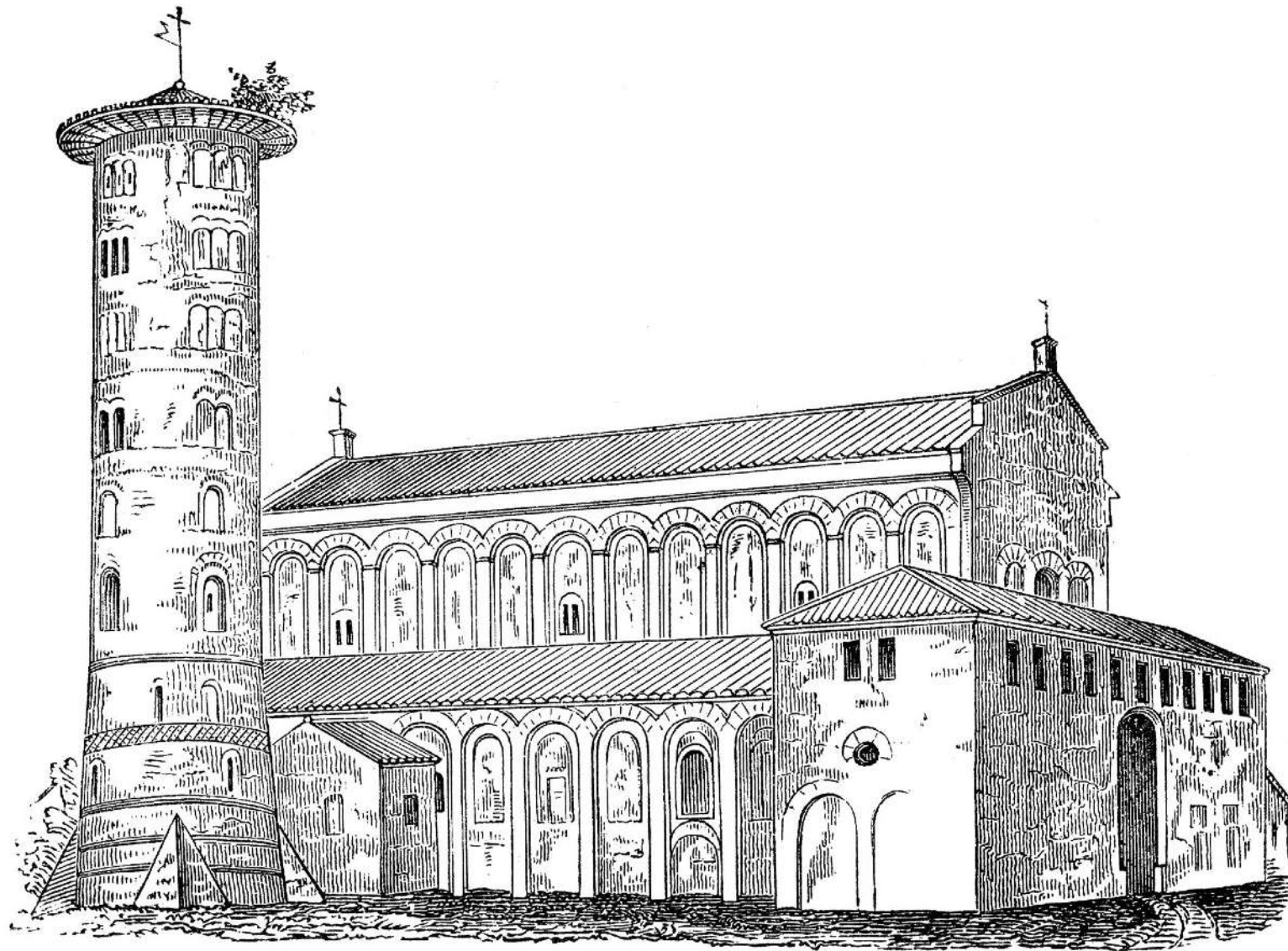


History of Architecture

Early Christian Architecture



Sara Khasib

The Shift from Roman to Christian

- The primary emphasis of the empire was no longer on secular concerns but on religious concerns
- Some functions of the Roman architecture continued to be built, but the real architectural innovation shifted to solving problem of how to house communal groups of worshippers
- In the new church buildings, the external qualities of architecture were an architecture of simple elements, focusing on mysticism

Historical Context

- The Roman Empire was divided into Western and Eastern empires around **285 BC**
- Christianity was born in **Palestine**, then spread towards the north and west through **St. Peter, St. Paul** and others
- The formulation phase of Christianity and its architecture can be considered **from Constantine period (300 AD)**
- The development of christian architecture can be divided into the following phases:
 - **Early Christian period**
 - **Byzantine**
 - **Romanesque**
 - **Gothic**
 - **Renaissance**



Early Church

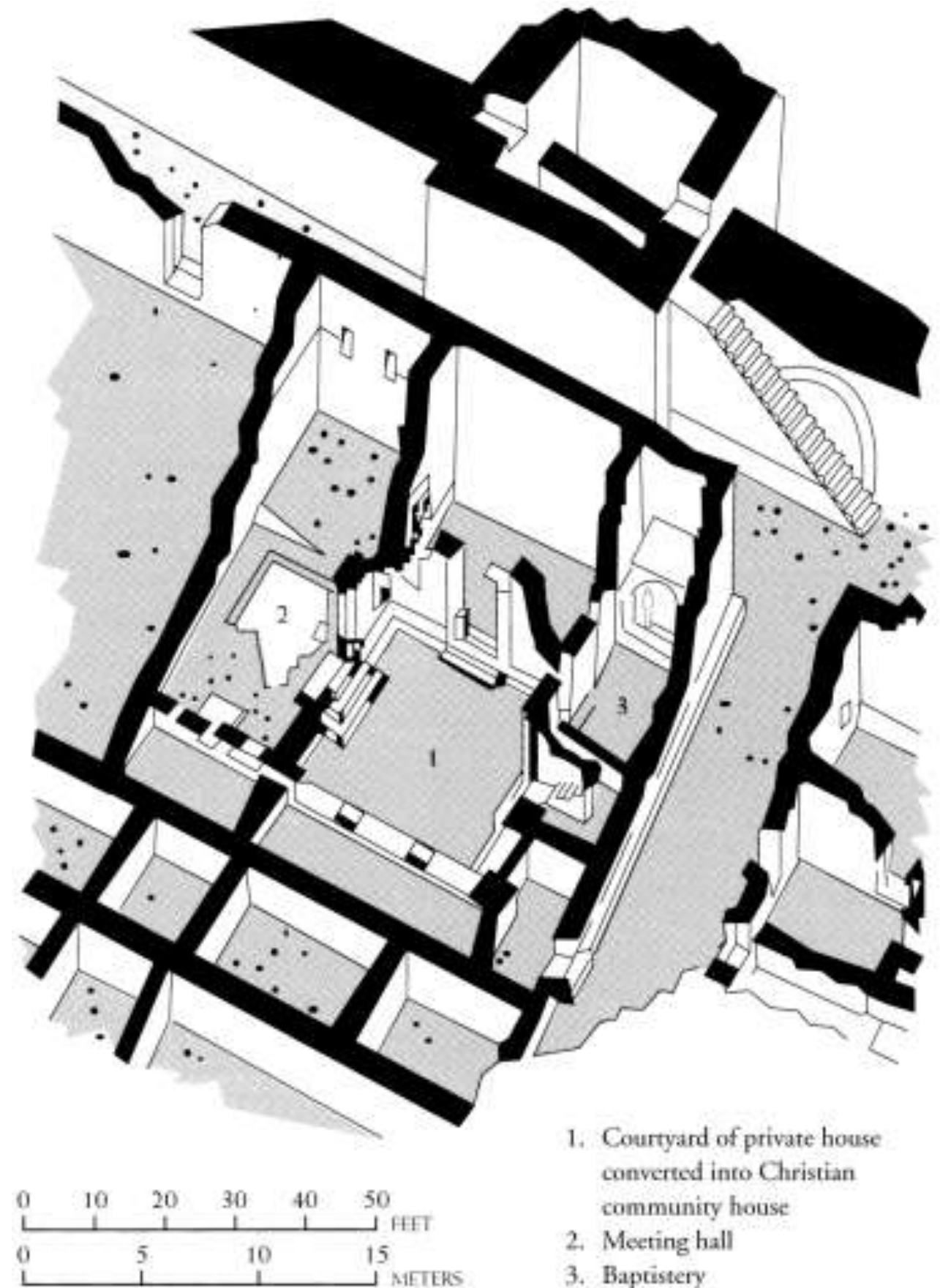


- **From 1AD - 306 AD**

- The church started from a latin **Ecclesia** (assembly in Greek), meaning the people; a particular body of faithful people (congregation)

Dura Europos (House Church)

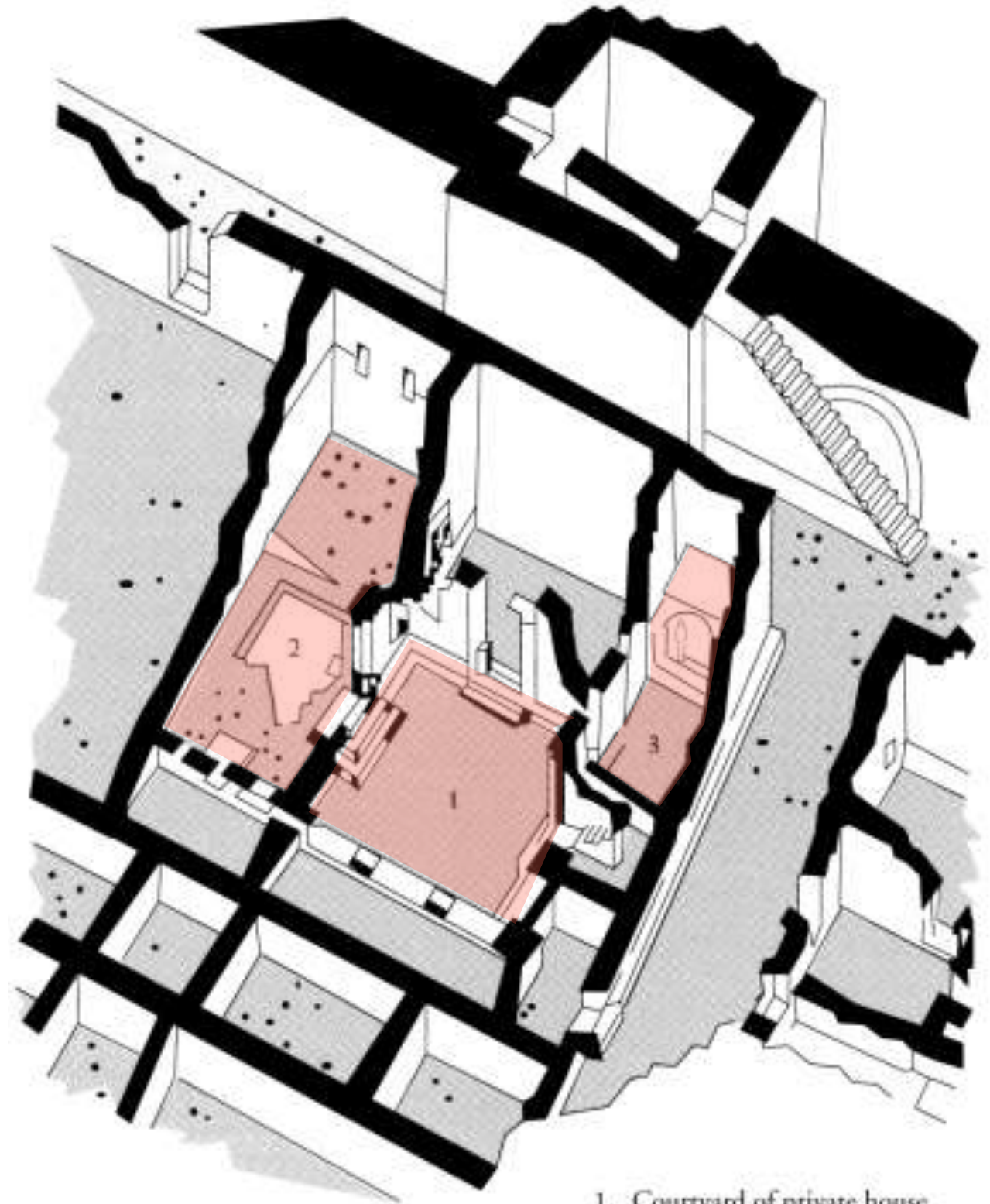
- During the early periods of persecution, christians **gathered quietly in homes of fellow christians**
- In the city of **Dura Europos on the Euphrates river** (on the Syrian Iraqi borders), there was one of the **oldest known christian church house buildings**
- The house was built **230 AD**, it was converted into a church in **231-232**



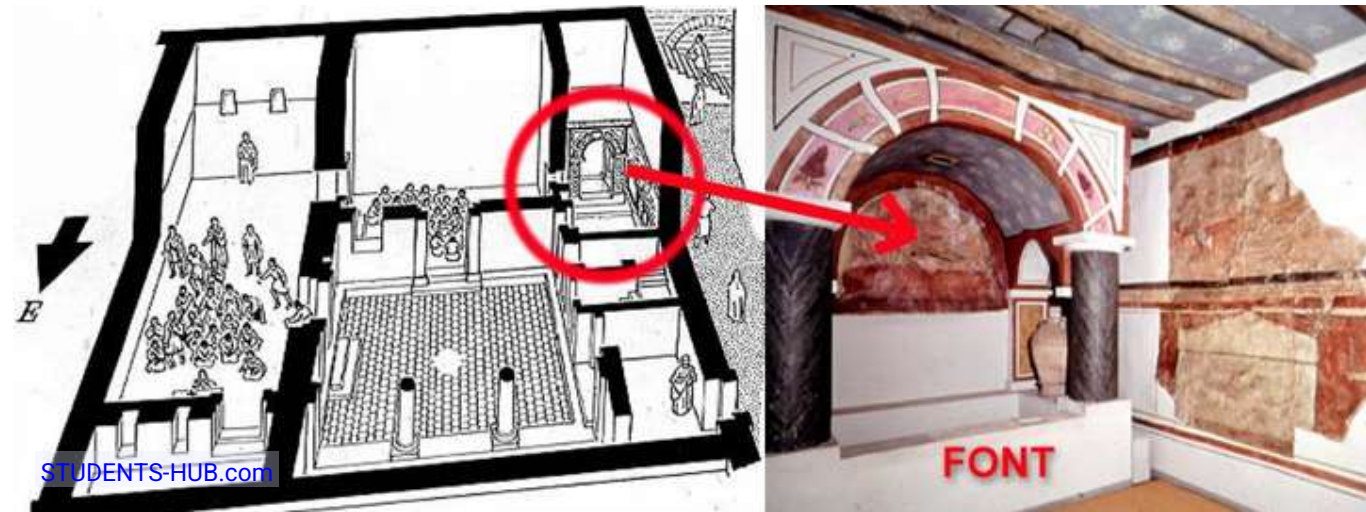
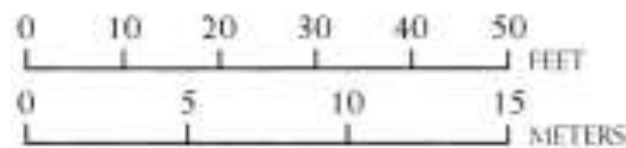
Dura Europos (House Church)

In the house:

