

## Visiting the Patriarchal Basilica of Aquileia







# 1. What the Patriarchal Basilica of Aquileia looks like

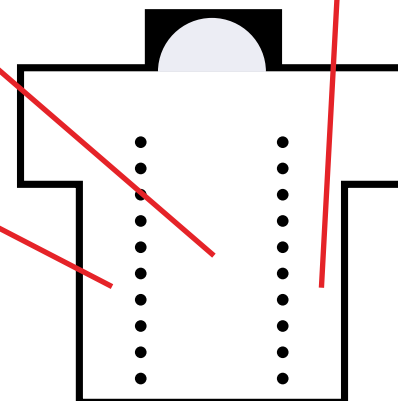


Left aisle

Central aisle

Right aisle

The Basilica of Aquileia is very large and beautiful. This Basilica is so big because many people used to come here to pray. The Basilica is made up of **three aisles**. The aisle is like a very long room.





The biggest and most important aisle is the central aisle.

To the right and left  
there are **2 side aisles**.

The side aisles are smaller  
rectangular rooms.

The aisles of the church are divided  
by many arches and columns.



The floor of the entire basilica is made of **mosaic**.

A mosaic is a drawing made  
with many little squares of stone  
or of coloured glass placed next to each other.

A mosaic can be made on the floors,  
on the walls and on the ceilings.

Making a mosaic is very difficult.

For this reason mosaics are very precious.





The roof of the Basilica is made of wood.  
Some parts of the roof are painted with stars.

At the end of the main aisle  
you see the **altar**.  
The altar is the table that priests  
and bishops use to say mass.



Behind the altar is the **apse**.  
The apse is in the shape  
of a half circle.  
In this apse there is a big **fresco**.  
A fresco is a painting made on a wall.





On the following pages we explain

- some parts of the mosaics
- the apse fresco.



To see the mosaics you need to walk over a glass walkway.

People cannot walk on the mosaics

because they are very precious and delicate.

The walkway is made of glass

because then you can see what the floor looks like.

Don't be afraid, you can hold onto the handrail if you want.



Looking at some of the mosaics is a bit difficult because they are far away.

Use the photographs on the next few pages

to get a good understanding of how mosaic drawings are made.

## INSIGHTS

For more information about how mosaics are made go to page 79.







## 2. The mosaic of the Good Shepherd



This is the mosaic of the **Good Shepherd**.

You can see this mosaic to the right of the glass walkway near the entrance to the Basilica.

A shepherd is the person who takes care of animals such as sheep, goats, cows.

Here you see the Shepherd with a sheep on his shoulders.

With one hand he is holding the sheep's legs, in the other he has a flute to make music.

A long time ago shepherds used to play the flute for fun.





Near the Shepherd's feet  
there is another sheep watching him.  
The Shepherd is good to his animals:  
he gives them food and drink  
to make them grow well.  
The Shepherd makes the animals grow  
to have milk and meat.  
The Shepherd protects his animals  
from danger.



In this mosaic, the Shepherd is drawn to make you think of Jesus.  
Jesus is good to people as the Shepherd is good to his animals.  
Jesus also protects people so that they can live well.





To the right and left of the Shepherd are drawings of:

an antelope

a deer



The antelope is an animal that lives in Africa.

Africa is a country very far from Italy where it is very hot.

The mosaicists drew the antelope next to the Shepherd to make you understand that Jesus loves people who live in countries where it is hot.



The deer is an animal that lives in places where it is cold.

The mosaicists drew the deer next to the Shepherd to make you understand that Jesus loves people who live in countries where it is cold.



**In fact, for Christians, Jesus loves all the people of the world.**





### 3. Solomon's knot



This is the mosaic of **Solomon's knot**.

Solomon was a very intelligent king who lived a very long time ago.

You can see this mosaic to the left of the walkway of glass near the entrance.

Solomon's knot is made of two rings stuck together.

This knot cannot be untied and the rings always stick together.

**A long time ago people used to draw this knot to make everyone understand who Jesus was.**



Jesus did the normal things that people do every day.

For example, Jesus slept and ate as you do.

Jesus was also very different from all other people because he did things that no other person could do.

For example:

- he could turn water into wine
- he could heal sick people without using medicine
- he was **resurrected** after death.

Resurrected means that Jesus came back to life after dying.

Some people think that:

- a ring of this knot represents the normal things that Jesus did
- the other ring represents the special things Jesus did.





