cathedral of the Sagrada Familia (Holy Family) was designed by Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí. Construction began in the 1880s, but the huge building project continues to this day.



THE NINE SAINTS

Modern New York painter and illustrator Laura James is inspired by the art of Ethiopia, and in her painting of nine Ethiopian saints she hopes to introduce people to the history of this country. Christianity came to Ethiopia in the 4th century, so the artist has a long tradition of Christian art from which to draw inspiration.



ACTING WITH PASSION

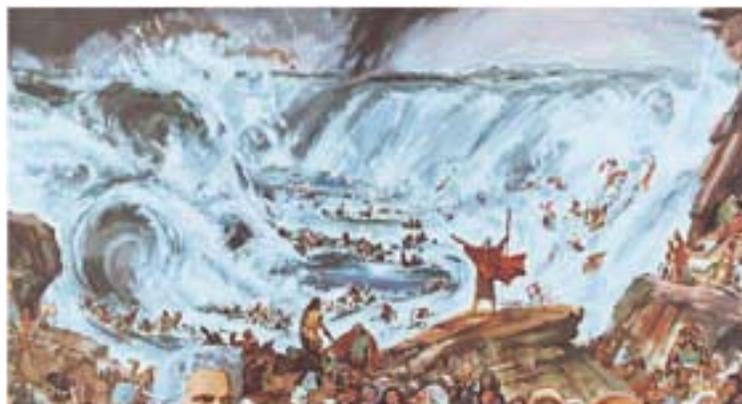
In some parts of Europe, local people put on traditional plays enacting the story of the Passion – the events leading up to Jesus’ crucifixion. In the village of Oberammergau in southern Germany, the Passion play has been staged regularly ever since the people escaped the plague in 1633. The play is now produced every ten years.

This scene is set in the disciple Simon’s house

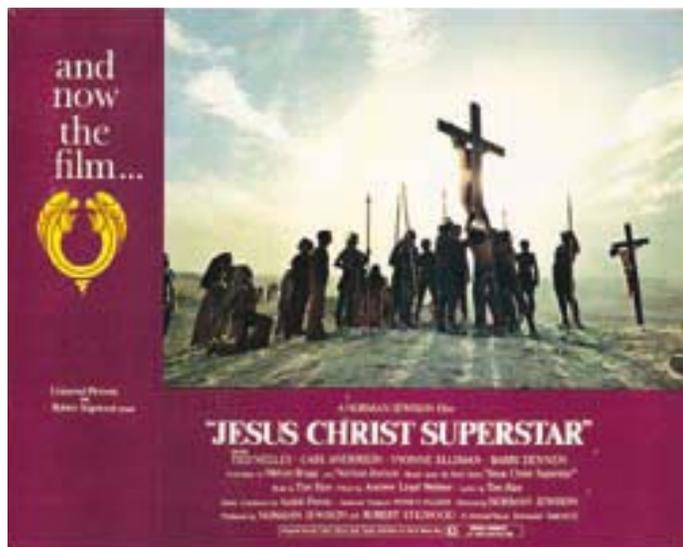


The performing arts

Music has been a part of Christian worship for centuries, and many composers in the Middle Ages were monks who spent their lives writing and singing church music. But from the beginning, religious music influenced other types of music, from extravagant choral pieces to dances and popular songs. Drama has also been influenced by Christianity for hundreds of years, and there are numerous famous films and plays with religious themes.



The parting of the Red Sea



FROM STAGE TO SCREEN

The “rock opera” *Jesus Christ Superstar* was first staged in 1970, and made into a film in 1973. With music by Andrew Lloyd Webber and words by Tim Rice, the production was one of the most popular 20th-century treatments of the Christian story.



Moses

Rameses II

*“Sing to the Lord, all the world!
Worship the Lord with joy;
come before him with happy songs!”*

PSALM 100:1-2
A hymn of praise

EPIC MOVIE

The Ten Commandments – a film created in 1956 by Hollywood director Cecil B. de Mille – tells how Moses led his people out of slavery in Egypt to their promised homeland. It features a huge cast, with Charlton Heston as Moses and Yul Brynner as Rameses II, and spectacular special effects, such as the parting of the Red Sea to let the Israelites pass.



SACRED SONGS

Sacred oratorios (a blend of solo and choral music) became popular in the 18th century. Among the most famous are J. S. Bach's two settings of the Passion story and G. F. Handel's *Messiah*. Handel wrote the piece in less than four weeks in 1741, and its portrayal of Jesus' life is still enjoyed by audiences today, especially around Christmas time.

Handel's original score of *Messiah*



Gospel choir performing in Washington D.C. in the USA

MUSICAL CONVERSATION

Baptist churches in the USA are the original home of gospel music, in which the preacher and congregation create an emotional musical conversation. The excitement of gospel music – with its sliding melodies, joyful shouts, and other vocal effects – has had a huge influence on singers in many diverse areas of modern music, from soul to rock.

THE KING

Rock and roll legend Elvis Presley learned to sing in his local church choir, and was influenced by gospel music. He combined this with rhythm and blues and country music to create a unique style. Later in his career, he recorded unique versions of a number of hymns and carols.



GRACEFUL GOSPEL

Soul singer Aretha Franklin is the daughter of a preacher and a gospel singer from Detroit in the USA. She sang with her father's choir before starting to make her own records. Her music is powerfully emotional and full of strong vocal effects, showing her roots in gospel music. Her album *Amazing Grace* is a collection of reworked gospel songs.

Did you know?

AMAZING FACTS



Benedict XVI

✠ There have been 266 popes of the Roman Catholic Church. They include 205 Italians, 19 Frenchmen, 14 Greeks, 8 Syrians, 6 Germans, 3 Africans, 2 Spaniards, an Austrian, a Palestinian, an Englishman, a Dutchman, and a Pole.

✠ Many popular children's books are based on the Christian story, including C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* series. Aslan the lion symbolizes Christ, while his adversary, the evil White Witch, symbolizes the forces of evil. The stories contain

many allusions to Christ's sacrifice and the constant struggle between good and evil.

✠ The Vatican City in Rome, Italy, is the world's smallest independent state, with a population of just over 900.