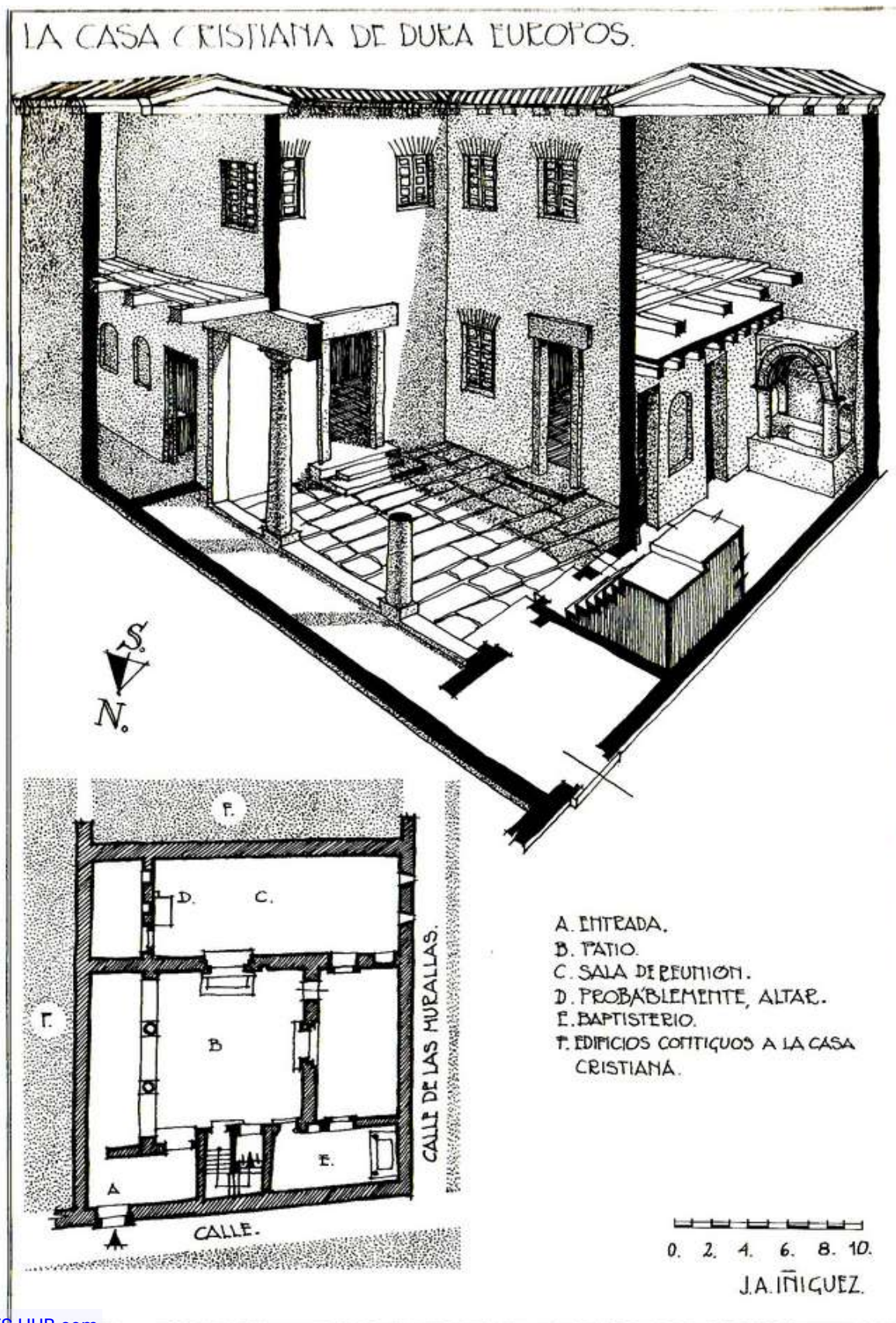
- Two rooms were merged for a **meeting room**
- Another chamber was made into **baptistry** with the construction of small **pool** covered by a canopy on four columns



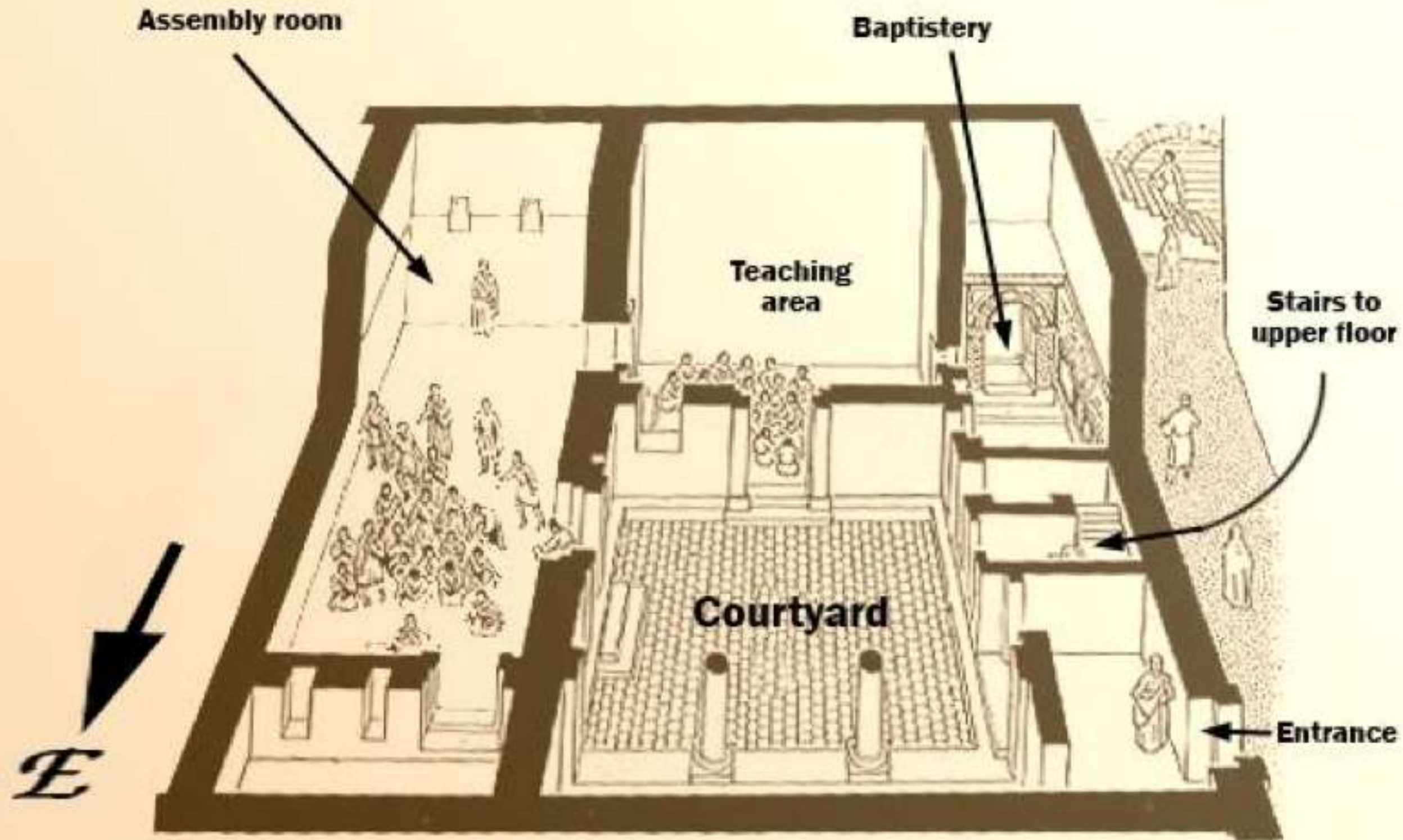
1. Courtyard of private house converted into Christian community house
2. Meeting hall
3. Baptistry



Dura Europos (House Church)



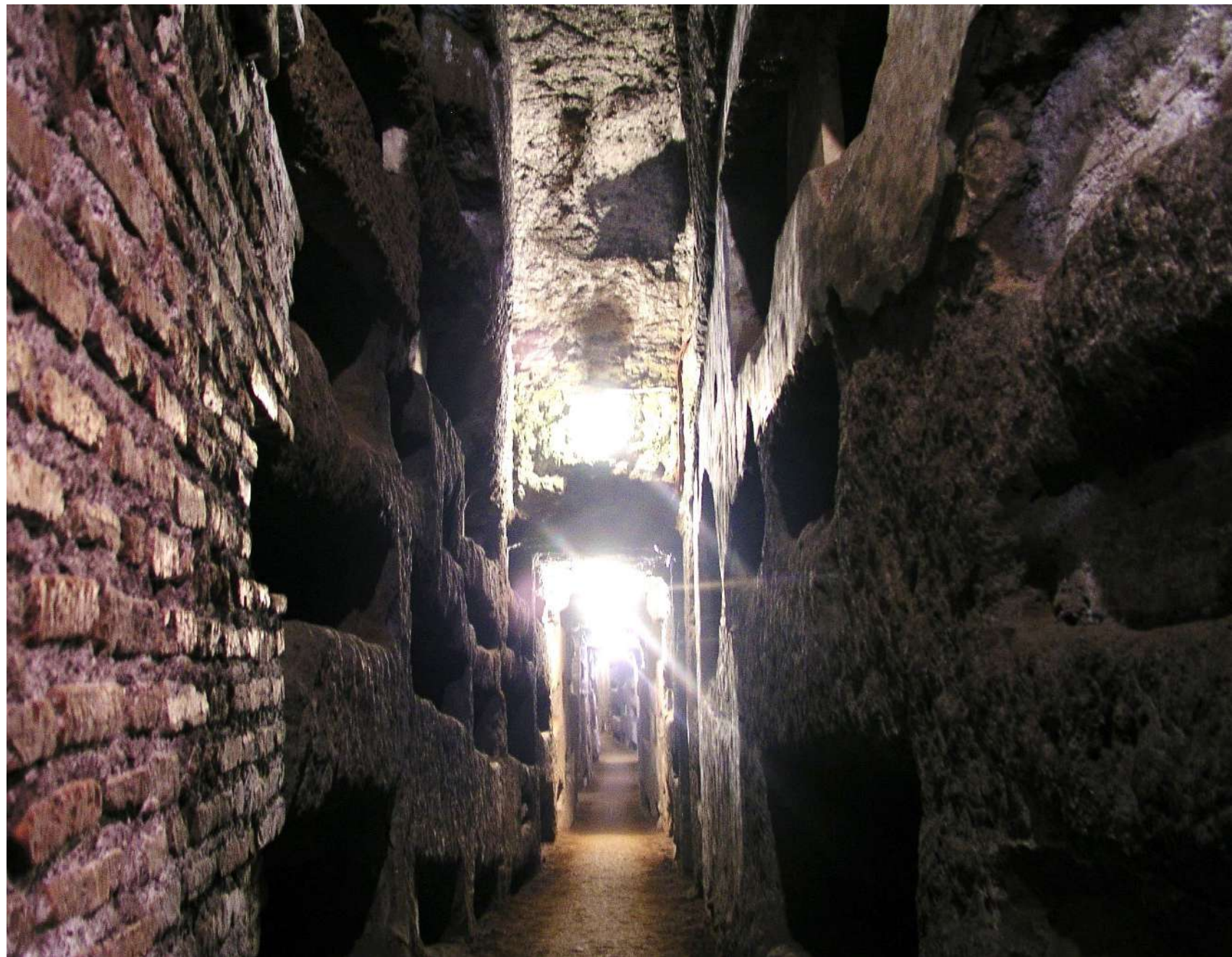
Dura Europos (House Church)



3rd-C. CHURCH AT DURA-EUPOPOS

Catacombs

- **Underground burial places**, started in the 2nd century AD
- They were carved outside the walls of the city, because Roman law forbade burial places within city limits
- Used for burial, memorial services and celebrations of the anniversaries of Christian martyrs
- known for its **fresco decorations**, providing the main surviving evidence for Early Christian art



Catacombs

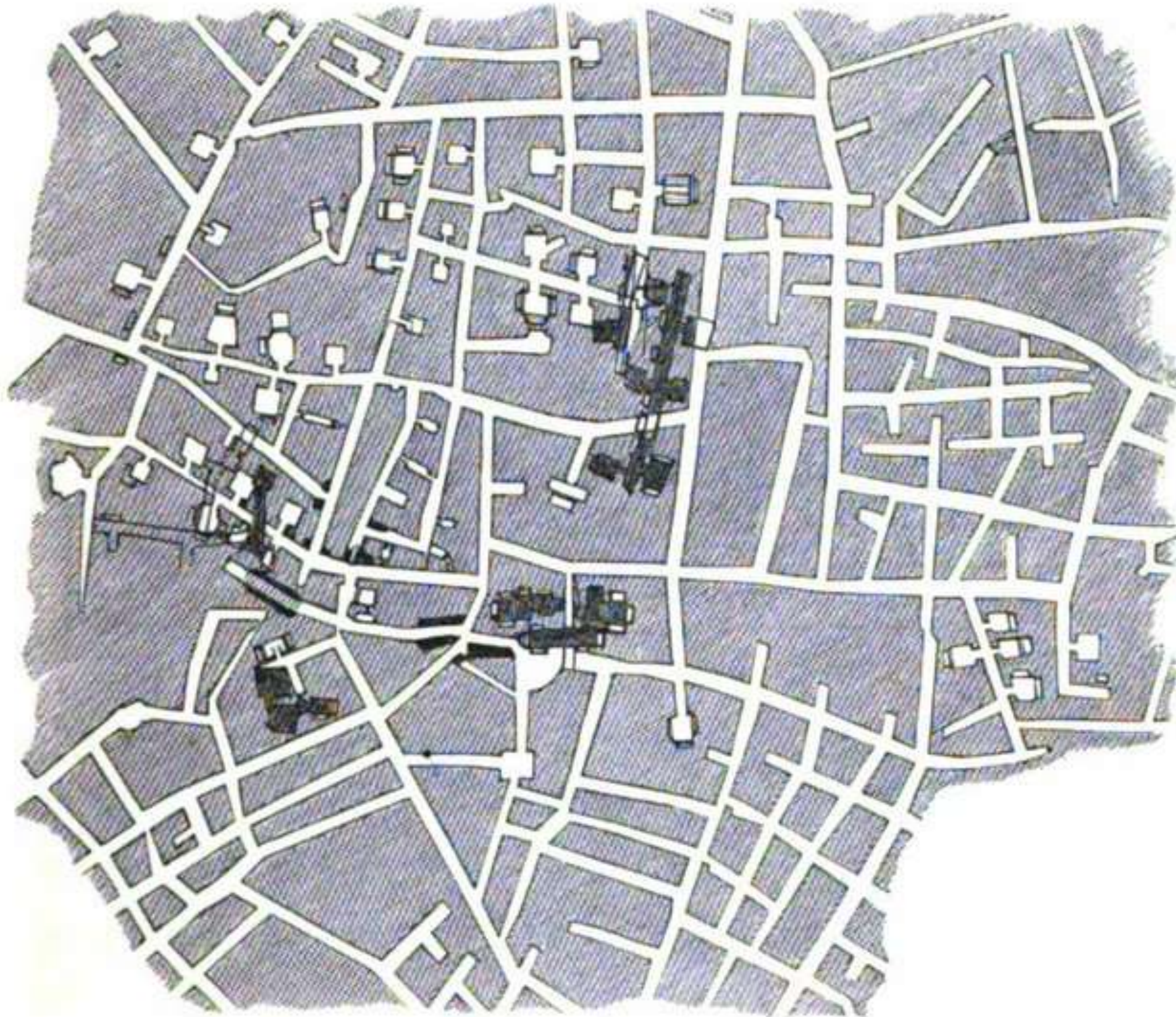
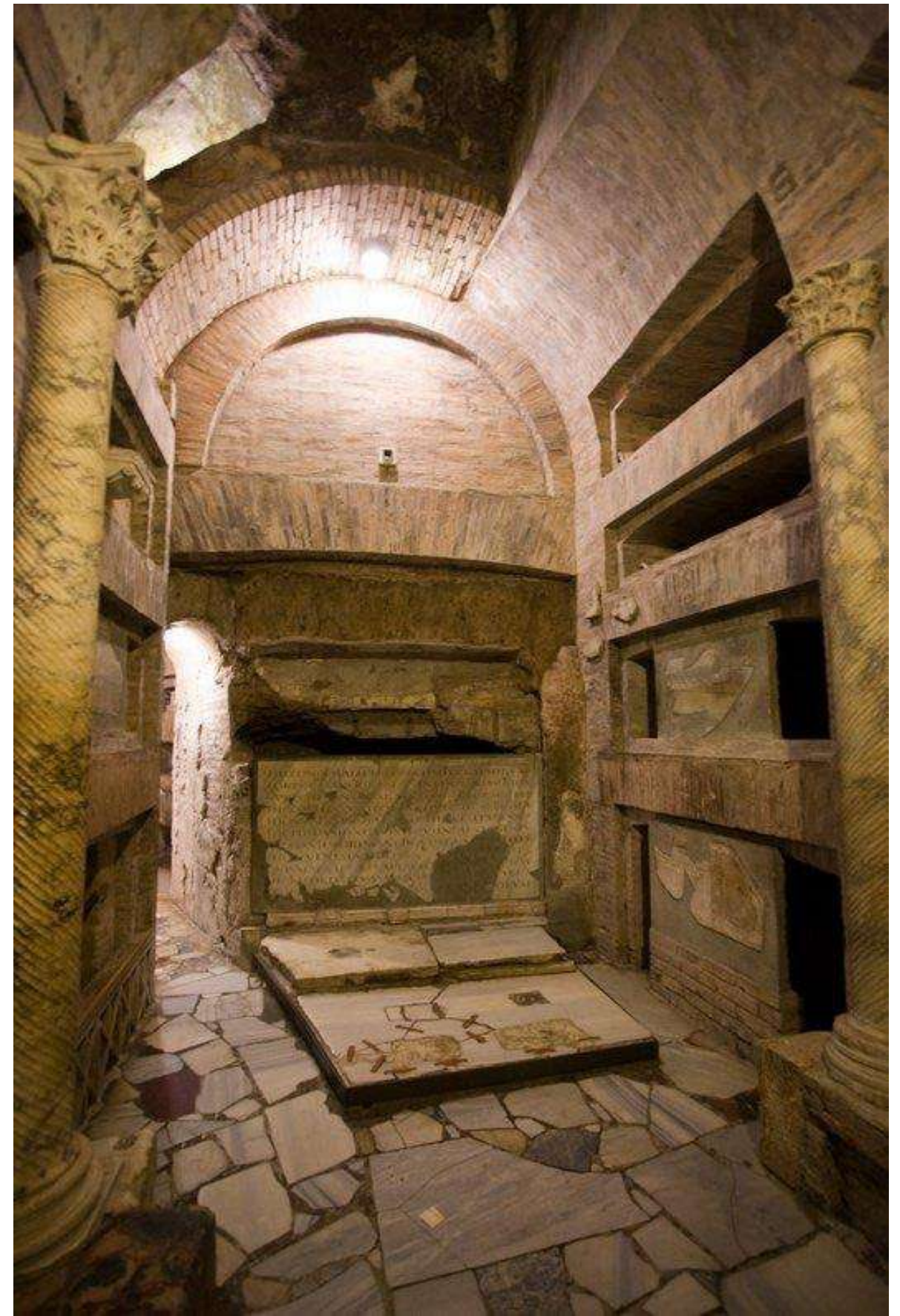
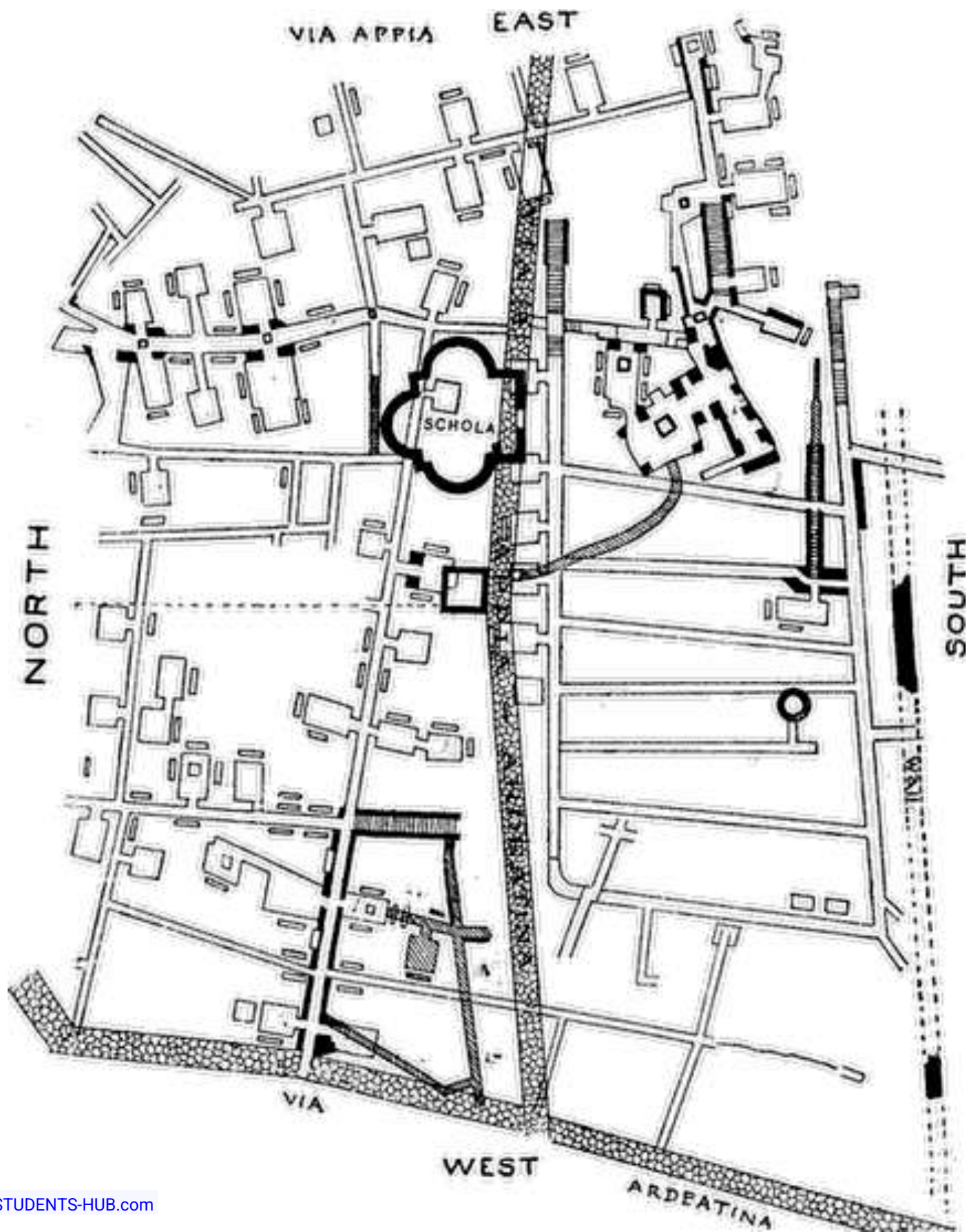