## 4. The mosaic of Christian Victory



This is the mosaic of **Christian Victory**.

You can see this mosaic to the left of the glass walkway near the apse.

In this mosaic you see a woman with wings.

A long time ago, this woman was called **Winged Victory**.

People would draw or make statues of Winged Victories to celebrate when a king won a war.

Kings who win wars are strong and important.



The Winged Victory is holding:



1 branch of a plant called palm tree.  
The Christian Church uses the palm tree to remember Jesus.

1 crown made from the leaves of a plant called laurel.

The laurel was the plant used to make the crowns of soldiers and of kings who won wars.

Near the feet of the Winged Victory are two baskets:

- 1 full of **grapes**.  
Grapes are used to make wine.
- 1 full of **ears of wheat**.  
Wheat is used to make bread.

This basket today can no longer be seen clearly because the mosaic is damaged.



**During mass, priests use wine and bread to remember Jesus:**

- the wine represents the blood of Jesus
- the bread represents the body of Jesus.

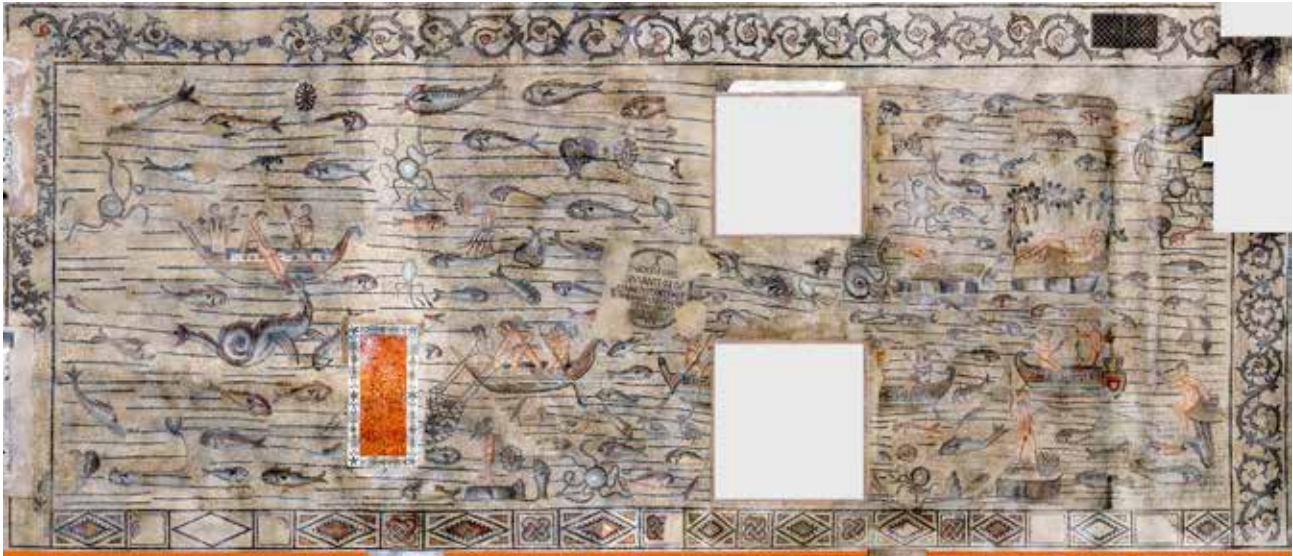
For the Christian Church, it is important for everyone to think how strong Jesus is.

The Winged Victory makes you understand that the Christian religion too is strong and important.





## 5. The mosaic of Jonah



The most important and largest mosaic in the Basilica is the one that shows you the story of **Jonah**.

You can see this mosaic by going on the glass walkway towards the altar.

The mosaic is before the altar steps.

To see it all you have to look to the left and right.

Jonah was a **prophet**.

Many people believe that some people can talk to God.

These people are called prophets.

Prophets have the task of making known to everyone what God says.

A story from a very long time ago tells that God had spoken to Jonah.

God had told Jonah to go to **Nineveh**

to speak of God to its inhabitants.

Nineveh was a city of a very long time ago that is no longer there.



Jonah, however, had tried to escape in a big boat because he was afraid to go to Nineveh as God had asked him.

Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh because many bad people lived there.

This large mosaic shows you what happened to Jonah after he tried to escape in a big boat.

In the mosaic you see the 3 most important scenes.

A scene is a drawing that shows you a precise moment in a story.