✠ Many of the world's most important civil rights leaders have begun as Christian ministers – including Reverend Martin Luther King Jr, who led the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his work against apartheid in South Africa.



Archbishop Desmond Tutu

✠ Charles Darwin was training to be a priest before a scientific fact-finding trip around the world on HMS *Beagle* led him to develop his theory of evolution. By the time he finally published *The Origin of Species* in 1859, he had lost his faith and become agnostic. His theories were greeted with much controversy at the time but are now widely accepted. However, they are still rejected by fundamentalist Christians known as Creationists.



The fish symbol and *ichthys* label

✠ Early Christians used secret symbols to help them communicate and worship without persecution. One way of encoding Jesus's name was the fish symbol – the Greek word for fish, *ichthys*, can also stand for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour". After AD 313, Christians were allowed to worship in public by imperial decree, yet many of these coded signs are still used in Church iconography today.

✠ Martin Luther (1483–1546), renowned for igniting the Protestant movement, also contributed to the popularization of the Church by translating the Bible into his native German (at a rate of more than 1,500 words per day) and writing some of Christianity's most popular hymns.

✠ In the 2001 UK census, 72 per cent of Britons identified themselves as Christian, although only 7 per cent are regular church-goers. Anglicans and Catholics make up the two largest groups.

✠ Since the 4th century, bishops have worn purple as a symbol of their status. Purple, made from an expensive dye, was once worn only by the Roman emperor and senators. The bishops' purple sash showed that they had the same status as Roman senators.

✠ In the 5th century, the monk Dionysius the Short introduced a new Christian calendar centred around the date of Jesus's birth, using the terms AD (*Anno Domini* or Year of our Lord) and BC (Before Christ). This calendar is still used today, even though Dionysius had Jesus's birthday wrong by at least three years. Sometimes BCE (Before the Common Era) and CE (Common Era) are used instead.

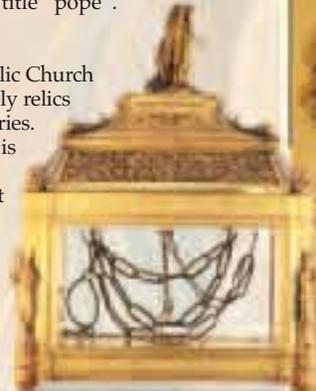
✠ Roughly two billion Christians make up a third of the world's population. As the number of practising Christians in Europe and America (mostly Protestant) declines, Christianity's centre is shifting to the Southern hemisphere of Africa, Latin America, and Asia (mostly Catholic and Pentecostal).

✠ St Pius I (AD 140–155) was the first bishop of Rome to exercise sole authority over the Church. Before this, the Church was governed by a council of elders or deacons. Until 1073, all bishops had the title "pope".

✠ The Catholic Church divides holy relics

into three categories. A first-class relic is part of a saint's body or an object directly relating to the events of a saint's life. A second-class relic is an object or article of clothing owned by a saint.

A third-class relic is a piece of cloth touched to the body of a saint after death, or else brought to a saint's shrine.



St Peter's chains are a first-class relic



Mary in blue robes

✠ An important duty of early monks was to copy the scriptures by hand onto illuminated (or illustrated) pages. The detailed artwork used pigments made from precious metals and stones, such as gold and lapis lazuli – a stone so rare that its rich blue was reserved for the robes of the Virgin Mary.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q What denominations make up Christianity?

A Christianity is the world's largest religion, followed by Islam and Hinduism. The major Christian denominations include Roman Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Baptists, Anglicans (or Episcopalians), Presbyterians, Lutherans, Pentecostals, and Methodists. Most share a belief in the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Many of the smaller Protestant sects, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, are centred around their founder's unique interpretation of Jesus's teachings.



Jerry Falwell, a leader of the Christian Right

Q What is the "Christian Right"?

A The Christian Right is an umbrella term for the American supporters of a fundamental brand of Christianity, which holds very conservative social and political views. They oppose any policies that they see as un-Christian, such as the right to abortion and the teaching of evolution in schools. Through their churches, they influence large numbers of voters to elect and put pressure on governments to turn their values and beliefs into official policy.



White smoke at the Vatican

Q How is the pope chosen?

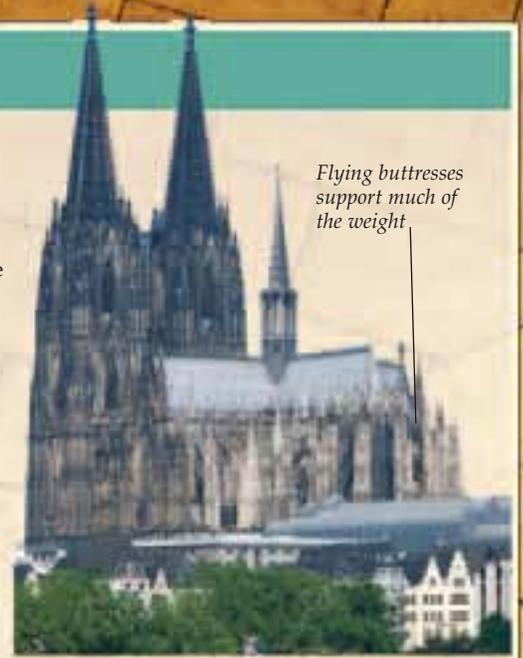
A After a pope's death, cardinals gather at the Vatican to elect a new pope. They cast their votes on paper ballots, which are counted and burned. Black smoke from the chimney signals that no candidate has received a two-thirds majority and the votes are recast. White smoke marks the election of a new pope.

Q What are the sacraments?

A A sacrament is a Christian rite intended to confer God's grace on the recipient. Seven sacramental rites have been used since the earliest days of the Church. Protestants regard only baptism and the Eucharist (or communion) as sacramental rites. The Catholic and Orthodox churches also consider confirmation, ordination, marriage, confession, and holy unction (or anointing the sick) as sacramental rites.

Q How long did it take to build a Gothic cathedral?

