



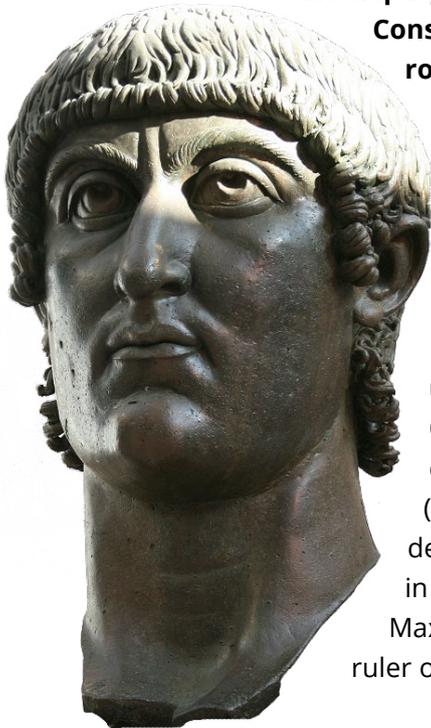
Division of Surrey:
A brief history of Constantine
and the Order



A Brief History of Emperor Constantine

Constantine the Great, also known as Constantine I, was a Roman Emperor who ruled between 306 and 337 AD. Born on the territory now known as Niš, located in Serbia, he was the son of Flavius Valerius Constantius, a Roman Army officer of Illyrian origins. His mother Helena was Greek. His father became Caesar, the deputy emperor in the west, in 293 AD.

Constantine was sent east, where he rose through the ranks to become a military tribune under Emperors Diocletian and Galerius.



In 305, Constantius raised himself to the rank of Augustus, senior western emperor, and Constantine was recalled west to campaign under his father in Britannia (Britain). Constantine was acclaimed as emperor by the army at Eboracum (modern-day York) after his father's death in 306 AD. He emerged victorious in a series of civil wars against Emperors Maxentius and Licinius to become sole ruler of both west and east by 324 AD.

As emperor, Constantine enacted administrative, financial, social, and military reforms to strengthen the empire. He restructured the government, separating civil and military authorities. To combat inflation he introduced the solidus, a new gold coin that became the standard for Byzantine and European currencies for more than a thousand years. The Roman army was reorganised to consist of mobile field units and garrison soldiers capable of countering internal threats and barbarian invasions. Constantine pursued successful campaigns against the tribes on the Roman frontiers - the Franks, the Alamanni, the Goths, and the Sarmatians - even resettling territories abandoned by his predecessors during the Crisis of the Third Century.

Constantine was the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity. Although he lived most of his life as a pagan, he joined the Christian faith on his deathbed, being baptised by Eusebius of Nicomedia. He played an influential role in the proclamation of the Edict of Milan in 313, which declared religious tolerance for Christianity in the Roman empire. He called the First Council of Nicaea in 325 that produced the statement of Christian belief known as the Nicene Creed. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built on his orders at the purported site of Jesus' tomb in Jerusalem and became the holiest place in Christendom. The Papal claim to temporal power in the High Middle Ages was based on the supposed Donation of Constantine. He is venerated as a saint

REIGN

25 July 306 AD – 29 October 312 AD
(*Caesar in the west; self-proclaimed Augustus from 309; recognized as such in the east in April 310.*)

29 October 312 – 19 September 324
(*Undisputed Augustus in the west, senior Augustus in the empire.*)

19 September 324 – 22 May 337
(*As emperor of whole empire.*)

GENERAL INFORMATION

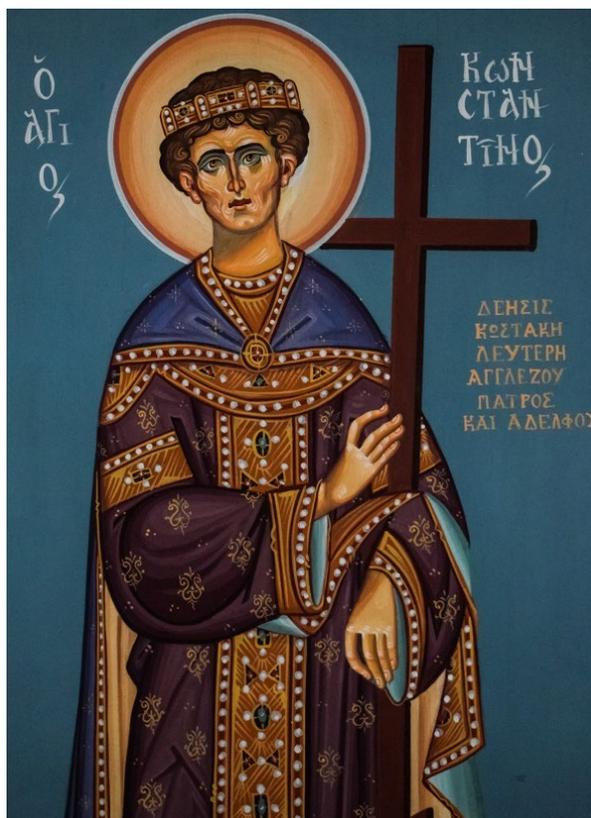
Predecessor	Constantius I
Successor	Constantine II
Born	27 February c. 272 Naissus, Moesia Superior, Roman Empire
Died	22 May 337 (aged 65) Nicomedia, Bithynia, Roman Empire
Burial	Church of the Holy Apostles, Constantinople
Spouse	Minervina Fausta
Full name	Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantinus
Regnal name	Imperator Caesar Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantinus Augustus
Dynasty	Constantinian dynasty
Father	Constantius Chlorus
Mother	Helena
Religion	Nicene Christianity Roman Religion (<i>previously</i>)