FIG. 3.—*Part of Catacomb of St Agnes.*

Catacombs



Catacombs



Early Christian Architecture

Division of the Roman Empire



Western Empire



Eastern Empire

--- Dividing line between lands
under Diocletian and Maximian

Home of
Constantius I,
Maximian's Caesar

Trier

Rhine

Danube

Mediolanum

Rome

Thessalonica

Home of
co-emperor
Maximian

Home of Galerius,
Diocletian's Caesar

Black Sea

Byzantium

Nicomedia

Home of
Emperor Diocletian

Tigris

Euphrates

Nile

Mediterranean

Sea

N

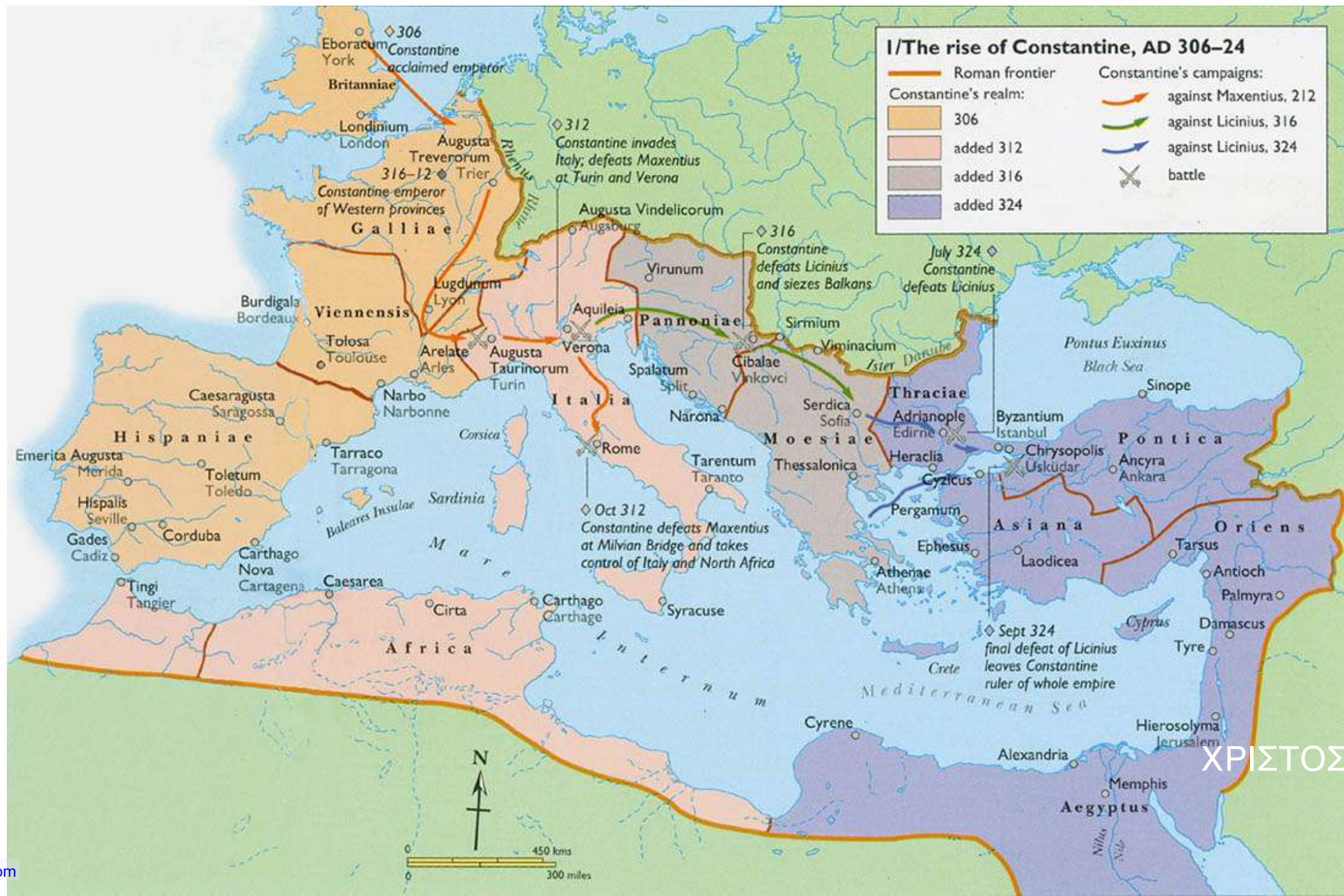
0 250 500 mi

0 250 500 km

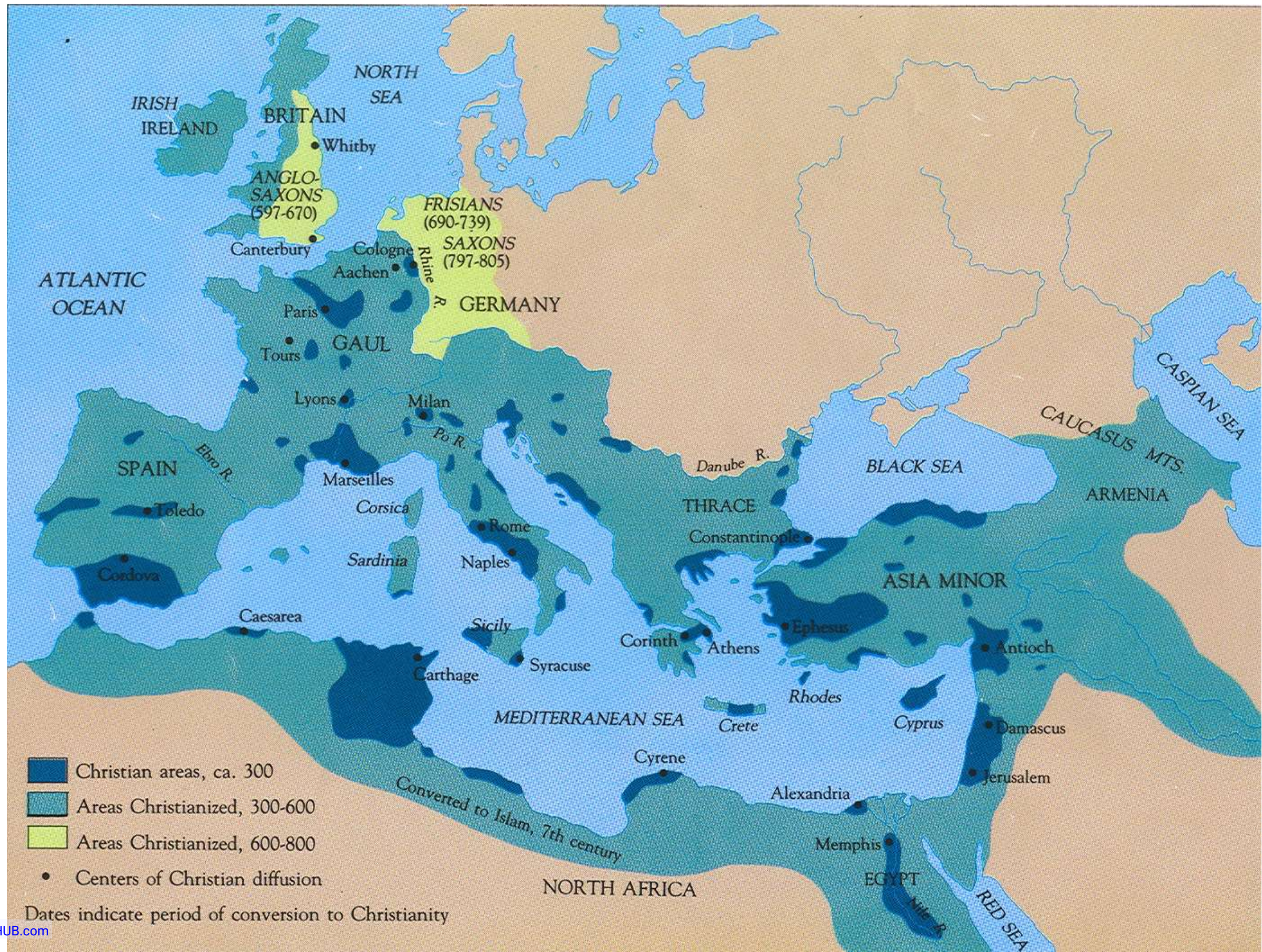
Constantine experienced a battle in **312 AC** after which he claimed the emperorship in the West, reuniting the roman empire again



ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ (Christos)



Spread of Christianity



Spread of Christianity

- Constantine shifts the capital of the Empire eastward
- Select the old city of Byzantium (Greek colony - Istanbul now)
- Filled with administrative buildings and churches
- In 330, government move to new Constantinople



Architectural Development

- After the announcement of the Christianity as an official religion for the Roman empire, **the need for a space to practice worshipping emerged**
- The Spatial needs:
 - **Large space to accommodate large numbers of worshippers**
 - **Enclosed spaces to facilitate church services**



Architectural Development

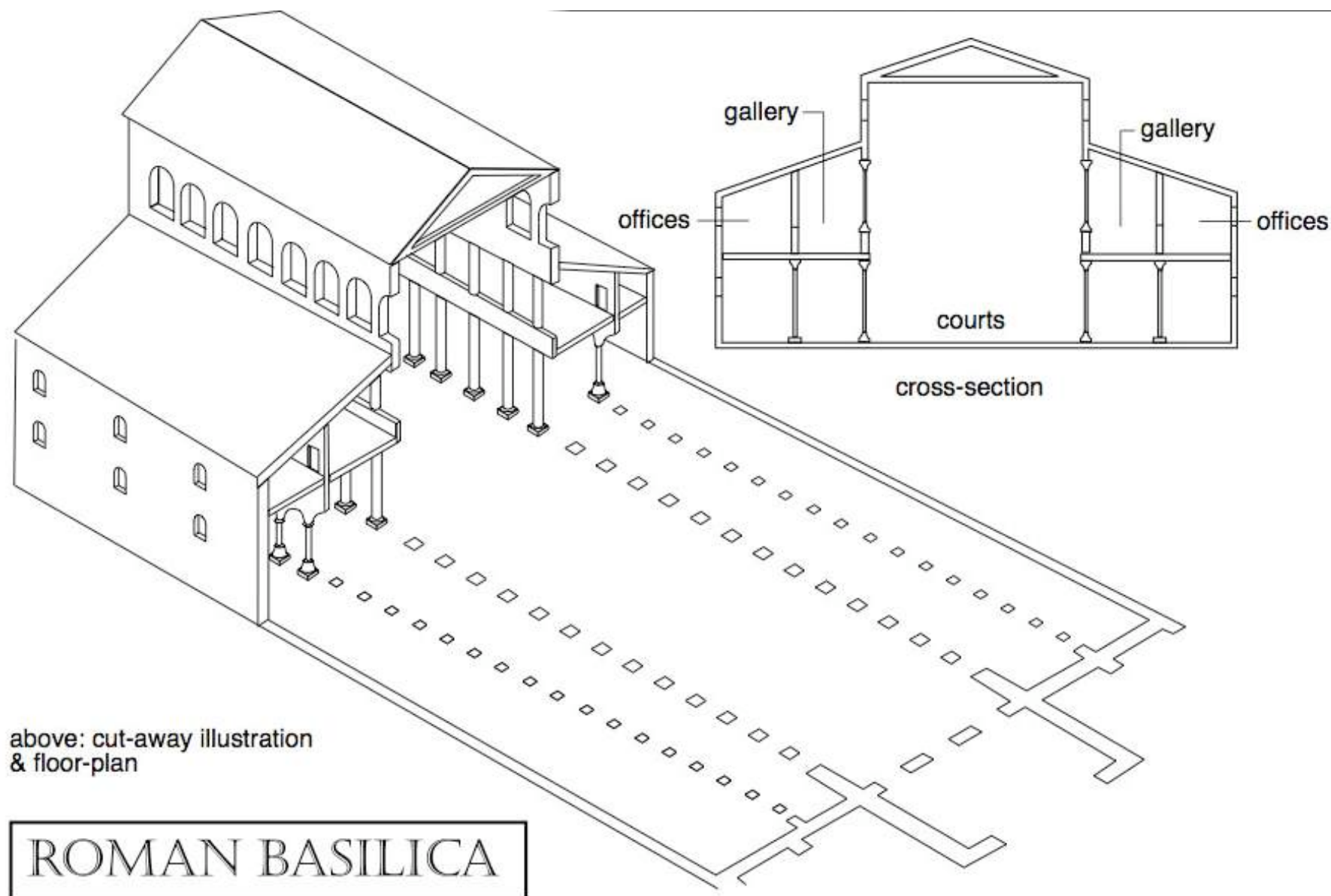
- It was impossible for the new religious architecture to follow in the footsteps of temple architecture. Roman temples were not suitable due to its **small internal spaces**, and it **symbolized pagan gods and the Roman Emperor Worship**
- Various forms were studied and re-evaluated for their compatibility with developing liturgical needs