A The Gothic cathedrals that came into fashion in the 12th century were so massive and ornate that funds often ran out before they could be finished. For this reason, and because of the sheer amount of labour required, a church could take centuries to build. Cologne Cathedral in Germany took more than 700 years to complete.

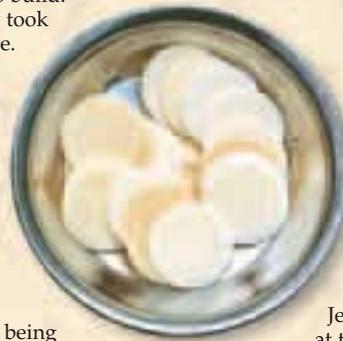


Flying buttresses support much of the weight

Cologne Cathedral

Q Why do the colours on the altar and on a priest's vestments change?

A Every season has its own colour, chosen to suit the mood of the events it commemorates. For example, during Lent, purple is used to remind Christians that they are being asked to make sacrifices and prepare for Easter. On Easter Sunday, white is used to reflect the joyfulness of Christ's resurrection.



Communion wafers

Q Can any bread become communion?

A A priest's blessing makes any bread suitable for communion. However, most churches choose to use simple, unleavened bread, which is what Jesus would have blessed at the Last Supper.

Q What are the core beliefs?

A Most denominations agree that a list of core beliefs should include the Trinity (God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit), the deity (godlike nature) of Jesus, his resurrection from the dead, his death as atonement for our sins, and salvation through faith or grace alone. Catholics also stress the sacred nature of Jesus's mother, the Virgin Mary.

Q Who becomes a saint?

A A saint or holy person is someone who after their death is recognized as having achieved, through their virtuous behaviour or deeds, the right to be worshipped or held up by the community as a role model. Canonization is the process of officially recognizing a person as a saint.

Record Breakers

LARGEST CATHEDRAL

The Cathedral of St John the Divine in New York City measures 36,880 sq m (121,000 sq ft) – the size of two football pitches.

LONGEST-REIGNING POPE

Some Christians consider St Peter, one of Christ's apostles, to be the longest-reigning pope. He supervised the early Church for over 34 years. Others give the title to Pius IX, who held office for 31 years during the 19th century.

OLDEST CHURCH

The earliest known church built specifically as a Christian place of worship was found in Aqaba, Jordan. It dates from the late 3rd century.

MOST POPULAR HYMN

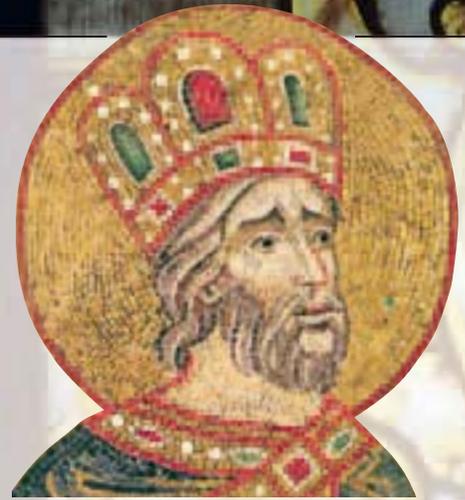
According to an online poll, the most popular hymn is *Amazing Grace*, which was composed in the 18th century by John Newton.

LARGEST BIBLE

The world's largest Bible is 110 cm (43 ½ in) tall, has a spine that is 86 cm (34 in) wide, and weighs 496 kg (1,094 lb).

Timeline

CHRISTIANITY HAS ITS ROOTS in the Old Testament books of the Bible with their stories of creation and God's special relationship with the Jewish people. The pivotal event, however, is the birth of Christ. Documents from the early years disagree about some of the dates, so it is not always possible to pin them down exactly. But as this timeline shows, Christianity has helped to shape much of the history of the Western world.



Constantine

c. 2100 BC

Birth of Judaism. According to the Bible's Book of Genesis, God made a Covenant with Abraham, promising him a new land in Canaan where he would found a great nation, and that the Jews would be God's "chosen people" if they agreed not to worship any other god.



Moses with the Ten Commandments

c. 1250 BC

Moses leads the Jewish people out of Egypt in the Exodus. He receives the Ten Commandments from God on Mt Sinai, en route to Canaan.

37 BC

King Herod is appointed ruler of Judaea, where Jesus will be born. This small province in the Roman Empire includes what is now Israel and the Palestinian territories. Many of Herod's subjects are unhappy with his reign.

31 BC

Octavian, Julius Caesar's adopted son, becomes Augustus, emperor of Rome. Jesus's parents, Joseph and Mary, will travel to Bethlehem for Augustus's census.

c. 4 BC

Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

The Holy Family



4 BC

Herod dies and his kingdom is divided among his sons.

c. AD 26

John the Baptist, Jesus's cousin, begins his ministry, at the age of 27. Living in the desert, he performs mass baptisms and tries to prepare the people of Jerusalem for the coming of a new Christ, or Messiah.

c. AD 27

Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist and begins his ministry. He travels around Galilee and Judaea, preaching a gospel of faith and salvation with the help of his 12 apostles, or disciples.

c. AD 30

Jesus is crucified on the orders of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, having been charged with sedition (inciting rebellion against the state).

c. AD 49

The Council of Jerusalem, presided over by Peter, decides that many Jewish laws, such as circumcision and dietary restrictions, do not apply to Christian converts.

AD 64–311

Persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire starts with Emperor Nero, who finds them useful scapegoats for the Great Fire of Rome. Their active proselytization (looking for new converts) and allegiance to Christ are seen as a threat to the emperor's authority, since emperors are held up as gods themselves. Many Christians are martyred (killed for their faith), and some will become saints.

AD 70

A fierce Jewish rebellion against Roman rule ends with the Fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. About 600,000 people are killed.

AD 313

Emperor Constantine converts to Christianity. His Edict of Milan decrees freedom of worship for all Roman subjects.

AD 325

Constantine summons 300 bishops to a Council at Nicaea to draw up the statement of Christian beliefs known as the Nicene Creed. It promotes the idea of the Trinity, or God as three beings in one: Father (God), Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit (God's continuing presence in the world).

AD 367

Bishop Athanasius authorizes 27 books to be included in the New Testament.

