

North & South Walls of Sistine Chapel



Journey of Moses in Egypt by Perugino



The Baptism of Christ by Perugino



Events in the life of Moses by Botticelli



The temptation of Christ by Botticelli



Passage of the Red Sea by d'Antonio



The calling of the first Apostles by Ghirlandaio



Handing over of the Tablets of the Law by Rosselli



The Sermon on the Mount by Rosselli



Punishment of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, S. Botticelli



Christ giving the keys to Peter by Perugino



Moses's Testament and Death, Luca Signorelli



The Last Supper by Rosselli

Story of Moses (South Wall)

The Stories of Moses, which originally included eight panels, each presented by a title in the upper frieze, began from the altar wall with the Birth and Finding of Moses by Perugino, a fresco that was lost when Michelangelo painted the Last Judgement. Thus today the Old Testament cycle starts from the Journey of Moses in Egypt, in which his farewell to his father-in-law Jethro (Exodus 4:18-20), his Return to Egypt with his family (Exodus 4:18-20) and the Circumcision of his second-born (Exodus 4:24-26) all appear in one picture. The second panel describes some Events in the life of Moses: the killing of the Egyptian (Exodus 2:11-15), the struggle with the shepherds to defend the daughters of Jethro (Exodus 2:16-22) and the sight of the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-12). The third fresco illustrates the Crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:5-31), which is followed by the Handing over of the Tablets of the Law. This simultaneously narrates Moses' Climbing of Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:12-17; 31:18) to receive the Tablets of the Law, the Worship of the golden calf (Exodus 32:1-20), the Punishment of the idolatrous Jews (Exodus 32:25-35) and the return of the Prophet with the new Tablets of the Law (Exodus 34:1-4). The next panel illustrates a rather rare episode, that is to say the Punishment of Korah, Dathan e Abiram (Numbers 16:1-35), Jewish priests who denied Moses and Aaron civil and religious authority over the chosen people. They were for this swallowed up by the earth and consumed by an invisible fire together with their families. The last fresco shows the Legacy and death of Moses (Deuteronomy 33:34) when he is already within sight of the Promised Land. The cycle ends on the entrance wall with the Dispute over the body of Moses (Letter of Jude, 9).

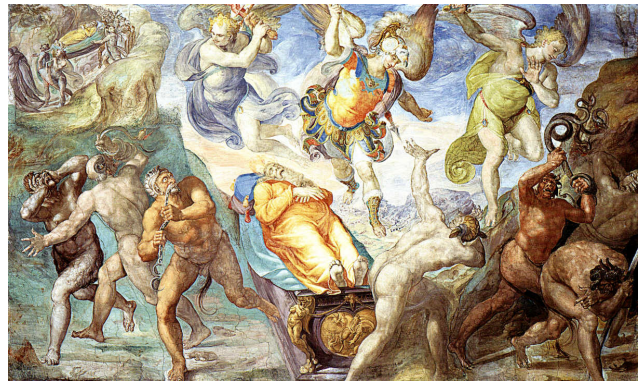
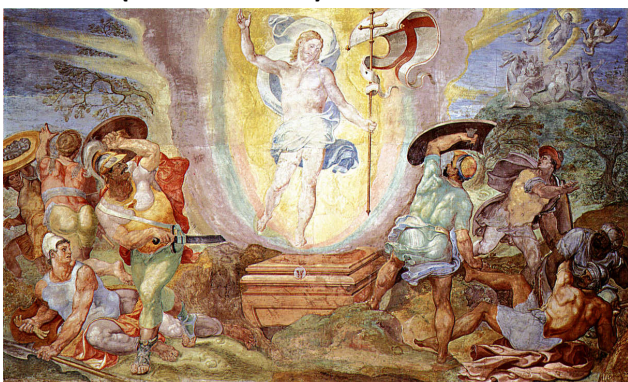
Vatican Museums http://mv.vatican.va/3_EN/pages/CSN/CSN_Sud_StMose.html#

Story of Christ (North Wall)

The stories of Christ were originally distributed over eight panels, each one presented by a title in the upper frieze. They began with the Nativity painted by Perugino on the altar wall, subsequently destroyed to make room for Michelangelo's Last Judgement. Thus, today, the events of the life of Christ start from his Baptism (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-34), which is followed by the Temptations of Christ (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1-13) and the Cleansing of the Leper (Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16). The third shows in the foreground the Calling of the Apostles Peter and Andrew, while the call of James and John is shown in the background (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11). The next fresco illustrates the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew Ch. 5-7; Luke 6:12-49) and the curing of the leper (Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16), while the fifth shows the Handing over of the keys (Matthew 16:13-20), that is to say the transfer of power from Christ to Peter, his vicar, as well as the two episodes of the Payment of the tribute (Matthew 17:24-27) and of the Attempted stoning of Christ (John 8:31-59; 10:31-39) in the background. The series on this wall ends with the Last Supper (Matthew 26:17-29; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-23; John 13:21-30) in which, beyond the windows we can see three episodes of the Passion: the Agony in the garden (Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46), the Arrest of Jesus (Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:1-11), the Crucifixion (Matthew 27:32-50; Mark 15:22-39; Luke 23:33-46; John 19:17-30). The cycle ends with the Resurrection of Christ (Matthew 28,1-8) on the entrance wall. Each panel of the stories has a corresponding false drape in the lower section with the enterprises of Sixtus IV. The series of Pontiffs ran along all the walls of the Chapel starting from that of the altar, in the centre of which could be seen Christ and the first pope Peter, as well as Linus and Cletus. The four figures were lost when Michelangelo, by order of Paul III, painted the Last Judgement on this wall in 1536. The Pontiffs are arranged in couples in niches beside the windows. The series does not run along the one wall, but they alternate with the opposite wall. The authors of the series are the same as those of the cycles of the lives of Moses and of Christ, that is to say, Pietro Perugino, Sandro Botticelli, Cosimo Rosselli and Domenico Ghirlandaio. The position of the various personages differs only slightly. They are usually shown as a full figure, in three-quarter profile with a book or scroll, or in the act of conferring blessing. In the lunettes and webs above, Michelangelo painted the Forefathers of Christ, the forerunners of his coming and therefore of the Redemption. They are listed at the beginning of the Gospel of St Matthew (Matthew 1:1-17), which, starting from Abraham, gives the names of forty forefathers of Christ (differing from the other version of the evangelist Luke, which, beginning from Adam, gives 75 families), shown here not so much as historical images but as symbolic figurations of mankind caught in various attitudes and above all in its formation into family units. Numerous attempts to link the names written on the labels to the personages depicted have not yet permitted them to be identified with any certainty.

Vatican Museums http://mv.vatican.va/3_EN/pages/CSN/CSN_Nord.html

Final End (Entrance Wall)



This wall has frescos of the two final episodes of the cycles of Moses and Christ: the Resurrection of Christ (Matthew 28:1-8) and the Discussion over the body of Moses (Letter of Jude, 9). The two frescos, originally works respectively by Ghirlandaio and by Signorelli, were destroyed when the architrave of the door collapsed in 1522 and were replaced during the pontificate of Gregory XIII (pontiff from 1572 to 1585) by the works depicting the same subject executed by Hendrik van den Broeck and Matteo da Lecce. As on the north and south walls, as well as the stories of the life of Moses and of Christ, some Popes are portrayed high up and there are false drapes in the lower register.