Architectural Development

1. Basilica structure:

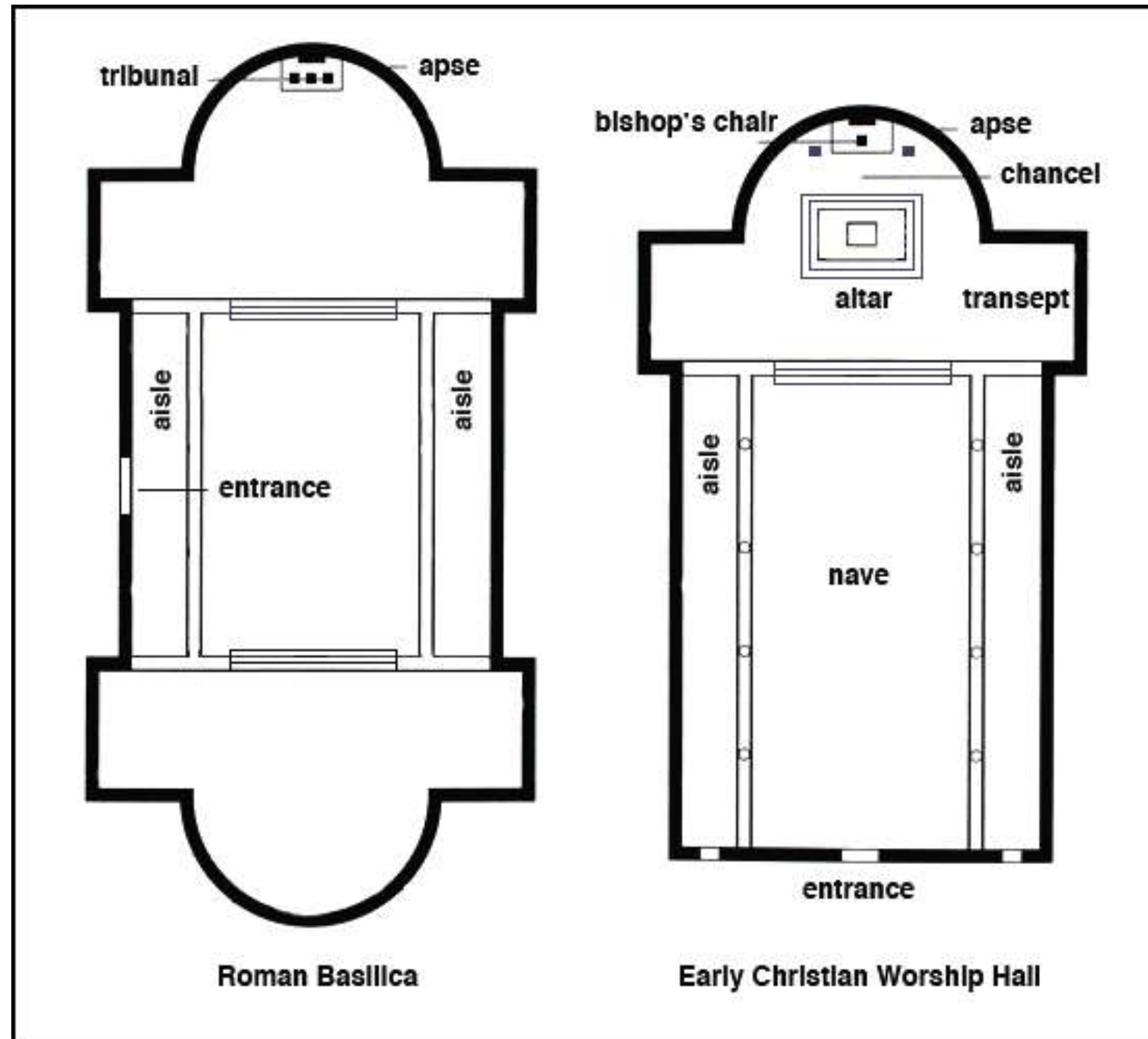
The basilica had originally been devised for **public gatherings**, and had **symbolic connection**, having to do with the **equitable administration of earthly justice**



Architectural Development

1. Basilica structure:

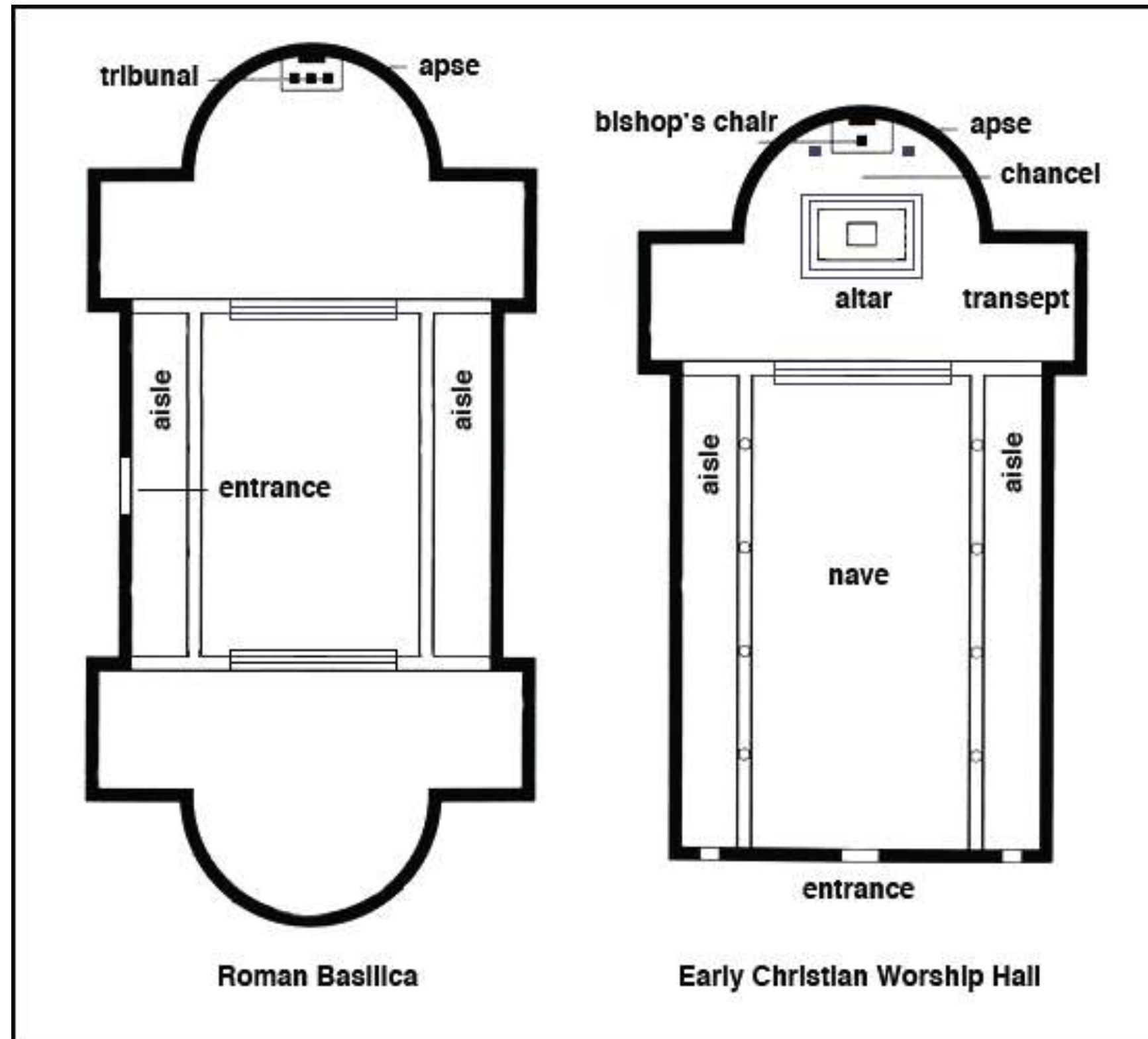
- The **alter** devoted to the emperor was replaced with one for **rituals**
- The **axial** form of the basilica was used **to focus on the alter**
- The only real change was **shifting the entrance from the middle of the long sides to the end opposite the apse and altar**



Architectural Development

1. Basilica structure:

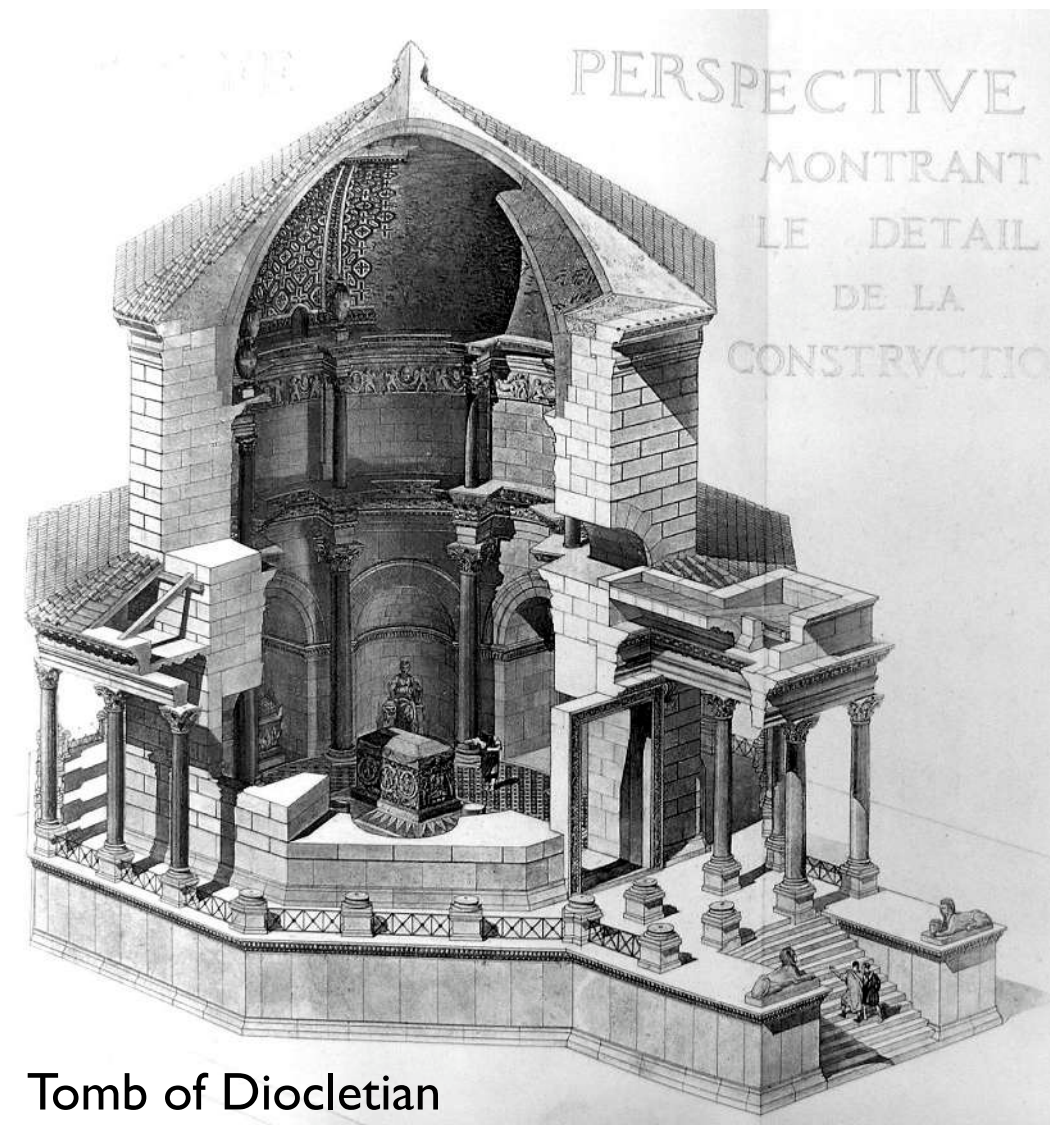
- The interiors were give more importance than the exterior
- The apse at one end
- Atrium was added (courtyard) with central fountain
- Transept was added in front of the alter, giving the plan the shape of the cross



Architectural Development

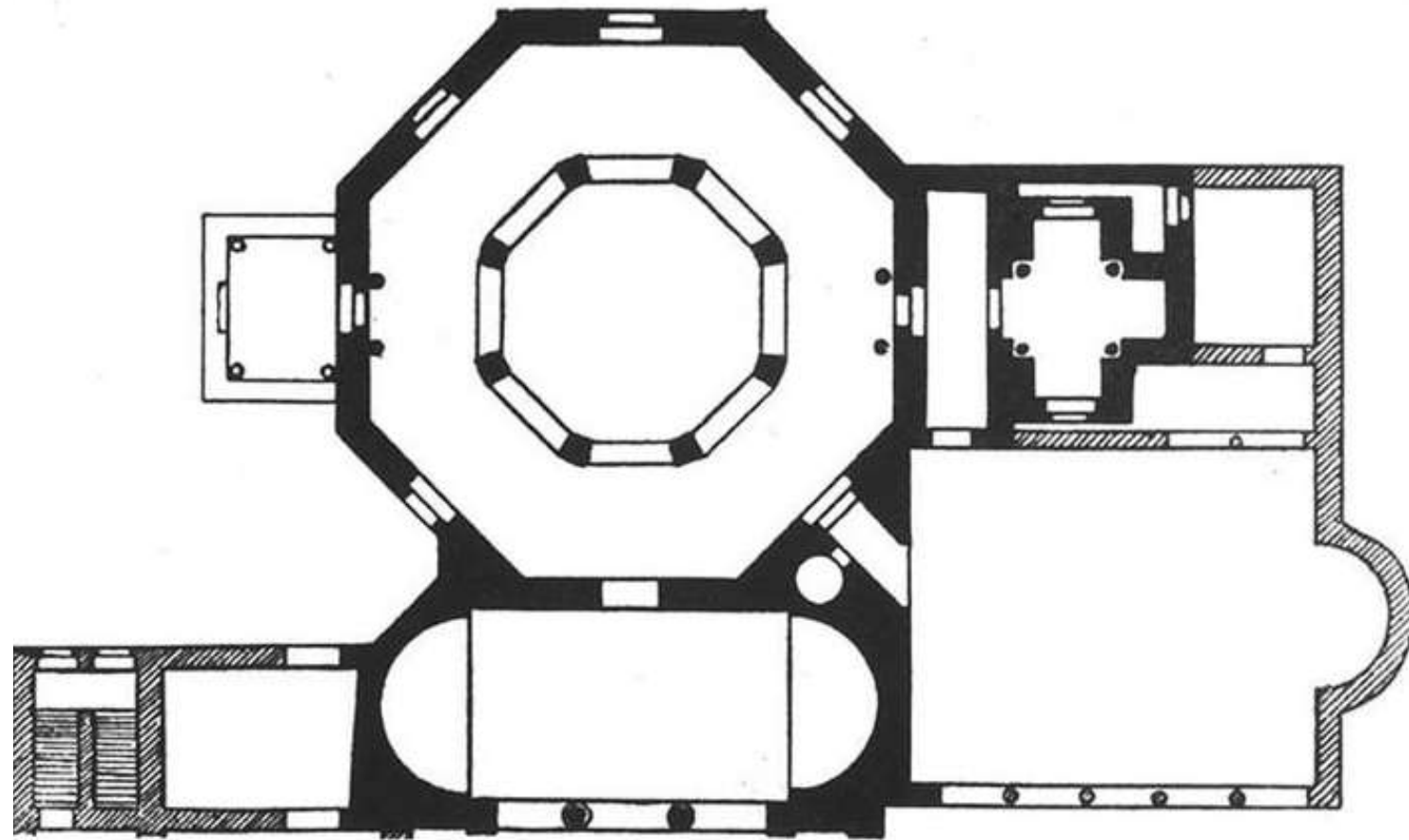
2. Centralized Structures (royal tombs)

- The other building type favored by the early christians had a **centralized plan**, whether **round**, **octagonal**, or **square**, and was derived from **royal tombs**
- This form was used for:
 - **Martyria**
 - **Baptisteries**