AD 380

Christianity is made the official religion of the Roman Empire.

AD 382–405

Jerome works on the Vulgate, a translation of the Bible from its Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek parts into a single Latin volume.



Pages from a 15th-century Vulgate

AD 430

Death of Saint Augustine of Hippo, one of the most important figures in the development of Christian beliefs. Author of many works, he promotes key doctrines, such as salvation, grace, and original sin.

AD 432

Saint Patrick brings Christianity to Ireland. It later spreads to Scotland with Saint Columba, who founds a community on the island of Iona. This marks the beginning of Celtic Christianity.

1054

Disagreements between the heads of the Western and Eastern churches lead to the split known as the Great Schism, when Pope Leo IX and Patriarch Michael Cerularius excommunicate each other. The Western church, based in Rome, becomes known as Roman Catholic, and the Eastern church, based in Constantinople (capital of the Byzantine empire), as Orthodox.

1095

Pope Urban II calls for a crusade to defend Christian lands in the East against the Turks. In response, European rulers raise armies for the First Crusade and take Jerusalem in 1099, massacring its Muslim population. Eight more Crusades follow, after losing Jerusalem, but fail to retake it. The last is in 1271.

1215

The Fourth Lateran Council is the most important church council of the Middle Ages. Amongst other decrees, it promotes the doctrine of transubstantiation.

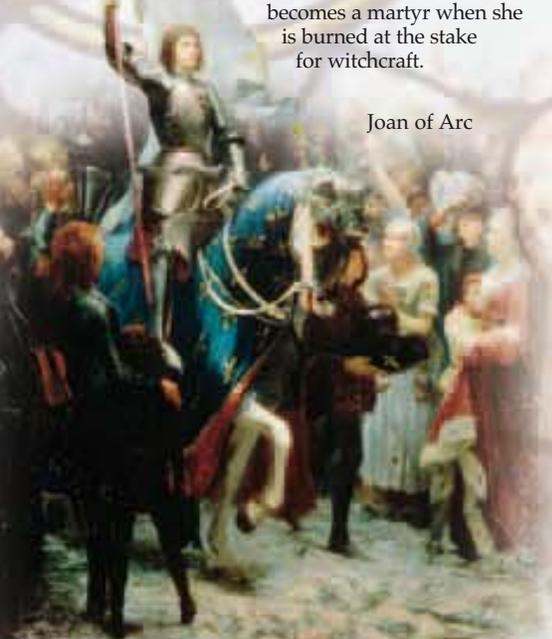
1378-1423

Disagreements over the election of Urban VI lead to a new election of a second pope, who is installed in Avignon, France. The Western Schism brought about by these events is finally resolved when the papacy is re-established in Rome.

1431

After responding to divine inspiration and leading the armies of France, Joan of Arc becomes a martyr when she is burned at the stake for witchcraft.

Joan of Arc



Creationist Christians selling literature at the Scopes trial

1478-1834

The Spanish Inquisition, founded by Ferdinand and Isabella of Castile, becomes an institution notorious for its use of torture and execution to suppress heresies within the Catholic Church. Historians estimate that between 2,000 and 30,000 people were killed during this period.

1517

Martin Luther nails his 95 Theses to a church door in Wittenberg, Germany, in protest against the Church's corrupt practices, including the sale of Indulgences. Intended as a call for reform, their unexpected consequence will be to split the Church in two and start the Protestant Reformation.

1534

After the pope refuses to allow Henry VIII to divorce his wife, the king forces the English Church to break from Rome and make him its new leader. This starts the process that brings Protestantism to England. In 1559, his daughter Elizabeth I establishes the Reformed Church of England, also known as the Anglican or Episcopalian Church.

1536

French theologian John Calvin publishes his defence of Protestant ideas and is forced into exile. The city-state of Geneva invites him to put his ideas into practice, setting an influential example and becoming a renowned sanctuary for religious refugees.

1791

Death of John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church and famed for his open-air preaching among the poor. His teachings will inspire the 20th-century Charismatic Movement.

1841

David Livingstone, a Scottish missionary, starts to set up missions across Africa.

1869

The First Vatican Council announces the Dogma of Papal Infallibility, which states that certain decrees are inherently correct.

1925

The "Scopes Monkey Trial" in Tennessee, USA, draws widespread attention to the opposition of Christian fundamentalists to Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, published 65 years earlier.

1948

The World Council of Churches holds its first meeting. Part of the ecumenical movement, its main aim is to promote unity between the different Christian Churches.

1962-65

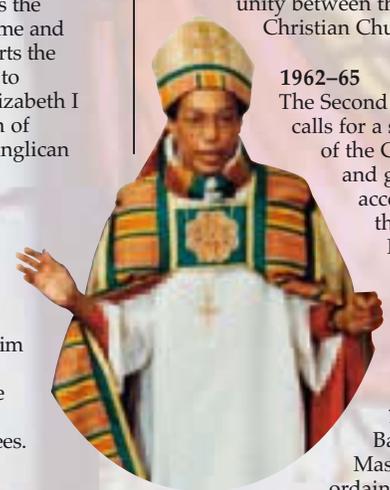
The Second Vatican Council calls for a spiritual renewal of the Catholic Church and greater accommodation with the modern world. Reforms include making Mass more accessible by replacing Latin with the local language.

1989

Barbara Harris of Massachusetts, USA, is ordained the first female Anglican bishop.

2005

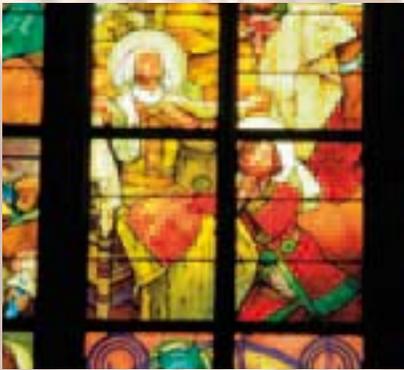
Benedict XVI, a German, is elected the 266th pope.



