

# In search of St Peter

## 1st century AD

**Circus of Nero:** Used during Nero's persecution of Christians. Many thrown to wild animals, others crucified along low central wall

Chariot racing track

Peter is crucified and buried alongside race track

Obelisk from Circus of Nero erected 1586

**Baldacchino:** Baroque canopy over high altar, designed by **Lorenzo Bernini**, erected between 1624-33

**Papal altar**  
Used for Mass, canonizations, coronations of emperors and kings, definitions of dogmas

**2nd century:** Shrine, **Trophy of Gaius**, erected over Peter's grave

**319-349 AD: Constantine** – first Roman emperor to embrace Christianity – builds first Basilica over grave

**1506: Pope Julius II** lays first stone of present-day St Peter's Basilica  
Designed by 10 architects, notably **Donato Bramante** and **Michaelangelo**, construction takes 120 years during reigns of 10 Popes

**Confessio:** Entrance to **Sacred Grottoes** illuminated by eternal flames of 100 lamps

## 20th century

**1940-49:** Archaeological excavations under Papal altar uncover sealed niche containing bones and cloth fragments embroidered with gold thread

**June 1963:** Remains identified as those of sturdy 1st-century male, aged mid-60s, wrapped in fabric dating from 4th century. **Possibly bones of the Apostle**

**Pope Francis will be buried in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. The last pope to break with tradition in this way was Leo XIII in 1903**

**EAST** John Paul I Benedict XVI: tomb vacated by John Paul II on beatification Paul VI

**Trophy of Gaius**  
1940s excavations below Confessio reach original 150AD structure

**Niche** believed to contain St Peter's remains

**Triple coffin:** Cypress, lead and hardwood caskets  
**Papal altar** **WEST**

**Crypt** **Confessio**

**Grottoes and necropolis** hold tombs of 147 previous popes

Vatican Hill

Pre-Constantine necropolis

Trophy of Gaius

St Peter's tomb