Tomb of Diocletian

Architectural Development

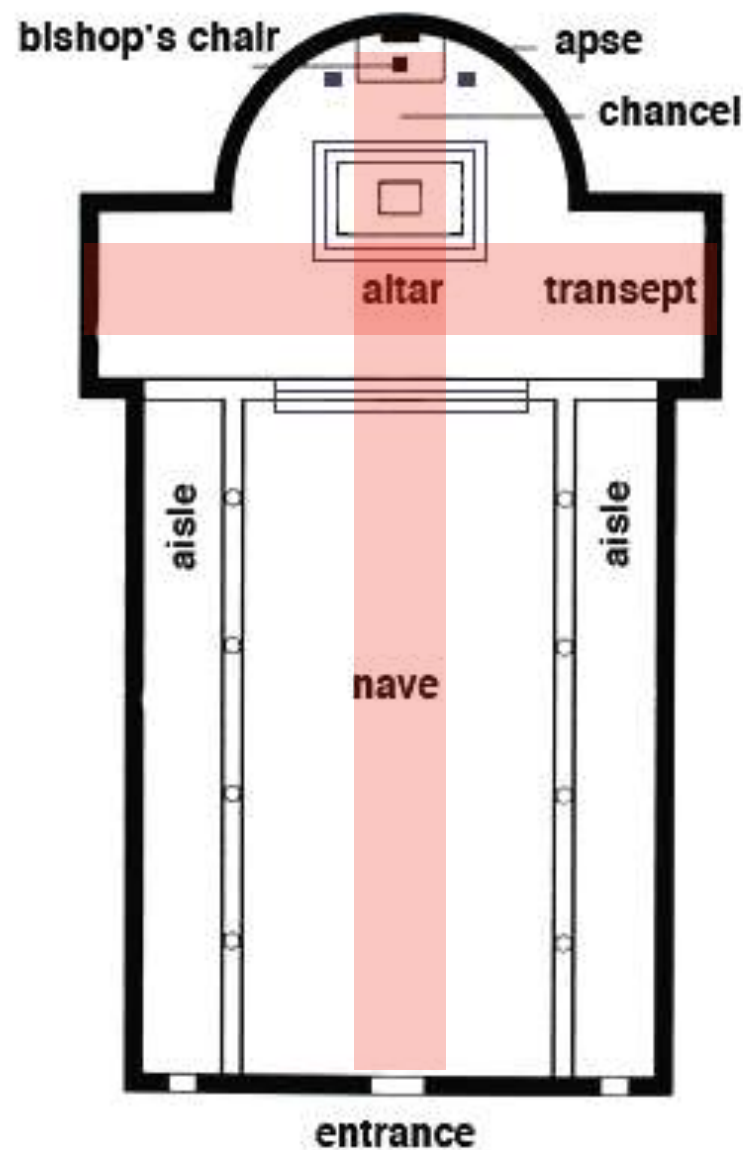


Baptistery of Lateran Basilica in Rome
the first in the city, built 315 AD

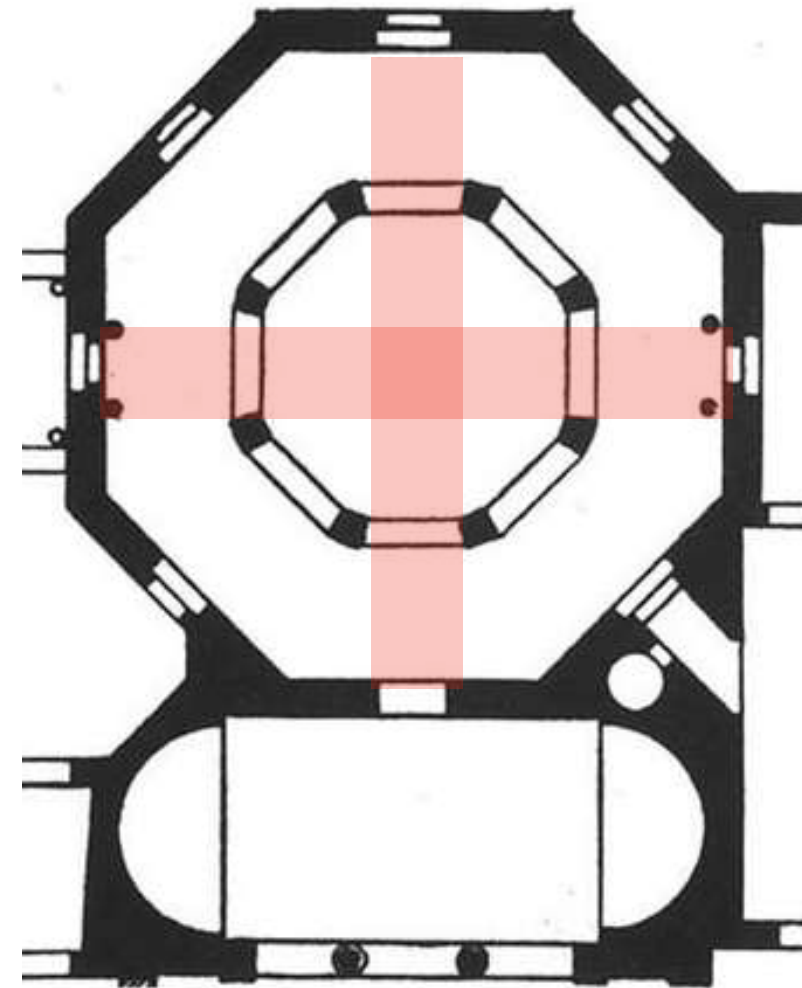
Architectural Development

A basic prototype for church design differed according to region:

- In the west, basilican axial churches (Latin cross)
- In the East, centralized plans (Orthodox cross)



West - Latin cross (Catholic)



East - Greek cross (Orthodox)

Churches main architectural principles

- Very close columns with beams or arches
- Gabled Wooden trusses as roofing for the Nave, half gable for the aisles and usually semi-dome for the apse
- Brick and Cement building material
- Importance of interior rather than exterior
- Stone mosaic and glass mosaic
- Optical illusion
- Clerestory
- Division in space



The city and its image were no longer dominated by a forum, agora, or palace, but rather by the dozens monasteries, baptisteries, and churches scattered in clusters in the farthest reaches of the city and its environs

Early Official Churches

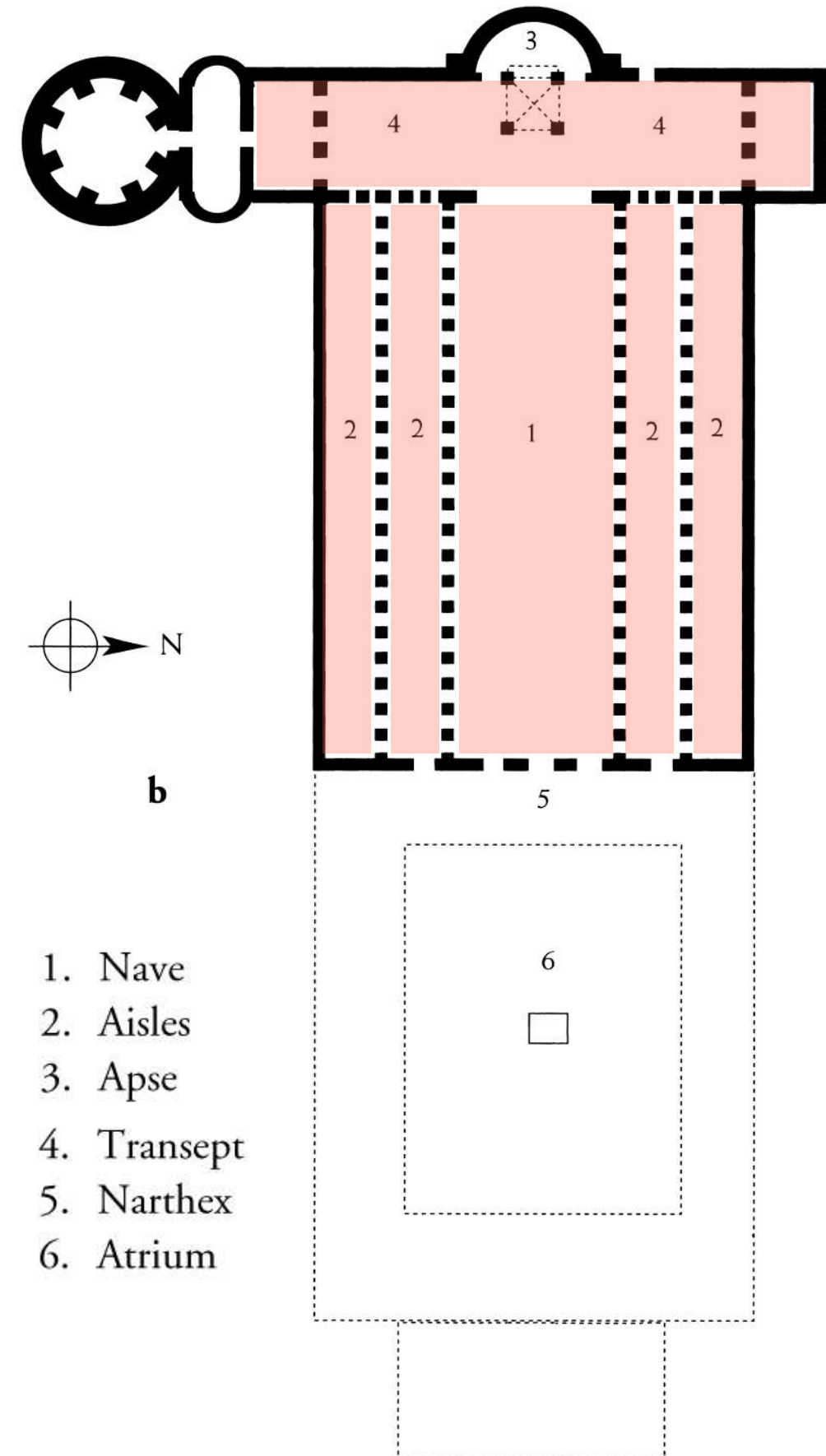
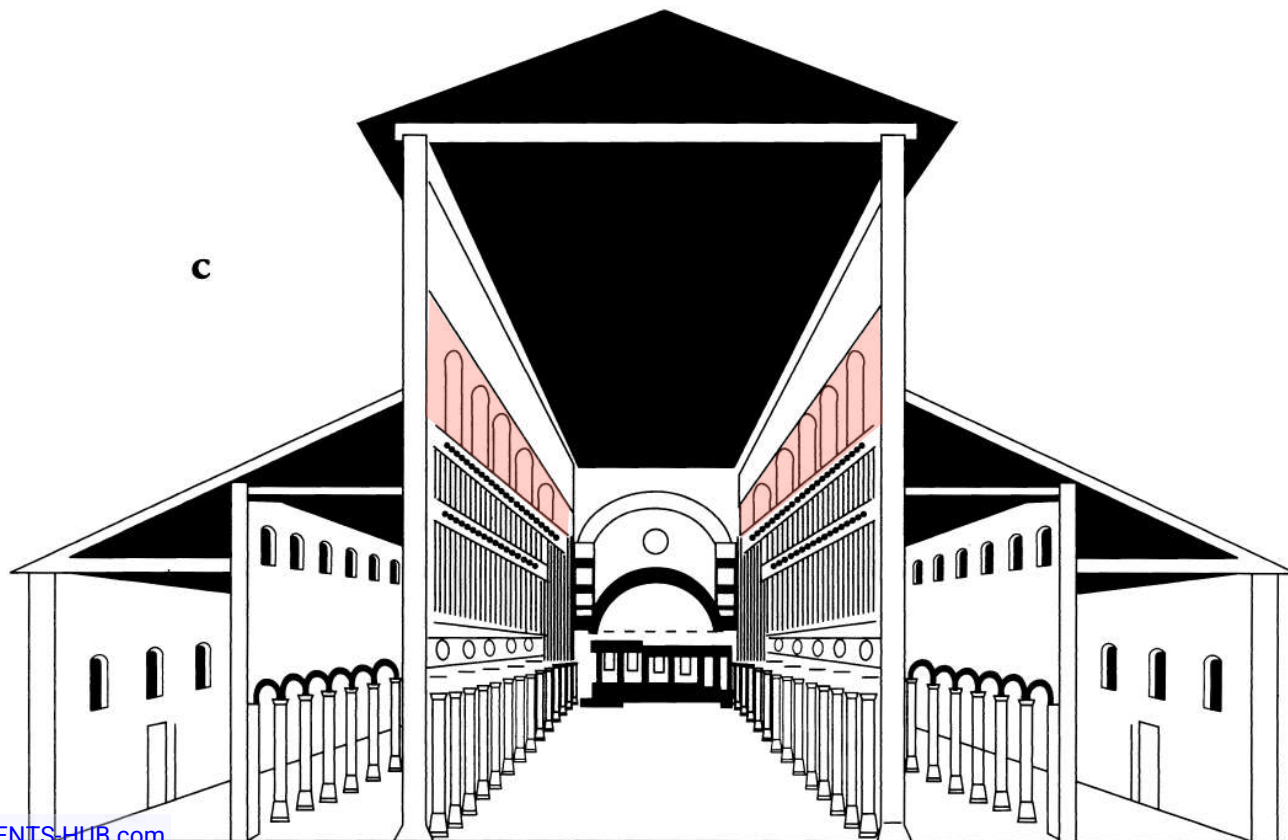
Basilica of Saint Peter, Rome (319-329)

One of the first cathedrals, built outside the walls of the city, on the **Vatican hill**



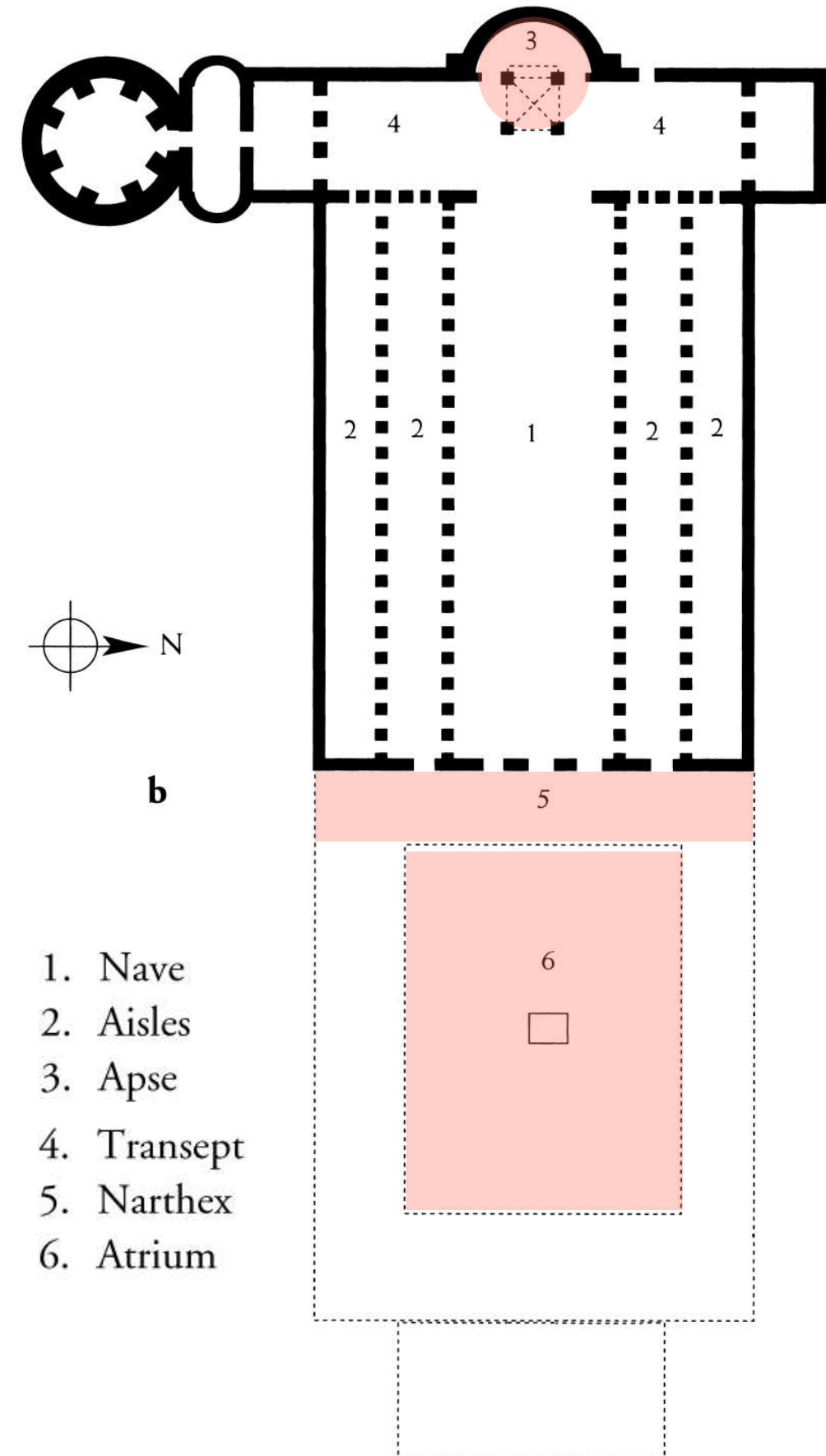
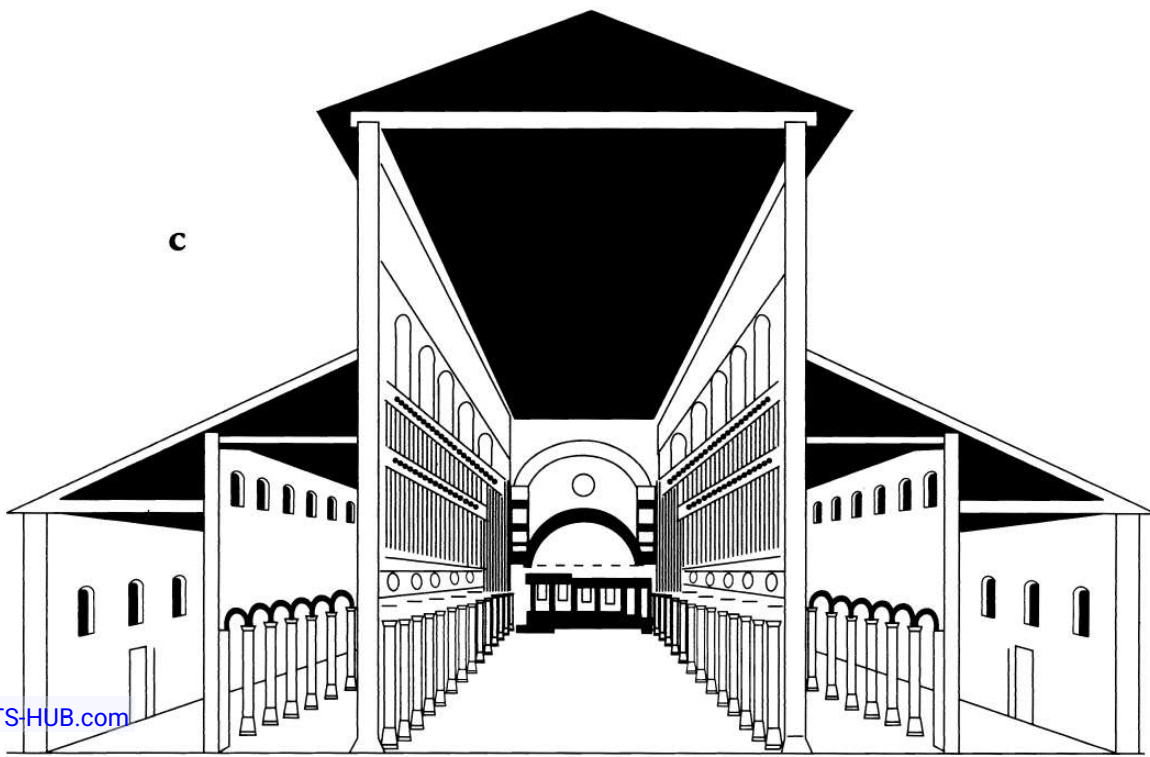
Basilica of Saint Peter, Rome (319–329)