Bishop Harris

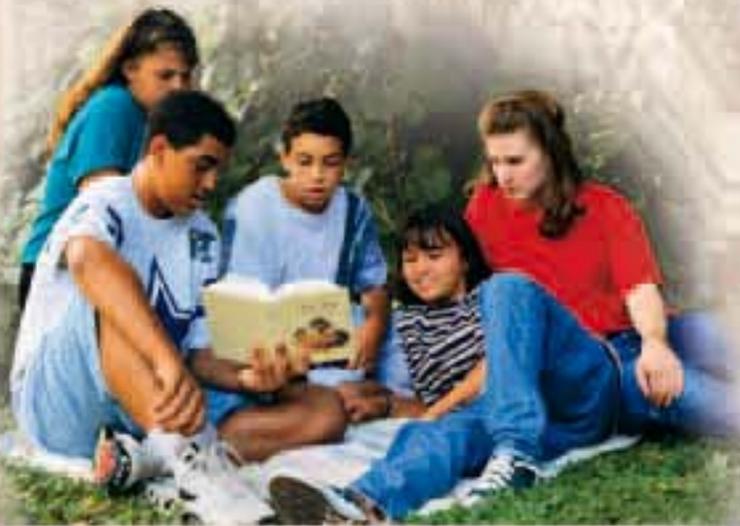
Find out more

WHETHER YOU LIVE IN A BIG CITY WITH ACCESS to top museums or a small community with a single church, there are plenty of opportunities to learn more about Christianity. Often the best place to start is your local church. Many churches run youth programmes, social activities, and performances of devotional music. You can also find many examples of Christian art in galleries and museums. The Internet is full of resources and information that are only a click away.



VISIT MUSEUMS

Most major museums or galleries have permanent exhibits of religious art and artefacts. Look for paintings and statues of Jesus, stained glass, and even richly decorated chalices.



READ THE BIBLE

There are many different versions of the Bible, so if you find yours difficult to understand, visit a Christian bookstore for help in finding one that is more accessible. Some come with illustrations, background information, or study guides to help you get the most out of your reading.

USEFUL WEBSITES

- To find statistics on the world's religions, including every Christian denomination; also lists the religious affiliations of famous people:
www.adherents.com
- For information on the popes, biographies of the saints, news updates from Rome, and a map of Vatican City:
www.vatican.va
- For explanations of different religions, including plenty of history and facts about Christianity:
www.religionfacts.com
- For a good example of a Christian youth site full of useful links and information:
www.kernowyouth.co.uk

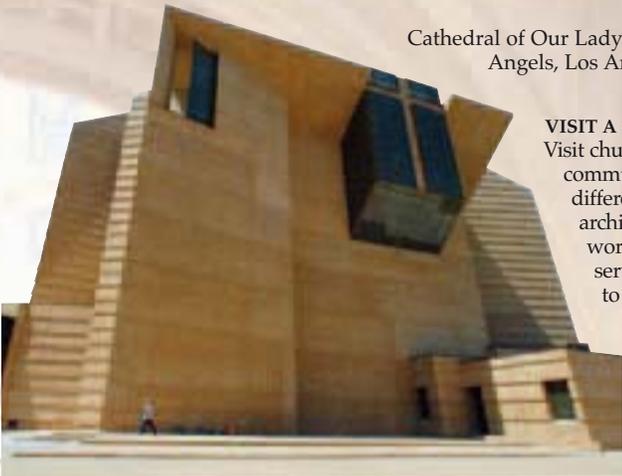
Playing an angel in the Nativity, a re-enactment of Christ's birth

PARTICIPATE IN YOUTH GROUPS

Local churches can help you find Christian youth groups in your area – or you can try the Internet. Many youth groups spend time reading the scriptures together or discussing the readings and sermons from that week's service. Some also put on special holiday programmes and are active volunteers in their communities.

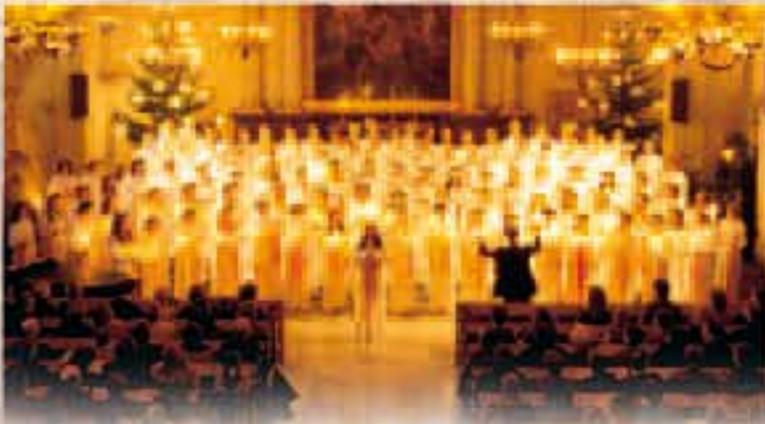


Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles, USA



VISIT A CHURCH

Visit churches in your community to see different styles of architecture and worship. Regular services are open to everyone, but be sensitive – if the service is not of your faith, you may want to stay seated during the communion or other blessings.



LISTEN TO CHURCH MUSIC

If your church has a resident choir, find out when they perform and drop by to listen. You can find out about other choirs or performances of religious works by renowned composers by checking the listings in your local newspaper. You will find that different churches use different styles of music – Latin Masses in Catholic churches, celebratory hymns in Anglican churches, or gospel music in Pentecostal churches.

WATCH FILMS

Cinema has often borrowed Christian themes and stories to draw in audiences. Musicals, such as *Jesus Christ Superstar*, treat Jesus's story with a light touch, in contrast with more dramatic re-enactments, such as *The Passion of Christ*. This created controversy with its graphic portrayal of Jesus's suffering in the period before and during his Crucifixion.

Places to visit

WESTMINSTER ABBEY, LONDON

This largely Gothic church, built on the scale of a cathedral, is the traditional place of coronation for English monarchs. The original Abbey was built by the Saxons. Many famous people, such as Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, and Dr Johnson, lie buried within its walls.

ROSSLYN CHAPEL, EDINBURGH

The 15th-century Rosslyn Chapel was originally intended as part of a larger building. A visit is a thrilling experience as almost every surface is covered in detailed carvings of biblical scenes or vivid symbolic imagery. The Chapel featured in the bestselling book *The Da Vinci Code*.

