

AP Art History

Church Vocabulary Terms

- *Aisle*: columned side walkways (usually 1-2 in early churches)
- *Altar*: table-top where the priest performs the Eucharistic ritual (essential for the Catholic liturgy)
- *Ambulatory*: a semi-circular passageway around the apse of a church typically to visit reliquaries
- *Apse*: semi-circular niche where the rituals were performed by the priest (sometimes with a little step up)
- *Atrium*: outdoor courtyard for gathering
- *Axially planned/basilica*: rectangular building with a large open center space for crowds
- *Barrel Vault*: a vault, series of arches together, forming a half cylinder
- *Bay*: a squarish section of a church in the aisle that is flanked by a set of columns and usually has an opening of arches and aligns to an exterior window
- *Cathedral*: the most important church in a city, town, or region; literally the “seat of the bishop”
- *Centrally planned*: a church that is circular/octagonal in shape, NOT rectangular
- *Chevet*: an extension of the east end of the church (encompasses the choir and apse)
- *Choir*: (not the singing one) the larger space between the *transept* and *apse*, for more "theatrical" liturgical events
- *Clerestory*: second story windows allowing light into the *nave*
- *Coffered Ceiling*: pattern of indentations or recesses in the ceiling
- *Dome*: a rounded vault forming the roof of a building
- *Façade*: the front of the building, especially the main entrance
- *Flying Buttress*: stone arch that supports the stone roof by having the weight bypass the thinner walls and travel down to large *piers* outside the building
- *Fresco*: painting done directly on to a wall so that it chemically binds to the surface
- *Jamb*: side columns, attached to the wall next to the *portal*
- *Lancet Window*: a narrow, tall window that is pointed
- *Lintel*: a horizontal support beam across the top of a window or doorway

- *Mosaic*: a picture/pattern created by placing small colored pieces of stone, tile, glass, etc.
- *Nave*: large center rectangular aisle spanning from the *narthex* doors to the *apse*; worshipers typically stood in this space, leaving a walkway for the priest during the *mass* (service)
- *Narthex*: vestibule or front porch (this was as far as non-Christians could go in the early days of the Church)
- *Pendentive*: triangular-shaped masonry that serves as the transition from a *pier* to a dome; they allow domes to be supported by four free-standing piers thereby opening up a greater space
- *Pier*: large column or post
- *Pointed Arch*: an arch that meets at a point, versus rounded, helps to distribute weight downward not side wades
- *Portal*: a doorway, typically highly decorated with scenes from the Bible
- *Relic/Reliquary*: a piece of a saint (*relic*) in a container (*reliquary*) used by the faithful to pray; it was believed proximity to a reliquary could help your prayers reach God
- *Ribbed Vault*: the meeting of two *vaults* (self-supporting arches) in which the diagonal arches form a rib-like pattern
- *Rose Window*: a circular stained glass window in a form suggestive of a rose
- *Side Chapel*: a small chapel with an altar that is off of the *nave*
- *Spolia*: items that are reused from earlier buildings
- *Stained Glass*: colored glass used to form decorative window designs
- *Transverse Arch*: an archway that runs across a *barrel vault*, dividing the *bays* with supporting *piers*
- *Tympanum* (pl. *tympana*): a rounded semi-circle that is above the portal of a medieval church, typically decorated with scenes from the Bible, especially the *Last Judgment*