- The **nave** of the basilica had **two aisles** along the sides
- The nave rose in a **clearstory** with many tall windows
- Attached to the nave at the west end was a cross arm - **transept** - giving the plan of the basilica the form of a T, **resembling the cross**

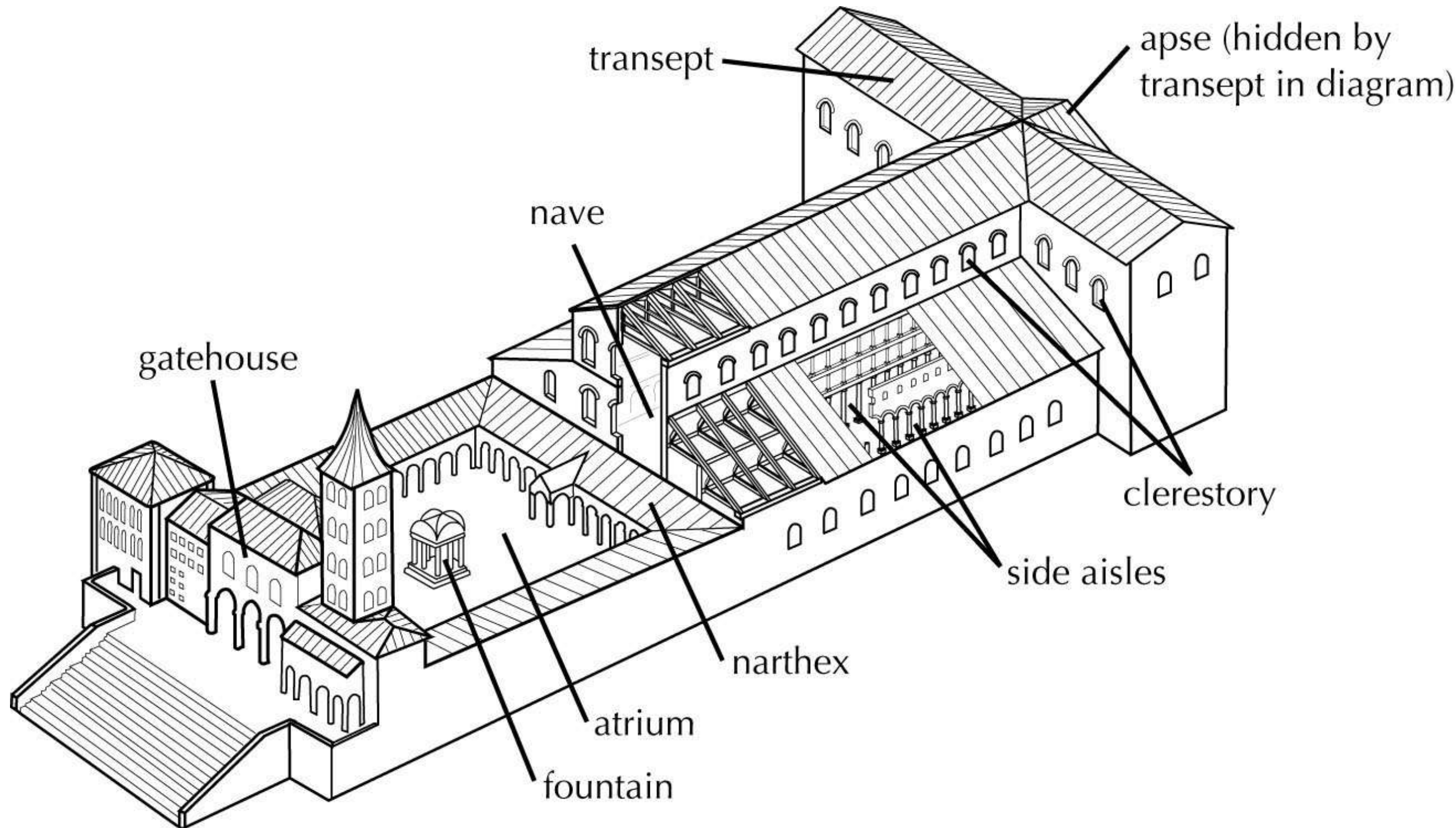


Basilica of Saint Peter, Rome (319–329)

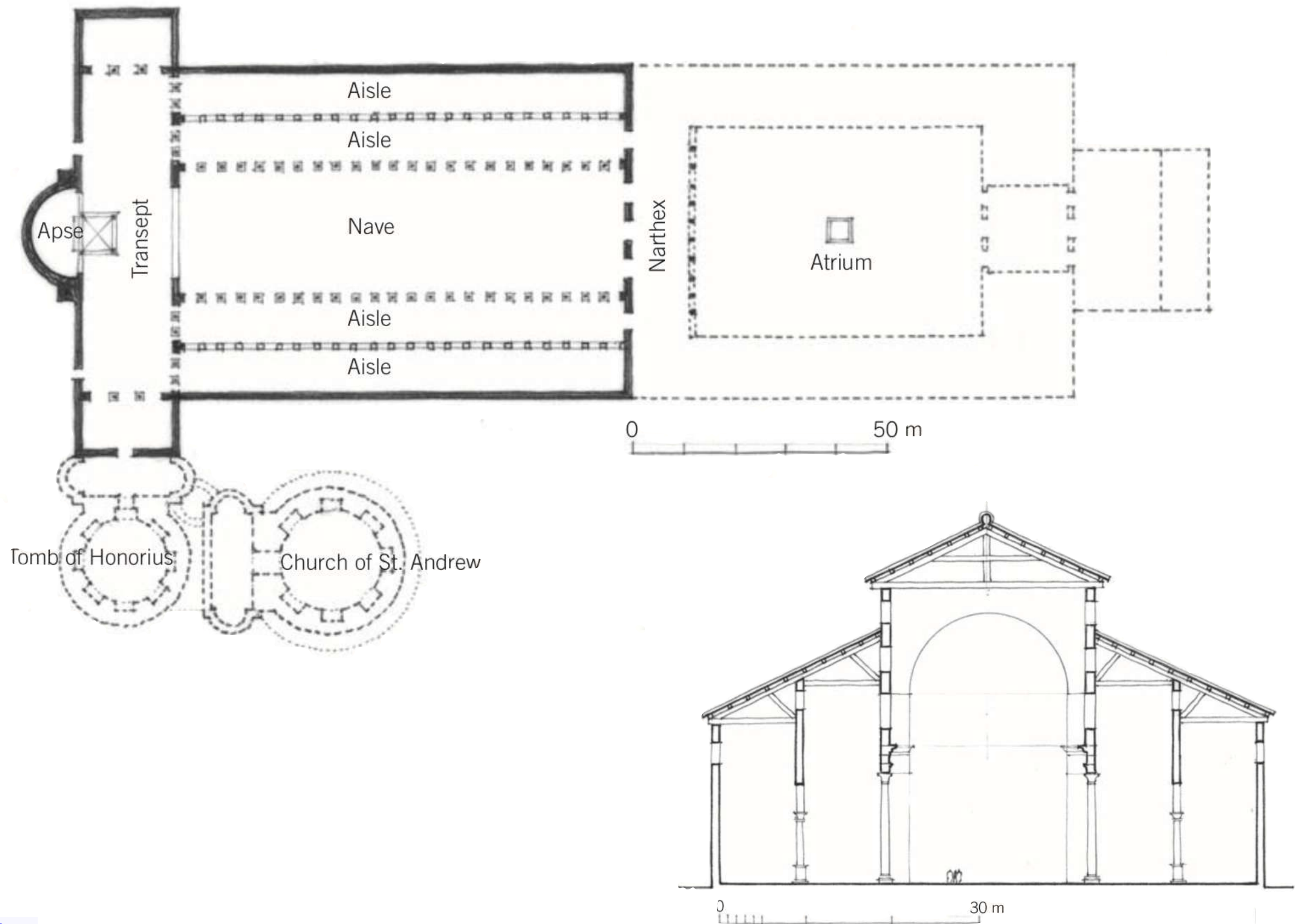
- From the centre of the transept extended a **semicircular apse** capped by half dome
- A **narthex** was added at the **entrance**, with the altar places at the far end on the semicircular apse
- Outside, precedent the narthex a large **atrium** forecourt **ringed with colonnades** was added



Basilica of Saint Peter, Rome (319–329)



Basilica of Saint Peter, Rome (319–329)

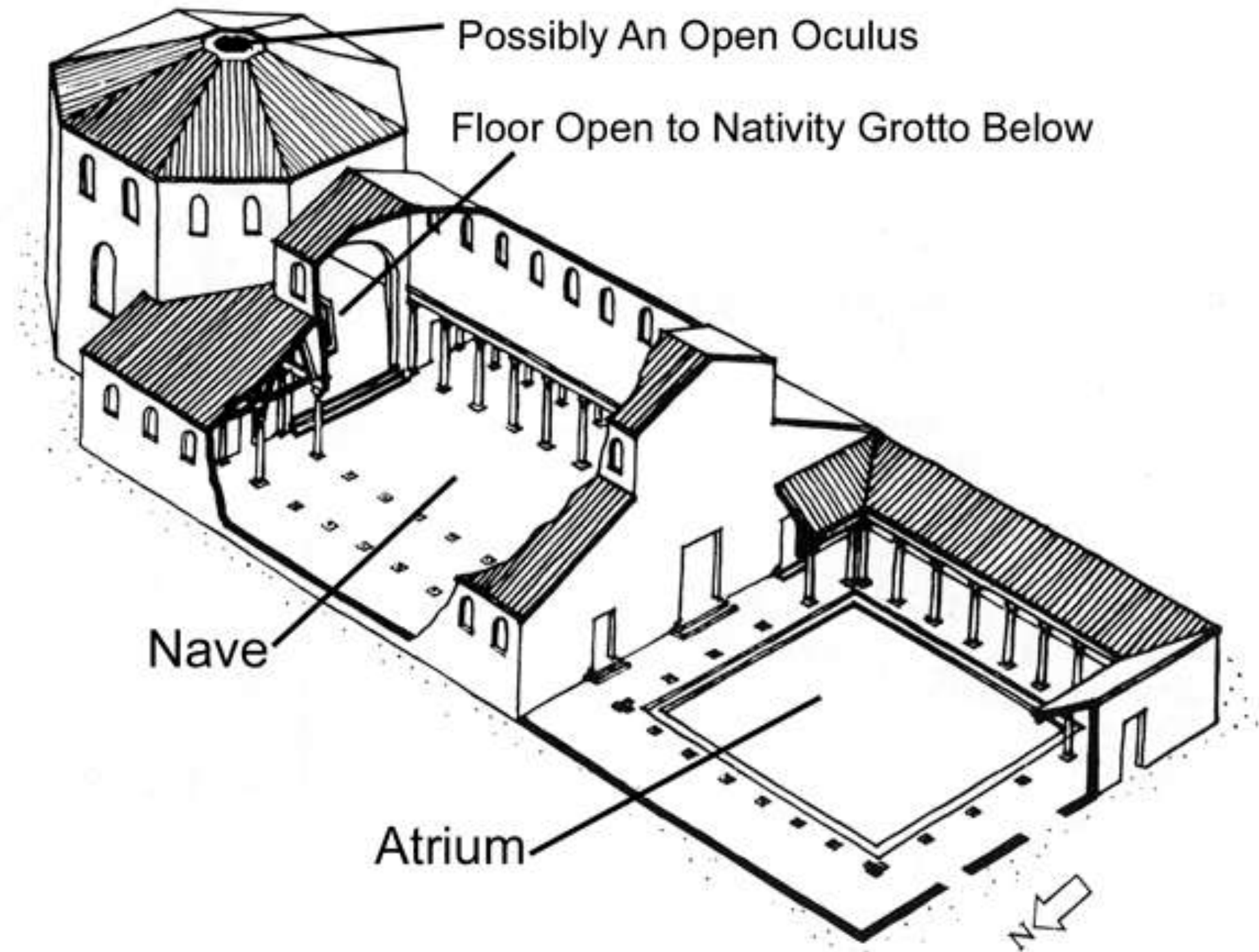


Basilica of Saint Peter, Rome (319–329)



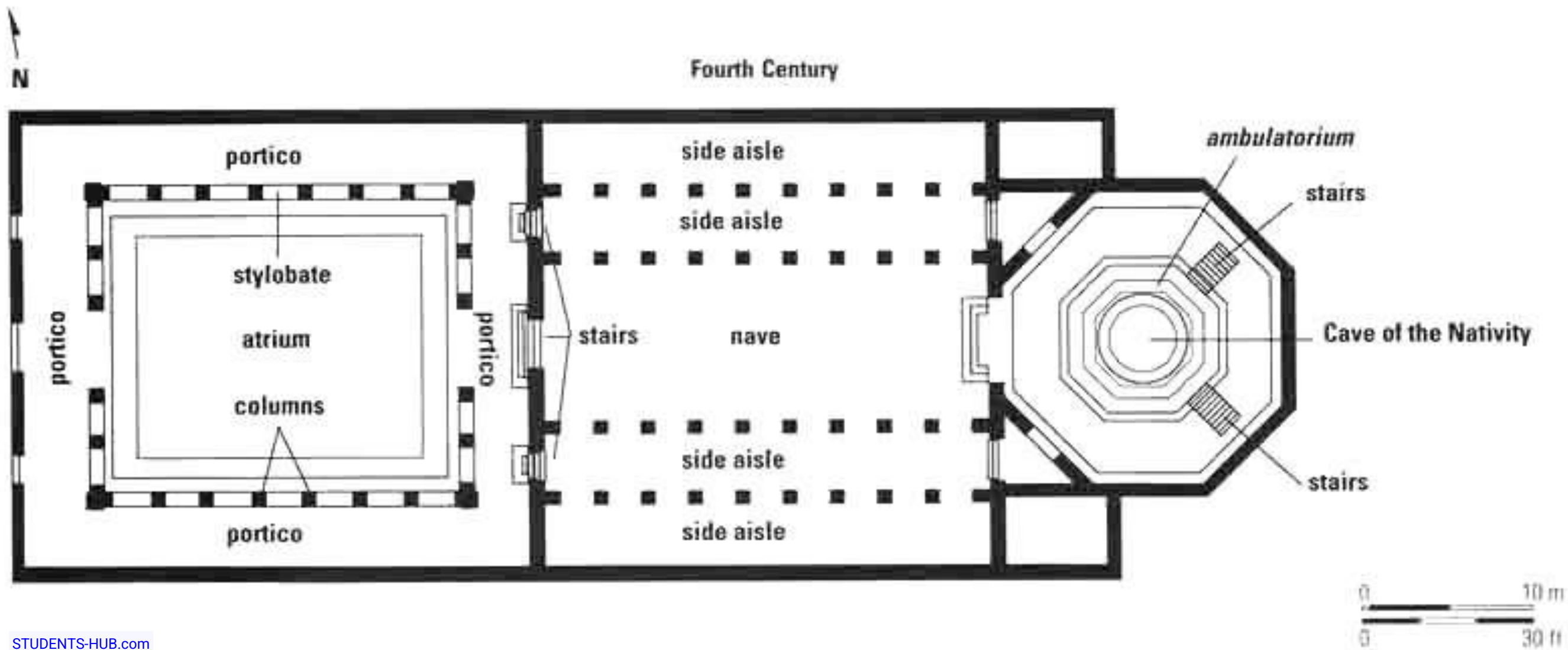
The Nativity Church, Bethlehem (326-333)