SKELLIG MICHAEL, COUNTY KERRY

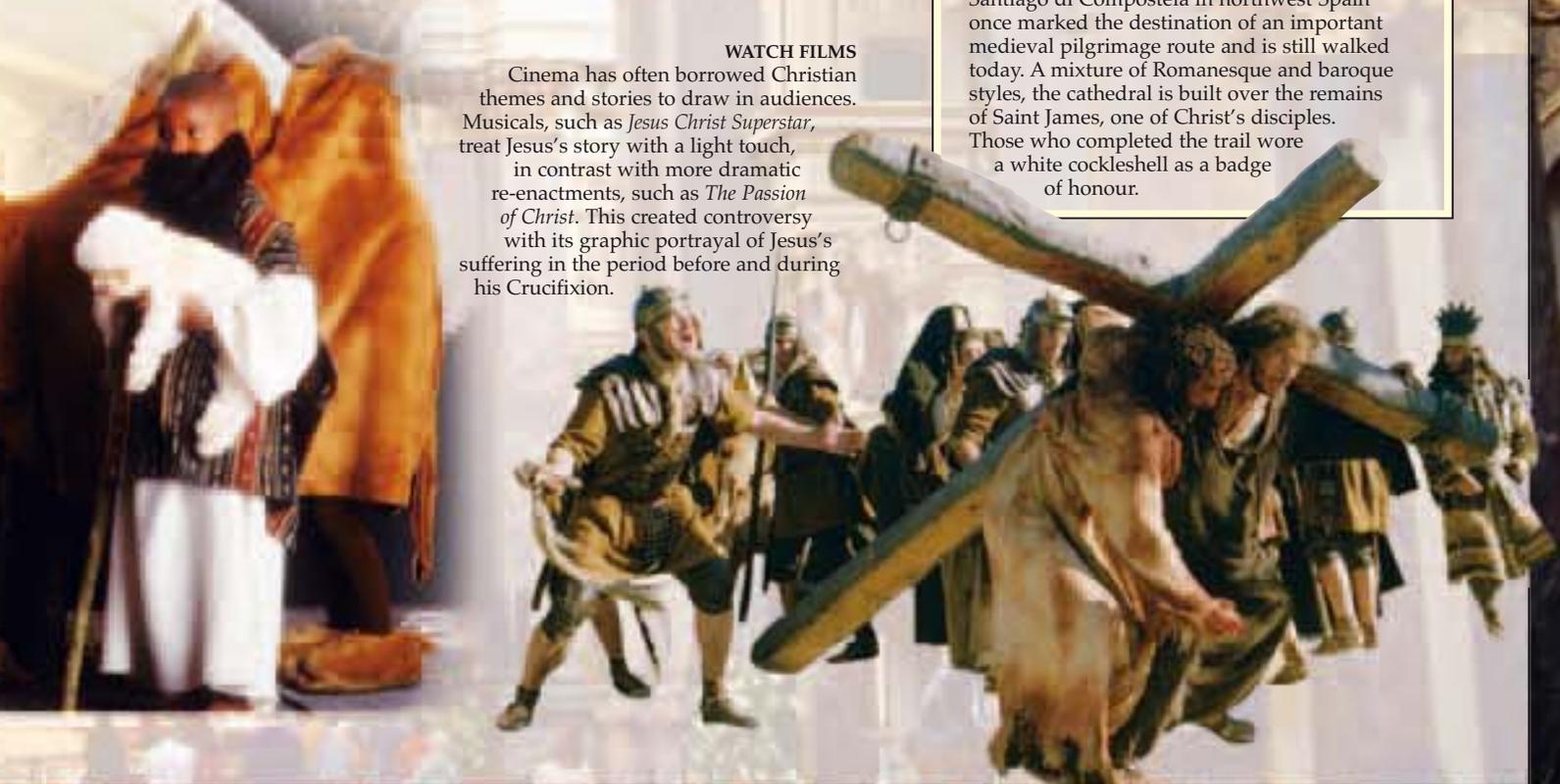
This mysterious barren rock rises 213 m (700 ft) out of the sea 13 km (8 miles) off the Irish west coast. Now a World Heritage Site, during the 1st century it was home to a community of 12 monks for over 200 years until disruption by Viking raids. Today, the tiny monastery is a place of pilgrimage and can be reached by a steep stairway of 600 stone steps.

ST PETER'S BASILICA, ROME

Conceived as the "greatest church in Christendom" and completed in 1590, St Peter's dominates the tiny Vatican state. Designed in the form of a cross with a huge dome over its centre, it is built on the legendary tomb of St Peter, Christ's disciple and the first pope. Many important architects and artists worked on it, including Bramante and Michelangelo, who designed the dome and painted the Sistine Chapel ceiling. The world's largest church, in Yamassoukro, Ivory Coast, is modelled on St Peter's.

SANTIAGO DI COMPOSTELA CATHEDRAL

Santiago di Compostela in northwest Spain once marked the destination of an important medieval pilgrimage route and is still walked today. A mixture of Romanesque and baroque styles, the cathedral is built over the remains of Saint James, one of Christ's disciples. Those who completed the trail wore a white cockleshell as a badge of honour.



Glossary

ABBOT/ ABBESS The head of a community of monks or nuns.

ALTAR A raised structure at the east end of a church, where bread and wine are consecrated.

ANGEL A spiritual being who may act as a messenger from God or as a guardian to humans.

ANNUNCIATION An announcement, specifically the announcement that Mary would bear the Son of God.

ANOINTING The act of conferring a blessing, typically by making the sign of the cross over a person's head with oil or water.

APOSTLE A missionary, a supporter, or a person sent to spread the word of Christ; specifically, one of Jesus's 12 disciples during his lifetime.

ASPERGILLUM A small, perforated ball or brush used for sprinkling holy water during church services.

ASSUMPTION The taking of a soul into Heaven. The religious holiday called the Feast of the Assumption celebrates the taking of Mary's soul into Heaven.

BAPTISM A sacrament in which holy water is used to bless a new member of the church and "wash away" his or her original sin.

