

0. LEGACY OF MARCUS AURELIUS - Story Preface

1. MARCUS AURELIUS

**2. LEGACY OF MARCUS AURELIUS**

3. COMMODUS - IN CHARGE

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When he returned to Rome to implement legal and administrative reforms, Marcus Aurelius sold his personal possessions to help relieve the effects of famine and plague. He helped the poor by cutting taxes and founding schools, orphanages, and hospitals.

When Marcus Aurelius was Emperor, Christianity was not the state religion of Rome. St. Peter's Basilica would not be built for another millennium. The beautiful altars, ceilings and churches of the Christian faith were not part of the Roman Forum. No Pope wielded religious power in Rome when Marcus Aurelius was Caesar. (Follow this link to the current Pope's private study.)

Furthermore, Marcus Aurelius was not as generous toward Christians as he was toward the Empire's poor. Believing they threatened the imperial way of life, Marcus Aurelius persecuted Christians.

In 176, thinking he would extend the Empire's northern border to the Wisla (Vistula) River, Marcus Aurelius returned to the Danube frontier. He was soon a sick man. He died of the plague in Vindobona (today's Vienna) on March 17, 180 and was buried in Hadrian's Masoleum (known today as the Castel Sant'Angelo). He never reached the Vistula.

One of his final acts dramatically harmed the Empire he had worked so hard to protect. Instead of adopting a capable man to succeed him - as the previous four Emperors had done - Marcus Aurelius appointed his son, Commodus. It was a terrible mistake.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/LEGACY-OF-MARCUS-AURELIUS-Gladiator>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/LEGACY-OF-MARCUS-AURELIUS-Gladiator>

## Media Stream



### Illustration of St. Peter's Basilica

Image online, courtesy the Vatican's website (known as *Christus Rex*).

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View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Illustration-of-St.-Peter-s-Basilica>



### Drawing of the Building of Vatican

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress [website](#).

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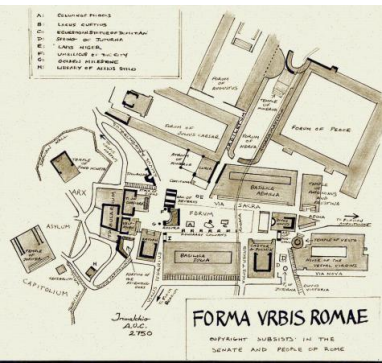


### Painted Ceiling at the Sistine Chapel

[Image online](#), via the U.S. Library of Congress.

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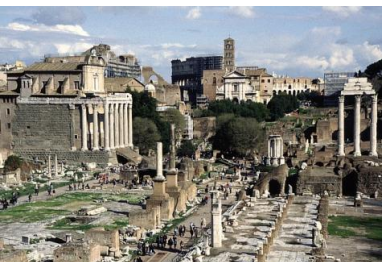


### Roman Forum - Drawing of the Ancient Site

Image online, courtesy the Rockburn Elementary School [website](#).

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### Roman Forum - Remaining Ruins

Image online, courtesy RomeTour.co.uk

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Roman-Forum-Remaining-Ruins>



### Crowds at the Vatican

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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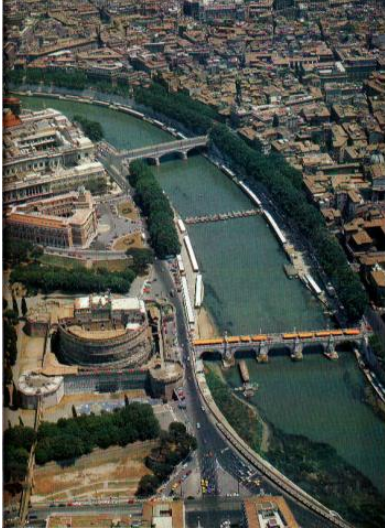


## Private Study of the Pope

Image online, courtesy of nationstates.net website,

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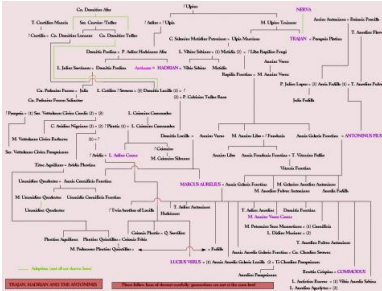
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Private-Study-of-the-Pope>



## Castel Sant'Angelo

Image online, courtesy the Vatican website, [christusrex.org](http://www.vatican.va).

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## Geneology of Roman Emperors

Image online, courtesy the [University of Calgary](http://www.ucalgary.ca) website.

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