by the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic Churches. He has historically been referred to as the *'First Christian Emperor'*, and he did heavily promote the Christian Church. Some modern scholars, however, debate his beliefs and even his comprehension of the Christian faith itself.

The age of Constantine marked a distinct epoch in the history of the Roman Empire. He built a new imperial residence at Byzantium and renamed the city Constantinople (now Istanbul) after himself (the laudatory epithet of *'New Rome'* came later, and was never an official title). It became the capital of the Empire for more than a thousand years, with the later eastern Roman Empire now being referred to as the Byzantine Empire by historians. His more immediate political legacy was that he replaced Diocletian's tetrarchy with the principle of dynastic succession by leaving the empire to his sons. His reputation flourished during the lifetime of his children and centuries after his reign. The medieval church upheld him as a paragon of virtue, while secular rulers invoked him as a prototype, a point of reference, and the symbol of imperial legitimacy and identity. Beginning with the Renaissance, there were more critical appraisals of his reign due to the rediscovery of anti-Constantinian sources. Trends in modern and recent scholarship have attempted to balance the extremes of previous scholarship.

Constantine gained his honorific of *'The Great'* from Christian historians long after he had died, but he could have claimed the title on his military achievements and victories alone. He reunited the Empire under one emperor, and he won major victories over the Franks and Alamanni in 306–308, the Franks again in 313–314, the Goths in 332, and the Sarmatians in 334. By 336, he had reoccupied most of the long-lost province of Dacia which Aurelian had been forced to abandon in 271. At the time of his death, he was planning a great expedition to end raids on the eastern provinces from the Persian Empire. He served for almost 31 years (combining his years as co-ruler and sole ruler), the longest-serving emperor except for Augustus.

The Byzantine Empire considered Constantine its founder, and the Holy Roman Empire reckoned him among the venerable figures of its tradition. In the later Byzantine state, it became a great honor for an emperor to be hailed as a "new Constantine"; ten emperors carried the name, including the last emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire. Charlemagne used monumental Constantinian forms in his court to suggest that he was Constantine's successor and equal. Constantine acquired a mythic role as a warrior against heathens.



A Brief History the Order of the Red Cross of Constantine

As a Royal Arch Mason, you are now entitled to seek membership of the Order of the Red Cross of Constantine.

Since the establishment of Grand Imperial Conclave in 1865, the order has steadily grown with Conclaves formed throughout the English speaking world.

Why Constantine? Candidates in this degree recognise how Christianity can be embraced by seeing how the legend of Constantine's conversion is set within Masonic ritual that is linked with the history of the Roman Empire.

THE HISTORY OF THE DEGREE

Constantine, a Roman, was destined for the college of Emperors but following the death of his father, he was hailed by the Legions in York as Augustus and became the Governor of Britain and Gaul. After several successful battles across the Alps and Italy he eventually established himself as the lawful Emperor of both the East and West and transferred the capital of the empire from Rome to Byzantium, later to be named after him.

He was the first Roman Emperor to openly encourage Christianity. His conversion began one evening after a long day's march with his army when, in what he believed was a sign from heaven, he and his army saw in the sky, and by the rays of the setting sun, a pillar of light in the form of a special cross. To sanctify the minds of his pagan army, he had made a standard bearing a Cross like that seen and ordered it to be carried before him in the wars. Several Christians in his army came forward and avowed their faith following which Constantine directed that they should wear on their armour a red cross.

Having been successful in battle it is said that Constantine with the help of his chief bishop, Eusebius, opened a Conclave of the Knights of the Order whose members became the bodyguard of their Sovereign.

THE CEREMONIES

The Christian Order is in two parts. The first ceremony consists of the candidate's admission, obligation, and then the installation as a Knight-Companion of the Red Cross of Constantine, in which the historical basis of the Order is also detailed.

In separate ceremonies the Knight-Companion builds on what he has already been taught, and in the ceremony of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre and St. John the Evangelist this knowledge is further expanded and the ultimate aims of Freemasonry are revealed. These, together with the two Installation ceremonies leading to the principal Chairs in the Red Cross of Constantine, are undoubtedly among the most impressive ceremonies in the whole of Masonry.