BISHOP A high-ranking member of the clergy with spiritual and administrative powers over a diocese or group of churches.

CARDINAL Senior official in the Roman Catholic Church, ranking just below the pope. Duties include advising the pope and electing new popes. Most also lead a diocese or archdiocese.

CATACOMBS Underground cemeteries made up of cave-like hallways. During the 300 years after Christ's death when Christianity was illegal, many Christians used the catacombs to worship in secret.

CATHEDRAL The principal church of a diocese, often large and ornate. The name is derived from *cathedra*, which is the Latin word for "throne", or the official seat of a bishop.

CHALICE A ceremonial cup from which communion wine is taken.

CONFESSION A sacrament in which a person confesses

their sins in order to be absolved or forgiven. In the Catholic tradition, a priest hears confession before granting absolution. In the Protestant tradition, the sincere act of confession through prayer is believed to achieve absolution.

COWL The hood or hooded cloak worn by a monk.

CROZIER A tall staff shaped like a shepherd's crook that symbolizes a bishop's or abbot's office.

CRUCIFIXION The act of executing a person by hanging them on a cross; specifically, Jesus's death on the cross.

DENOMINATION An organized group of Christians that adheres to a certain set of practices and beliefs.

DOGMA A decree handed down as an absolute truth from the pope.

ENCYCLICAL An official letter from the pope to all Roman Catholic bishops.

EPISTLE A letter, especially a formal or official letter.

EUCHARIST Another word for communion; the re-enactment of Christ's sharing of bread and wine as his body and blood at the Last Supper.

EXCOMMUNICATE To expel from membership of the Church.

GOOD SAMARITAN Like the character in Jesus's parable, someone who is willing to help another person, even if the person is an enemy or stranger.

GOSPEL One of the first four books of the New Testament, by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each gospel presents the story of Jesus Christ from his birth to his death and resurrection. A gospel reading is included in most church services.

Chalice

GRACE The spiritual state of being close to God; a short prayer recited before or after a meal to invoke a blessing on the food.

HABIT A nun's or monk's uniform.

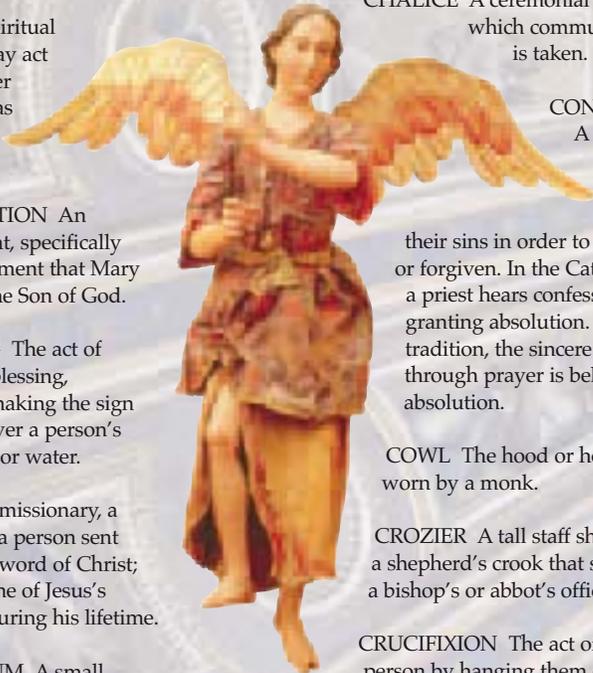
HERETIC A baptized person who holds beliefs contrary to Church teachings.

HOLY ORDERS The sacrament of being ordained as a priest, nun, or other minister of the Church.

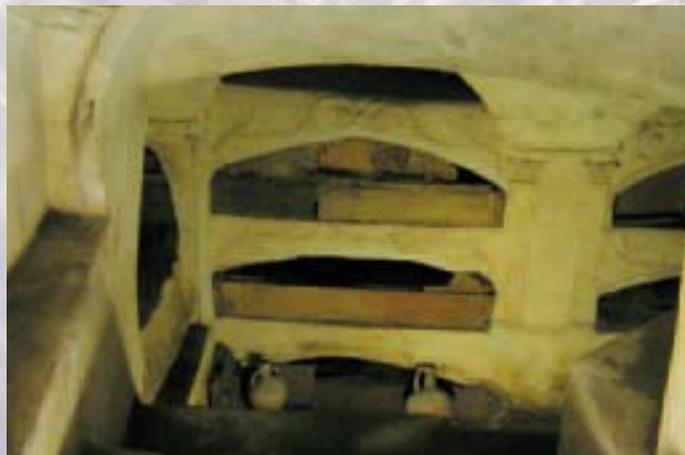
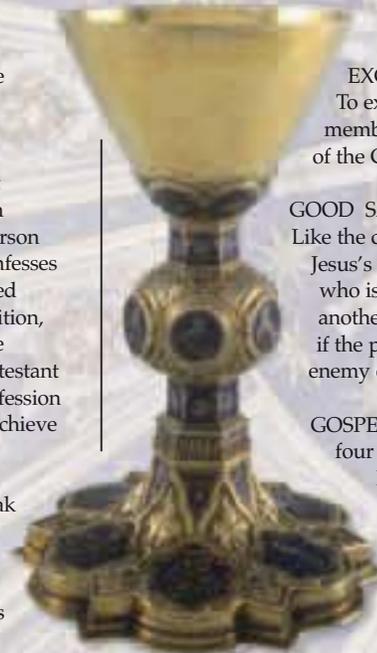
HOLY WATER Water that has been blessed by a priest for use in church services.

ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPT A handwritten book whose pages are illustrated with colourful, intricate artwork, usually by scribes in a monastery.

INDULGENCE A "credit" for grace or absolution (forgiveness of sins) that was once sold to parishioners by Catholic Church officials.