In the east, churches took slightly different form, **representing centralized martyra**. The buildings erected on the **spots associated with the life and death of christ**



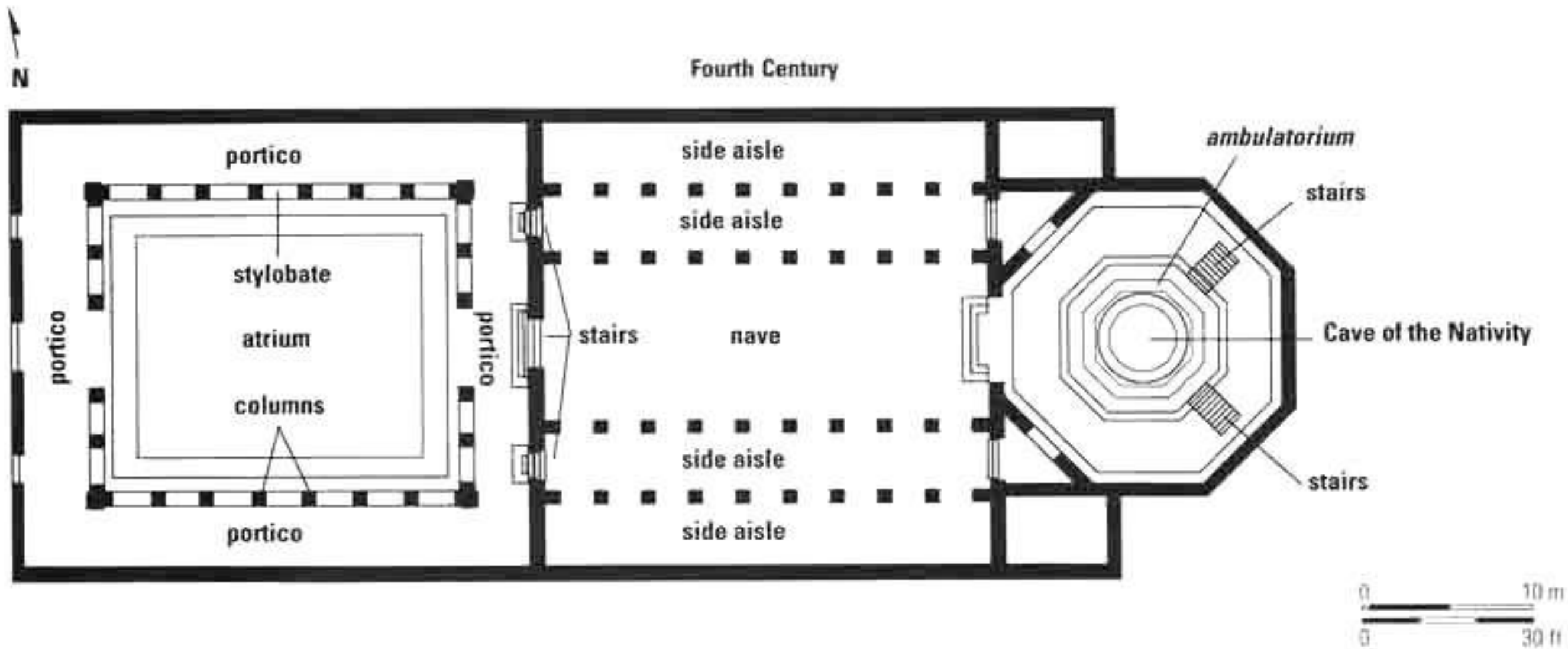
The Nativity Church, Bethlehem (326-333)

- In 326, Constantine ordered to built a church over the cave of nativity in Bethlehem, where the christ had been born
- The church of Nativity, was replaced by another in the 6th century, but the remains suggest the general outline of Constantine's church



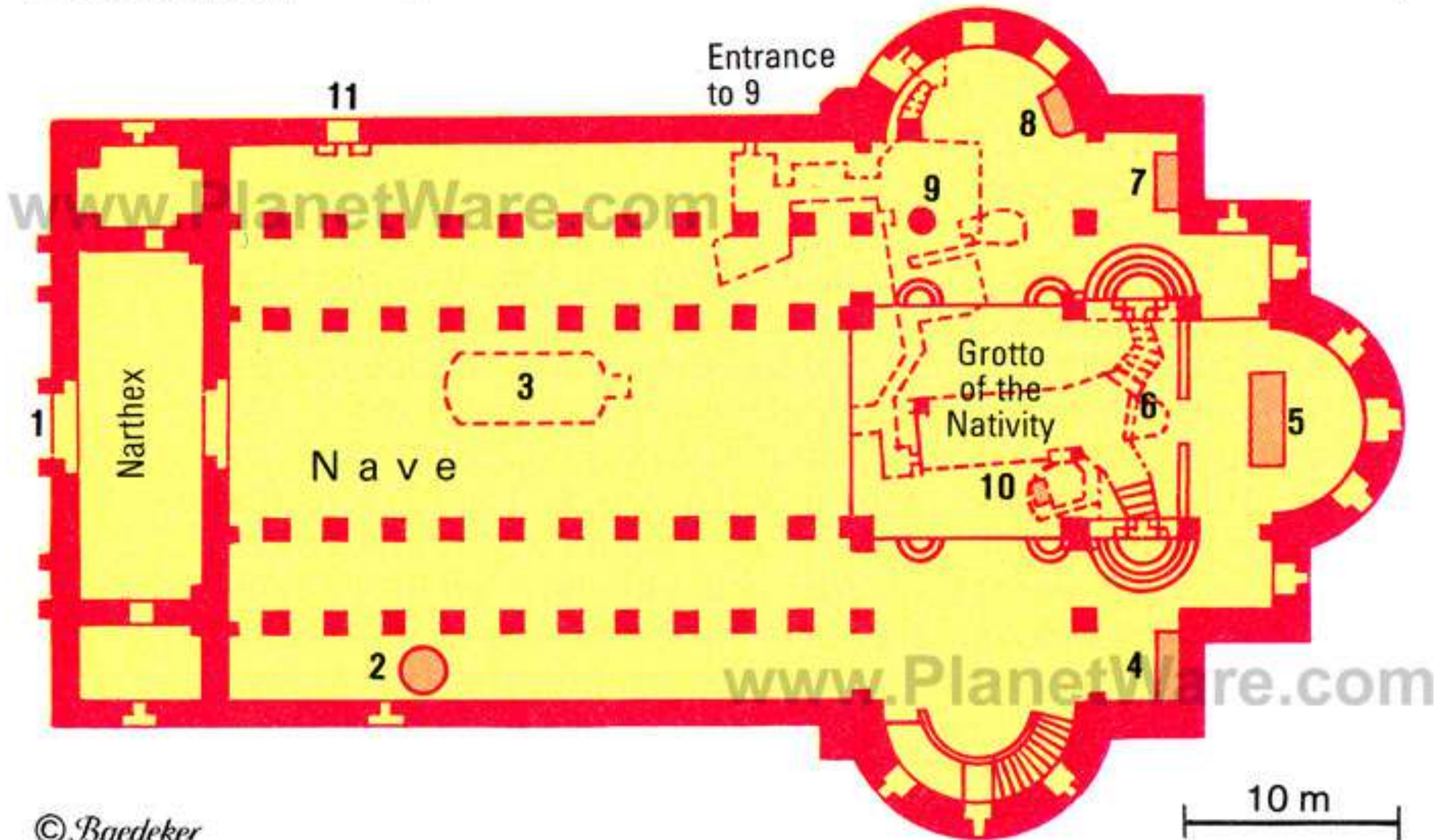
The Nativity Church, Bethlehem (326-333)

- Finished in 333, it had an atrium, and a basilica with side aisles, instead of having transept and small apse, the church terminated in a large domed octagon, with an opening in the floor through which pilgrims could look down into the cave believed to be christ's birthplace.



Bethlehem

Church of the Nativity



© Baedeker

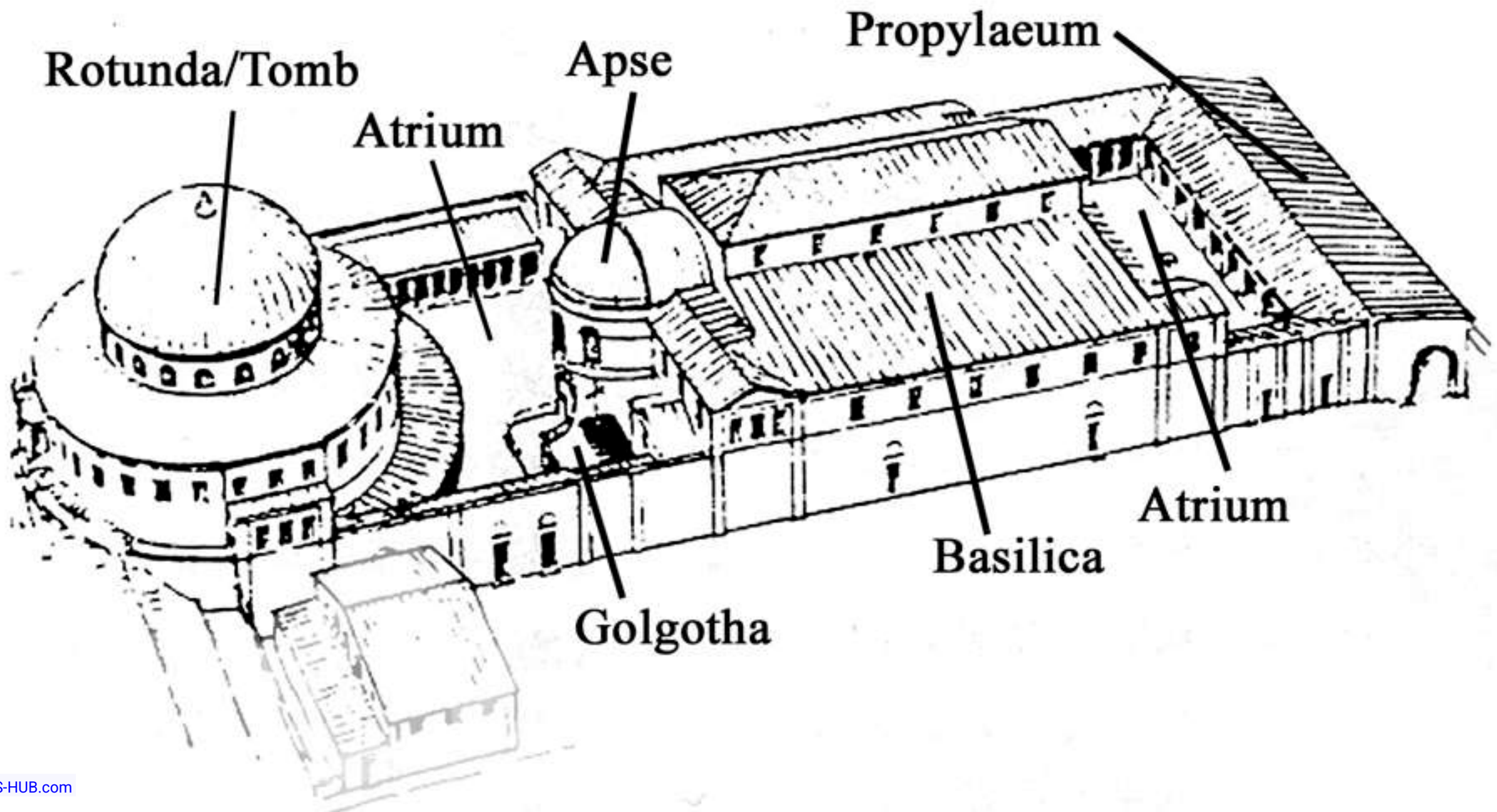
- 1 Entrance
- 2 Font
- 3 Mosaic pavement
- 4 Altar of Circumcision

- 5 High altar
- 6 Iconostasis
- 7 Altar of Three Kings
- 8 Altar of the Virgin

- 9 Grotto of Holy Innocents
- 10 Altar of the Manger
- 11 Doorway to St Catherine's Church

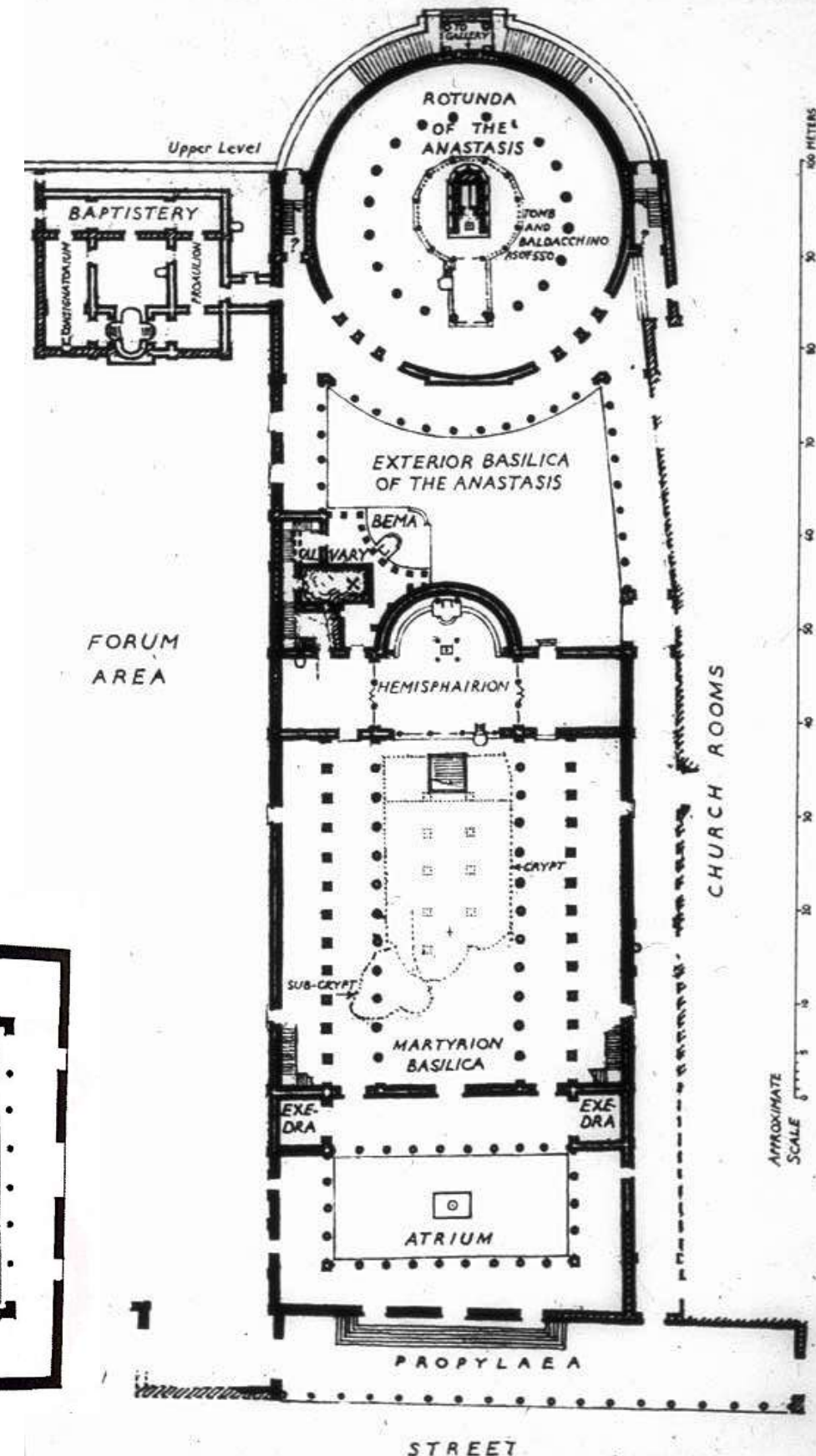
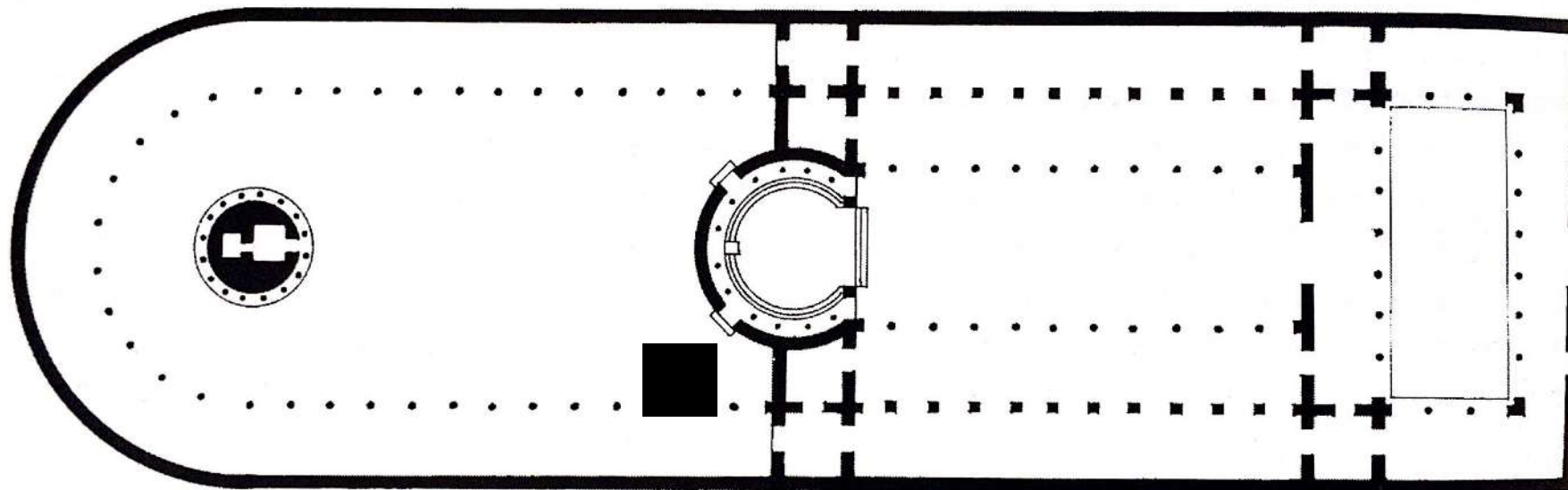
The Church of Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem

- Constantine ordered to build a church in Jerusalem 'a basilica more beautiful than any on earth'
- Construction began 326



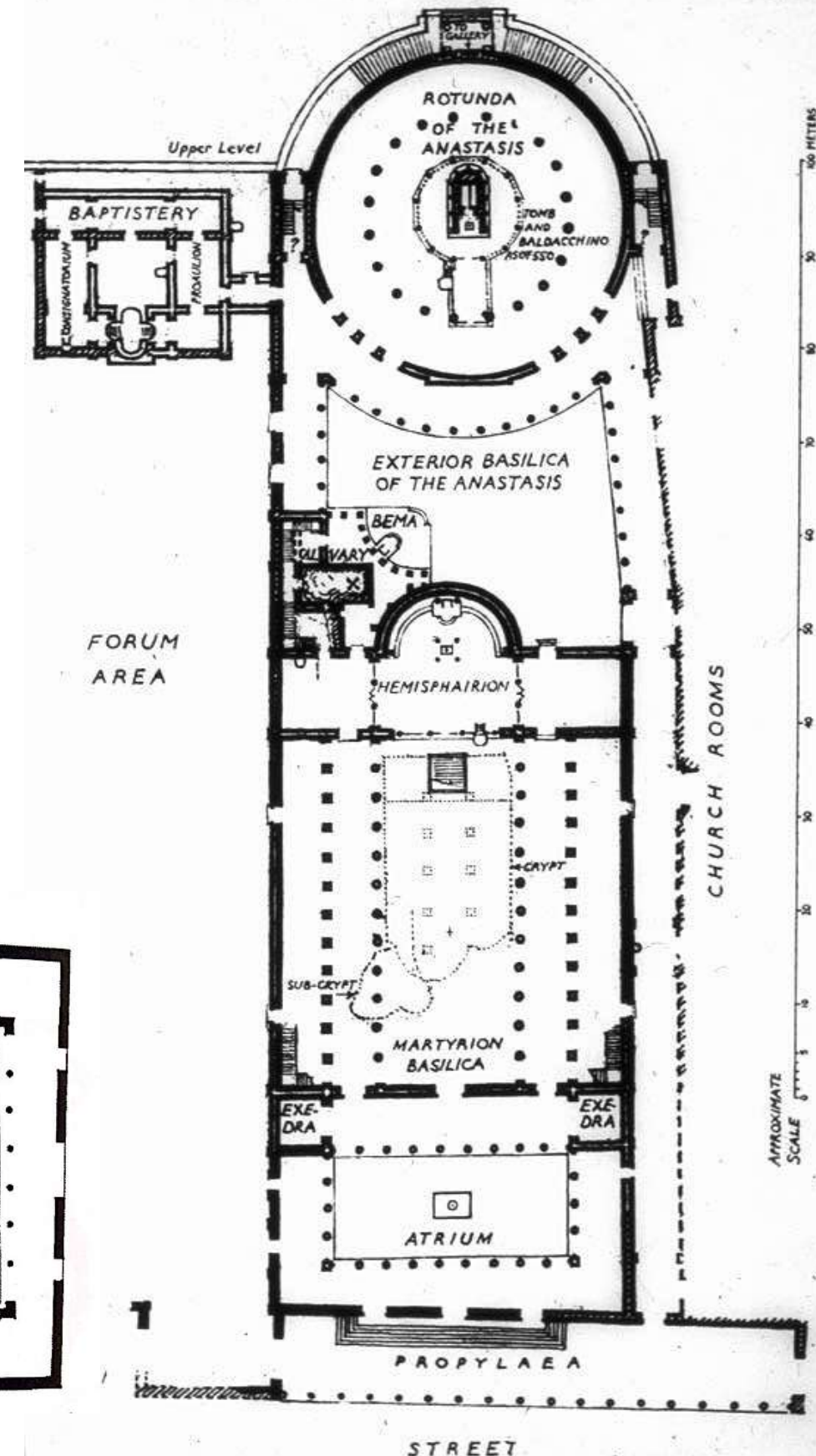
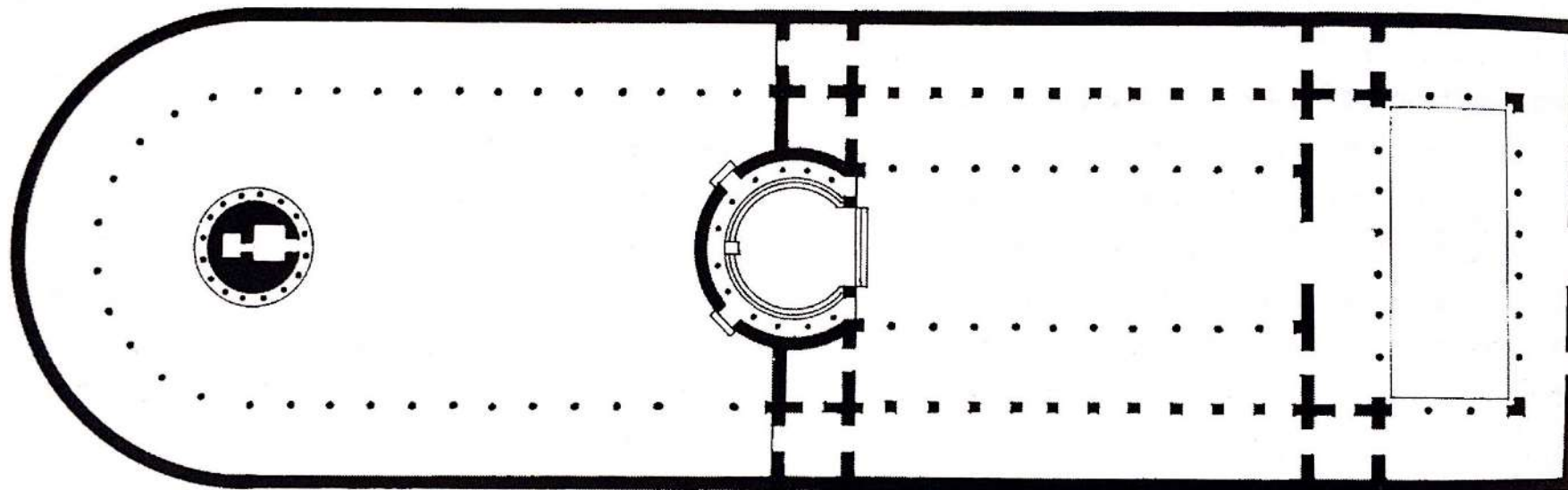
The Church of Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem

- The church had a small atrium, nave, and two aisles
- Ended in an apse consisting of an almost completely circular structure lined by 12 column, symbolic the 12 apostles
- The focal point of this centralized feature was directly over where the remains of the cross had been unearthed by Constantine's mother, Helena

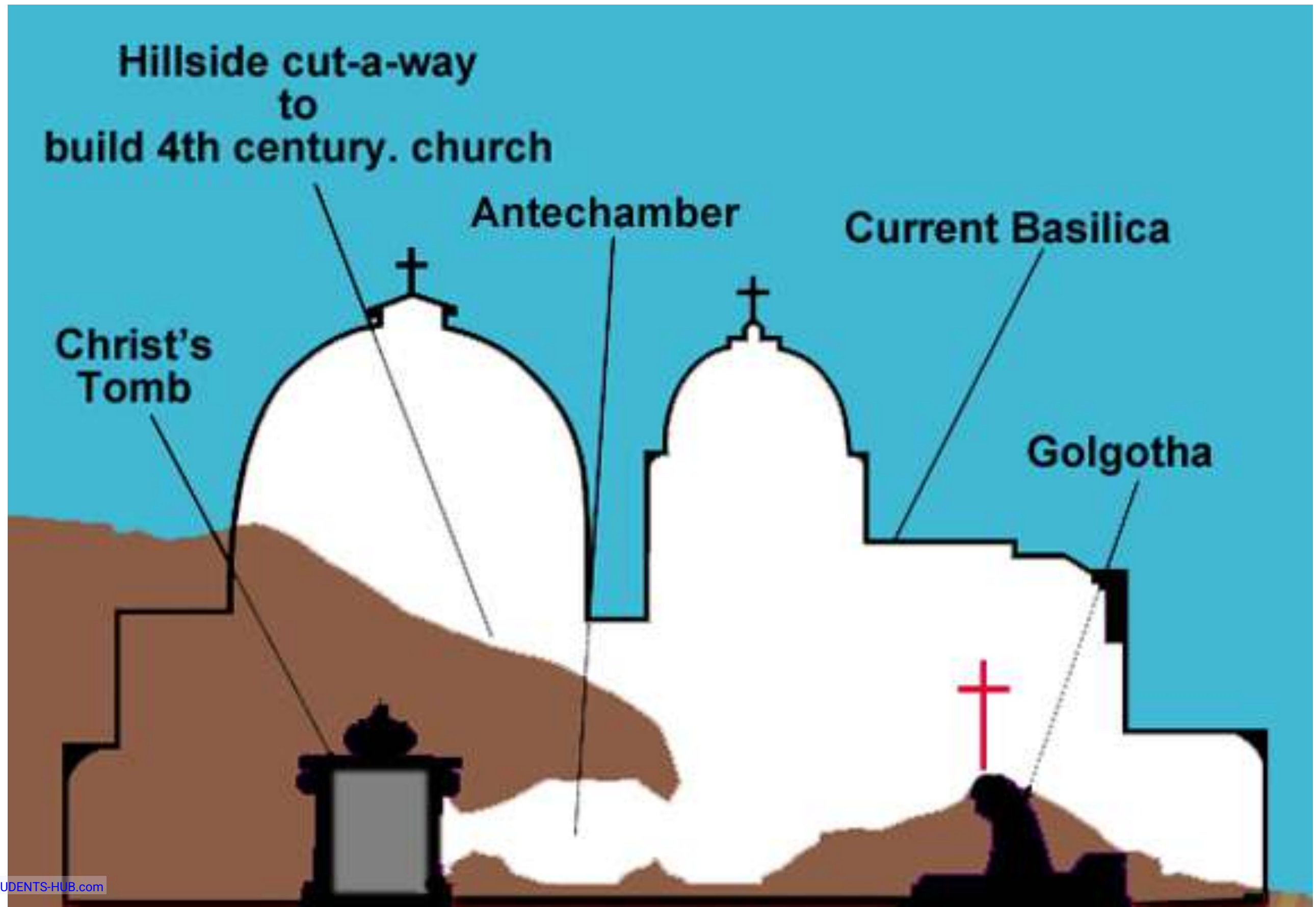


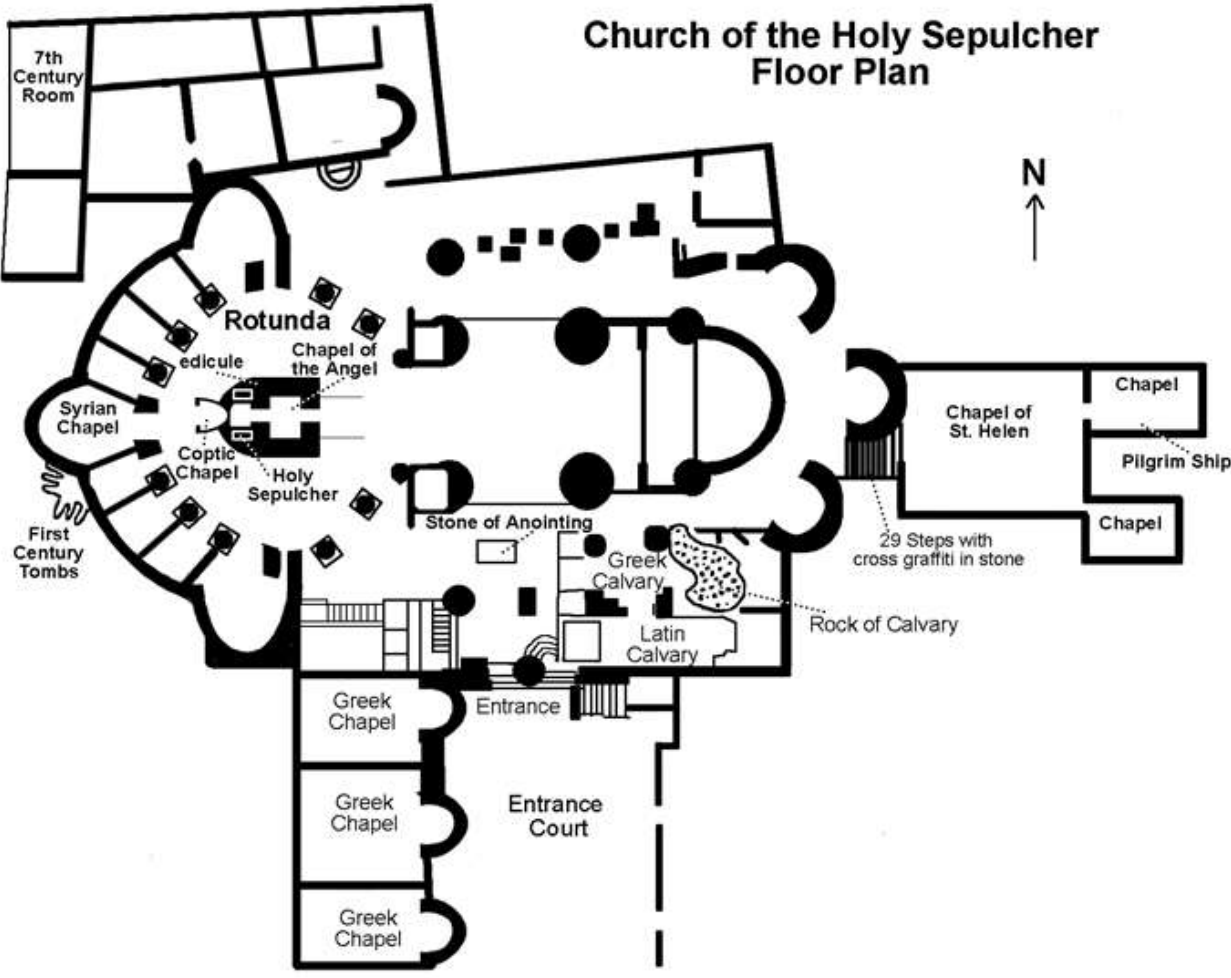
The Church of Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem

- West of the apse was a rock cube - the remains of the hill of Golgotha - surrounded by a large atrium - like court ending in a hemicycle over the tomb
- Over the tomb was replaced by much larger dome (rotunda), 16.8 m in diameter and three storied high



The Church of Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem





Next lecture

Byzantine Architecture