SCENE 1

SCENE 2



SCENE 3





## SCENE 1

Here you see sailors throwing Jonah into the water.

The sailors are the people who work on the boats.



The dark lines you see in the drawing are the waves of the sea.

The sea is full of big and small fish.

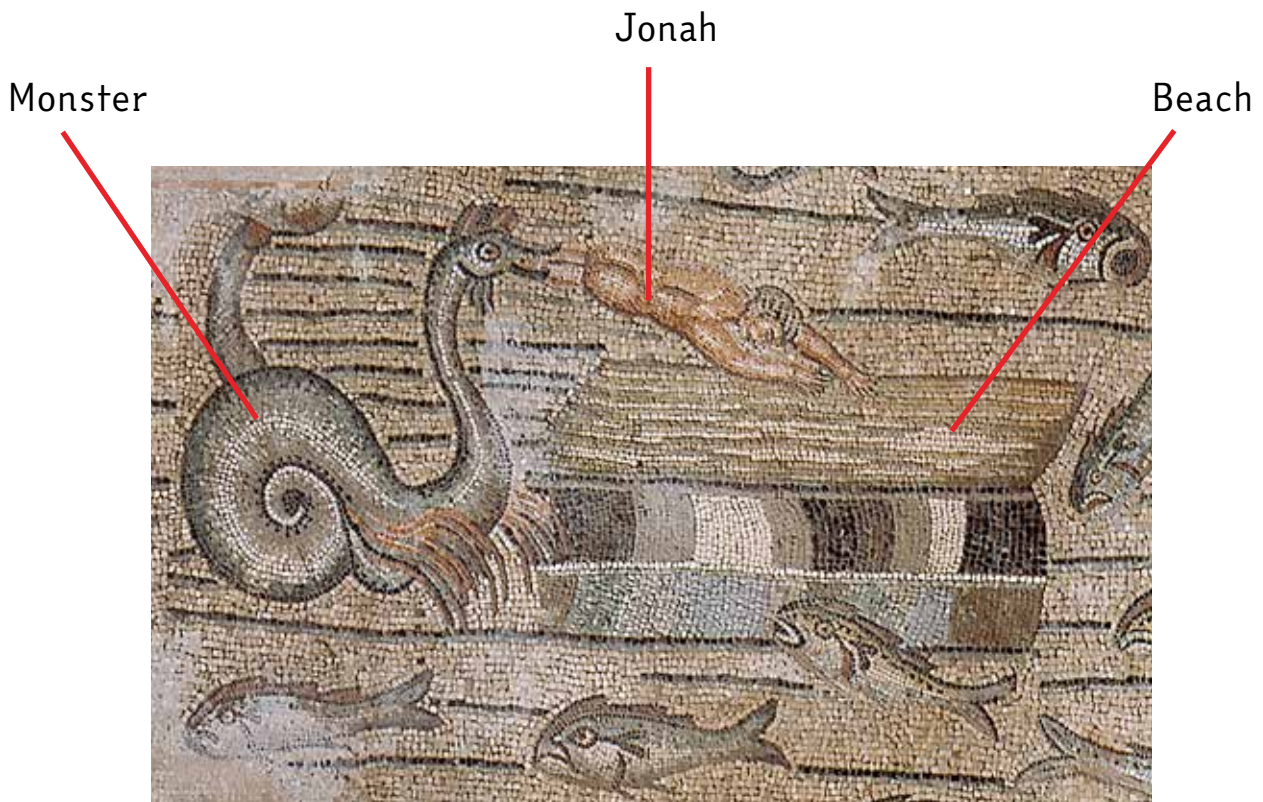
**In the middle of the fish there is also a monster that eats Jonah.**

The story goes that Jonah stayed inside the monster's belly for three days.

After 3 days, the monster spat Jonah out onto a beach.



## SCENE 2



Here you see the monster after 3 days spitting Jonah still alive on a beach.

Around the beach you see the sea with many fish swimming.

The story goes that when Jonah was on the beach he had decided to go to Nineveh as God had asked him. Jonah was glad that he was still alive and wanted to do a good thing. Jonah then decided to go to Nineveh to speak about God to its inhabitants. After listening to Jonah, all the people of Nineveh had started to pray to God.





### SCENE 3

Pumpkins



Jonah had gone to Nineveh and had spoken of God to all the people of the city. Afterwards, Jonah was very tired and had decided to rest. **Here you see Jonah lying down under some gourds to rest.**

Around the 3 scenes that show you Jonah's life there is a drawing of a large sea full of fish. If you look closely you can recognise many types of fish and animals that live in the sea.