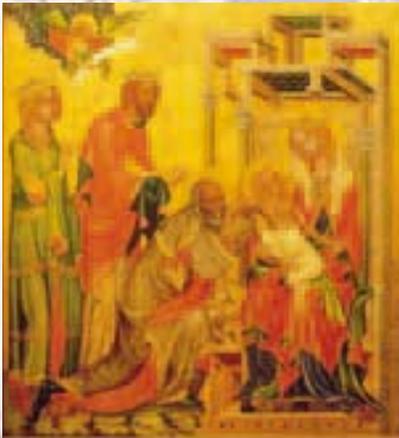


Angel



Catacomb

MAGI Wise men from the East, often referred to as the three kings, who visited the baby Jesus in Bethlehem.



Magi

MANGER A trough from which animals eat; specifically, used as a "cradle" for the baby Jesus.

MANTLE A loose, sleeveless overgarment worn by priests during church services.

MARTYR A person who suffers death rather than renounce their religious beliefs.

MESSIAH One of Christ's titles; specifically, the long-awaited saviour of the Jews.

MIRACLE An occurrence that cannot be explained by the laws of nature and is attributed to God or a saint.

MITRE A tall, pointed headdress worn by bishops and abbots.

MONASTERY A place where monks live and worship together as a community.

MONK A male member of a religious community who has taken a vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

MYRRH A kind of fragrant resin; one of the gifts brought to the baby Jesus by the magi.

NUN A female member of a religious community who has taken a vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

ORTHODOX Relating to the Eastern branch of Christianity.

PAGAN A person who worships many gods or any religion other than Christianity, Judaism, or Islam.

PARABLE A story told to teach a lesson.

PATEN A ceremonial plate used to carry bread for the Eucharist.

PIETÀ A scene, often depicted in religious art, of Mary holding the dead Jesus after he has been taken down from the cross.

PILGRIM A person who travels to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion.

POPE The elected head of the Catholic Church.

PRIEST A person ordained to lead church services and perform sacraments.

PSALM A sacred song or poem.

PSALTER A book of psalms for devotional use.

PULPIT A podium in a church from which readings or sermons are delivered.

PURGATORY According to Catholic belief, a place between Heaven and Hell, where one may have to wait for sins to be absolved before being admitted into Heaven.

RELIC A scrap of clothing, bone, or other artefact from the life of a saint, which is believed to help its holder in understanding the scriptures and often to have healing properties as well.

RESURRECTION Jesus's coming back to life from death.

RITUAL A prescribed form of religious ceremony.

ROSARY A circular string of beads with a crucifix attached, used as a devotional aid in Catholic prayer.

SABBATH A day of rest and worship: Sunday for Christians, Saturday for Jews.

SACRAMENT A formal religious ceremony conferring God's grace on those who receive it. All denominations recognize baptism and the Eucharist as sacramental rites.

SACRIFICE An offering of something valued to a god or for the sake of a higher consideration.

SAINT A person whose good works on Earth have earned them official recognition as holy beings from the Church after his or her death.

SCHISM One of two major breaks in the Christian Church – between the Eastern and Western churches in the 11th century, or between the papal seats of Rome and Avignon during the 14th and 15th centuries.

SCRIPTURE The writings of the Bible, also known as Holy Writ.

SECT *see* DENOMINATION.

SHRINE A place or object of worship.

SOUL The spiritual part of a person as opposed to the physical body.

SPIRE A vertical, pointed structure that rises above a church's roofline.

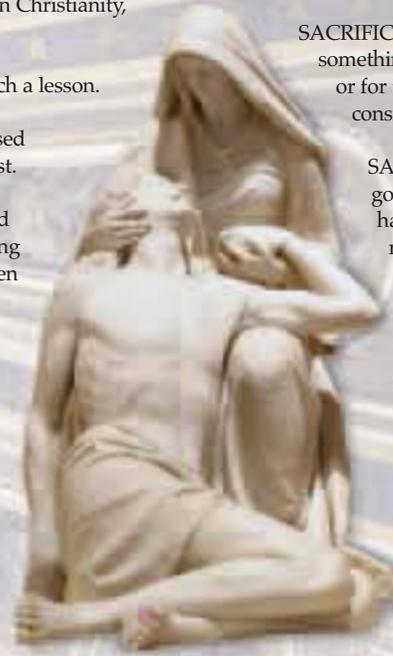
STOLE A long, thin band worn over the shoulders of a priest.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION The Catholic doctrine that bread and wine changes into the body and blood of Christ when blessed during the Eucharist.

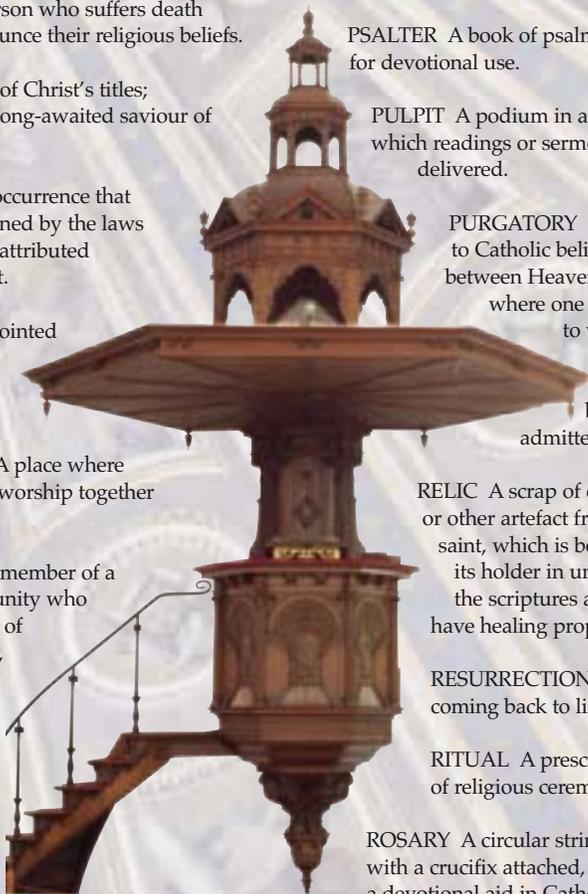
TRINITY The three aspects of God, consisting of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

VESTMENTS Ceremonial clothing.

VESTRY A room in a church where vestments are kept and parochial meetings are held.



Pietà



Pulpit



Vestments

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