A City Changes

Christianity and the Roman world

9-12.WC.19 "Analyze the impact of Christianity on Classical culture and society and the formation of the Catholic Church."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways Christians adapted or changed Classical culture, and circle two changes in public or community life. Number three details that show how local Christian communities became part of a larger church.

Christianity in a Roman City

1. Imagine walking through Rome in the fourth century. At one end of a busy street stands a temple where Romans once offered sacrifices to traditional gods. Farther along, a Christian congregation gathers in a basilica, a spacious building type Romans had used for courts and public meetings. Christians adapted its long hall for worship rather than inventing an entirely new design. Before 313, Christians sometimes faced imperial persecution. In 313, emperors Constantine and Licinius granted legal protection to Christianity. Imperial support then helped fund churches, making a once vulnerable faith more visible in the city's public spaces.

2. Changes reached beyond buildings. Christian communities collected donations for widows, orphans, and people in poverty, extending traditions of mutual aid already present in Roman society. Bishops, who led local Christian communities, supervised worship and sometimes helped settle disputes. Wealthy Romans could support churches and aid to the poor, giving them a new way to display generosity in public. As Christianity gained imperial favor, emperors restricted some traditional sacrifices. By the late fourth century, public worship of the old gods faced growing legal limits. These shifts did not erase Classical culture, but they changed which beliefs and activities received public support.

3. A local congregation was not the whole church. Bishops in different cities exchanged letters and met in councils to settle disagreements about belief and practice. In 325, Constantine called bishops to a council at Nicaea, where they agreed on a statement of Christian belief, although debates continued. The bishop of Rome gained influence partly because his city had been the empire's capital and because Christians linked his office to the apostle Peter. Over centuries, networks of bishops and shared teachings helped shape the Catholic Church. Its structure grew within the Roman world, even as its leaders sometimes challenged imperial power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the Christian use of a basilica show both continuity and change in Classical culture?

2. How did support from wealthy Romans and emperors change public life for Christians and followers of traditional gods?

3. How did bishops and councils help local Christian communities become part of a larger church?

4. Why would it be inaccurate to say Christianity erased Roman customs? Use two details from different paragraphs.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 100 word museum label for an imaginary exhibit called "A Roman City Changes." Describe how a resident might experience two connected changes, one in public space or religious practice and one in leadership or aid, then explain how those changes reshaped but did not erase Classical society. Use at least three accurate details from the passage in your own words.

A City Changes

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways Christians adapted or changed Classical culture, and circle two changes in public or community life. Number three details that show how local Christian communities became part of a larger church. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the Christian use of a basilica show both continuity and change in Classical culture?	**Christians kept a Roman building type but used its hall for worship instead of courts or public meetings.**
2	How did support from wealthy Romans and emperors change public life for Christians and followers of traditional gods?	**Wealthy Romans funded churches and aid, while imperial support made Christianity more visible. Emperors also restricted traditional sacrifices and public worship of the old gods.**
3	How did bishops and councils help local Christian communities become part of a larger church?	**Bishops led local communities, exchanged letters, and met in councils. Shared decisions about belief, including the statement agreed on at Nicaea, connected communities across cities.**
4	Why would it be inaccurate to say Christianity erased Roman customs? Use two details from different paragraphs.	**Christians adapted the Roman basilica for worship, and their donations to people in need extended an existing Roman tradition of mutual aid.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A resident walking through fourth-century Rome might see a Christian congregation using a basilica, a familiar Roman building type, for worship. That same resident might hear that a bishop helps resolve a dispute or that church donations support neighbors in need. Imperial backing made Christian meeting places more visible, while older sacrifices faced new restrictions. These changes brought Christian beliefs into public life, but the basilica's design and the city's older habits of giving show that Roman customs did not simply disappear.

Accept other passage-supported examples of continuity and change. For the museum label, look for two connected changes, at least three accurate details, and an explanation of why Classical society was reshaped rather than erased.