For example you can see:

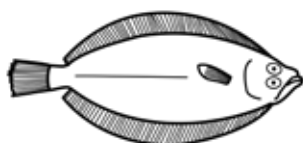
- the octopus



- the dolphin



- the sole.



The mosaicists were very good at making these fish because they are the same as the real ones.

## INSIGHTS

For more information about the mosaic of Jonah go to page 82.







## 6. The apse



At the end of the aisle of the church is the **apse**.

The apse is behind the **altar** and is shaped like a half circle.

The altar is the table that priests and bishops use to say mass.

The bishop is the head of the **Christians** in a city.

A Christian is a person who prays to Jesus Christ.

On the walls and ceiling of the apse is a large **fresco**.

A fresco is a painting made on a wall.

A long time ago, there was a smaller basilica here.

**Patriarch Popone** had a new basilica built on top of the more **ancient**, smaller one.

A patriarch is a very important bishop.

Ancient means of a very long time ago.

Patriarch Popone had this fresco made in the new basilica.



On the ceiling of the apse you see the **Madonna seated on a throne with the baby Jesus on her arm.**

Madonna is another name for Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The throne is the chair of important people.

Around the Madonna are:

- **Saints.**

A saint is a person who prays a lot, who loves Jesus very much and always helps other people.

- **Deacons.**

A deacon is the person who helps the bishop.

- **Patriarchs.**

- **Bishops.**

The bishop is the head of the Christians of a city.

- **Emperors.**

An emperor is like a king with a very large kingdom.





To the right of Madonna are:

- **Saint Ermagoras.**

Saint Ermagoras is the first bishop of Aquileia.

- **Saint Fortunatus.**

Saint Fortunatus was the deacon who worked with Ermagoras when he was the bishop of Aquileia.

- **Emperor Conrad.**

- **Saint Euphemia.**

- **Empress Gisela, wife of Emperor Conrad.**

In the fresco, the emperor and his wife are painted smaller than the other people.

The saints are painted larger because they were very important.



To the left of the Madonna are:

- **Saint Mark.**

A story from long ago tells that Saint Mark arrived in Aquileia to make Jesus known to the people who lived here.

- **Bishop Hilary**

- **Patriarch Popone.**

- **Deacon Tatian.**

**You can recognise Popone because he is painted smaller and is holding a model of the Basilica of Aquileia.**

A model church is a very small church made of wood or cardboard.

The model church is the same as the real church.

Popone is giving the Madonna the model of the Basilica because this basilica was built to celebrate her.







Below are painted eight other saints from Aquileia.



In the apse there is also a large **organ**.

The organ is like a piano and is played during mass.

Inside the Basilica of Aquileia many concerts are held with this organ.

If you want to know when the concerts are you can look at [www.basilicadiaquileia.it](http://www.basilicadiaquileia.it)



## 7. The Crypt of the frescoes



This is the **Crypt of the frescoes**.

A crypt is a room built under a church.

This crypt is so called because

all over the walls and ceiling you see very beautiful frescoes.

A fresco is a painting made on a wall.

**In the entire crypt there are 23 frescoes.**

**A long time ago Patriarch Maxentius**

**had this crypt built to put the relics of saints in.**

A patriarch is a very important **bishop**.

A bishop is the head of the Christians of a city.





A relic is a small part of the body of a saint like a piece of bone or a tuft of hair or a piece of his clothing.

A long time ago people used to pray before the relics of **saints**.

A saint is a person who prays a lot, who loves Jesus a lot and always helps other people.

Some of these relics are of Saint Ermagoras and Saint Fortunatus, the most important saints of Aquileia.

The relics are still inside this crypt.





Sometime after the construction of the crypt, the Patriarchs of Aquileia decided to have the frescoes done to make the crypt more beautiful and to make the stories of Jesus and some of the saints known. The frescoes you see in the ceiling tell the stories of the most important saints for Aquileia:

- **Saint Ermagoras**
- **Saint Fortunatus.**

There are many other frescoes on the walls of the crypt.





One of the most important frescoes is that of the **Deposition from the Cross**.



In this fresco you see the moment in which they remove the dead Jesus from the cross.

His mother **Mary** and **John the Evangelist** hold the **body** of **Jesus**.

John the Evangelist was an **apostle** of Jesus.

An **apostle** is a friend of Jesus who listens and tries to do what Jesus says.

Mary and John the Evangelist have a **halo** around their heads.

A halo is a golden, luminous circle that painters paint over the heads of holy people.

Mary brings her face close to that of Jesus.

Mary is very sad because her son has died and embraces him.





**To the left of Jesus are four women.**

The women are all close together and embrace each other.

These women have long dresses and cloaks that cover their whole bodies.

You only see the faces of these women.

If you look closely you see that they are very sad because Jesus is dead.

Each of these four women is painted differently.

**The painter painted these women**

**to show you that each one suffered in a different way**

**for the death of Jesus.**







This woman is trying not to look because seeing Jesus dead is very painful.

This woman wipes her tears with her cloak. This woman also does not look at Jesus.



This woman looks sadly at Jesus and covers her mouth with her cloak. Sometimes, when a person is very sad wants to scream in pain. In order not to scream this woman covers her mouth.

This woman covers her eyes with one hand. The other hand is next to her mouth. This woman is so sad that she can no longer look at Jesus and speak.



In the bottom right-hand corner you see Nicodemus with a rapier. Nicodemus is removing from Jesus' feet the nails used to place him on the cross.







Below the fresco of the deposition of Jesus is this fresco showing **two knights**.

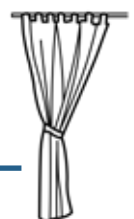
A long time ago knights were very powerful and strong people who rode horses.



On the drawings of the knights you see red stripes.

The painter painted these stripes

because he wanted to pretend to cover the fresco with a curtain.





These 2 knights represent a fight scene.



This soldier is turned towards the other soldier. He is holding a bow and wants to shoot an arrow to kill the other soldier.



This soldier is **riding** towards the other soldier. This soldier is holding a **spear** to kill the other soldier. A spear is a long stick with a metal tip.





## 8. The Crypt of the excavations



This room is called the **Crypt of the excavations** because here you can see **archaeological excavations**.

An archaeological excavation is a place where you dig for objects, pieces of houses and buildings that have been there for a very long time. The people who look for and study these things are called **archaeologists**. Things of a long and a very long time ago are often under the ground and archaeologists have to dig to find them.



Archaeologists started doing these excavations some time ago and found parts of:

- walls
- mosaic floors
- frescoes
- columns.

All these things were there from a very long time ago.

To see these archaeological excavations you have to walk over a glass walkway.

People cannot walk on archaeological excavations because they are very precious and delicate.

The walkway is made of glass because then you can see what the excavations look like.

Don't be afraid, if you want you can hold on to the handrail.





In this crypt you can see:

- Floors and parts of walls of a house of a very long time ago.

These floors are made in mosaic with **geometric drawings**.

In a geometric design you see shapes such as circles, squares, rectangles.



- Floors and parts of walls of the first church of Aquileia built by Bishop Theodore.



- Floors and parts of walls of the ancient basilica that the Huns had burnt a very long time ago.





## 9. The mosaic of the rooster and the turtle



This is the mosaic of the **rooster and the turtle**.

You can see this mosaic inside the Crypt of the excavations.

In this mosaic you see a **rooster** and a **turtle**.

The rooster is about to attack the turtle.

In fact, you see the rooster stretching its neck towards the turtle to strike it with its beak.

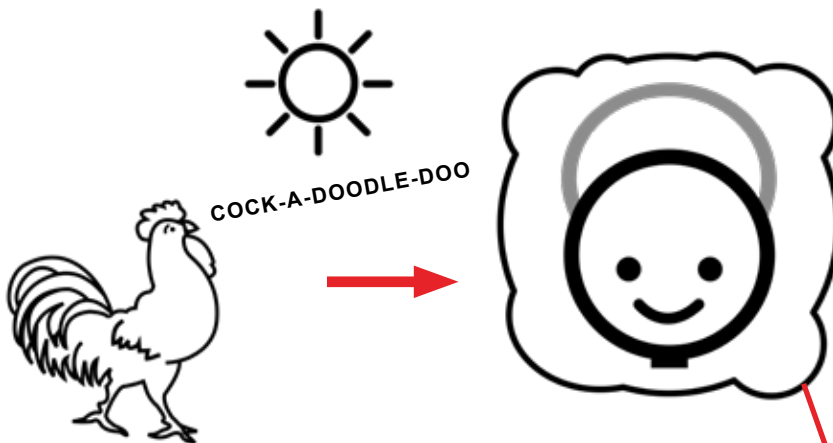
The turtle crushes itself on the ground because it is afraid of the rooster.







A very long time ago  
Christians used to draw the turtle  
to make people think of darkness and wickedness.  
Christians thought this  
because the turtle's ancient name meant  
animal that lives in the dark.



A long time ago, Christians drew the rooster  
to make people think of sunlight and good things.  
Christians thought this  
because the rooster crows every morning when the sun comes out.



In the mosaic, the rooster wins against the turtle because it is good. In fact, Christians thought that light and good things are stronger and more important than darkness and wickedness.



Between the rooster and the turtle is a column with a vase on it. Inside the vase is some **perfume**. Perfume smells good. Smelling good perfume makes people feel good. The perfume on top of the column is the prize the rooster wins after wrestling with the turtle.

The mosaicists drew the perfume here to represent the beautiful things in life. Good people can have these beautiful things, like the rooster who wins the prize for fighting the turtle.





## 10. The Baptistry



This is the **Baptistry of the Basilica of Aquileia**.

The baptistry is the place where people go who have to do **Baptism**.

Baptism is the moment when a person becomes a **Christian**.

Christians are the people who pray to Jesus.

Today, during Baptism the person's head is bathed with **holy water**.

Holy water is the special water that is used at important moments for the life of Christians.



**Bishop Chromatius had this Baptistery built a long time ago.**  
Bishop Chromatius had this baptistery built  
because in Aquileia so many people wanted to be baptised  
and become Christians.



Baptismal font

In the centre of the Baptistery is the **baptismal font**.  
The baptismal font is a stone basin filled with holy water.  
Today you do not see the water because this baptismal font  
is no longer used.





Steps

If you look inside the basin you can see some steps.

A long time ago, people who were to be baptised would descend the steps to bathe their whole bodies in the holy water.

Around the baptismal font you can see 6 columns of a stone called marble.

These columns were used to make a corridor around the baptismal font.

To the left of the baptismal font there is a door.

If you go through that door you enter the **South Hall**.

Inside the South Hall people went after Baptism.





## 11. The South Hall



This hall is called **South Hall**.

A very long time ago, into the South Hall came people who had just received **Baptism**.

This is where people would get dressed again.





In the floor of the South Hall you can see a large **mosaic**.

A mosaic is a drawing made of many little squares of stone or of coloured glass placed next to each other. These squares are called tiles.

A mosaic can be made on floors, on walls and on ceilings.

Making a mosaic is very difficult which is why mosaics are very precious.

In the mosaic of the South Hall you can see many drawings.

In some parts of the mosaic you see drawn

- **animals** such as the lamb
- the **Solomon's knot**.





When you are inside the South Hall on the wall to the right you can see another piece of a mosaic.

A long time ago this piece of mosaic was part of the floor of a room between the Basilica and the South Hall.

Today this room is no longer there.

If you go near the mosaic

you can see the coloured tiles placed next to each other.

You can see tiles:

- blue
- yellow
- brown
- white
- black.





Some tiles are golden.



Here you see a **vine plant**.  
The vine plant  
is the plant that makes  
the grapes.



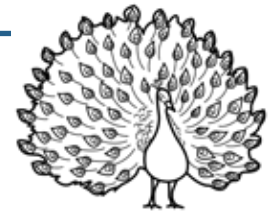
Leaves and branches

Grapes





Near the branches is a large **peacock** with its tail open.



You cannot see the whole peacock's head because the mosaic is from a very long time ago and is damaged.

The peacock has a blue body and a tail in many colours such as

- yellow
- green
- brown.

**The Christian Church uses the peacock to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus.**

The resurrection is when Jesus came back to life after he died.



The peacock's tail feathers fall each autumn and grow back the following spring.

This is why the Christian Church uses the peacock to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus.

The fallen feathers make people think of the death of Jesus.

The feathers that grow back make one think of Jesus coming back to life after having died.



Inside the South Hall you also see some **sarcophagi**.

Sarcophagi are **coffins** made of stone.

The coffin is the place where you put persons when they die.

Only very important and rich people had the sarcophagus as their coffin.

Over time, the mosaic of the South Hall was damaged and many pieces came off.



Today, you only see pieces of the mosaic.

Some parts of the mosaics have dark stains.

These are the parts that were burnt when the Huns and Attila burnt the Basilica.



## INSIGHTS

For more information about how mosaics are made go to page 79.

