

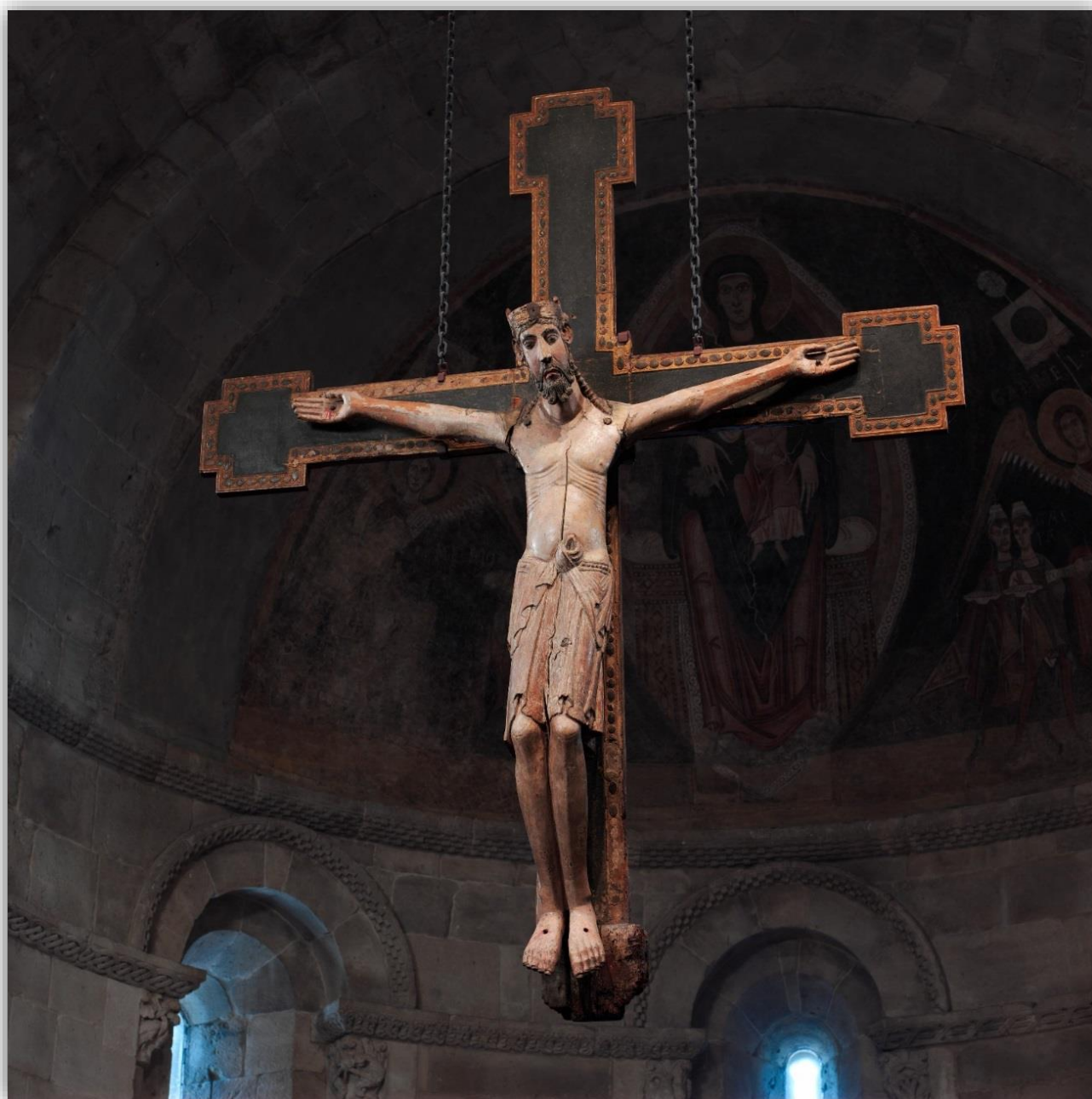
Jesus Christ is fully Human and Divine

We can look at images of crucifixes to see the differences between them. From the 7th to 12th centuries, Christ on the cross is typically portrayed as “Christus Triumphant” Christ triumphant. He gazes outward and appears to transcend human suffering. This shows us his divinity; He is God who became man. He will triumph over death. Gazing on a crucifix like this can give people hope of their own triumph over death as they pass into the heavenly paradise. He looks rather peaceful as if he is just awaiting the heavenly kingdom to come, death has no power over him. The crucifix shown is from Spain around 1150-1200AD. Back then this crucifix would have been studded with jewels around the edges. Notice he does not have a crown of thorns, but instead a king’s crown which would have been shimmering gold.

In the 13th Century the crucifix began to emphasize the human sufferings of Christ (*Christus Patiens*). He is shown with contorted limbs, blood dripping from his wounds and a distressed face. We see that he suffered from the agony of the pain inflicted on him as he dies. We are shown the humanity of Christ; he suffers as man suffers and he dies as man dies. He is one of us and suffers like us and for us. However, we do not see a crown of thorns during this period, his glory is still displayed by the gold halo instead. Later on he is shown with the crown of thorns and also a much more simple wooden cross with no ornaments. A major influence for this type of depiction of Christ is St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis understood the power of suffering and united himself to the suffering Christ in his own stigmata (St. Francis was given the stigmata and suffered the wounds and pain) His message of the suffering love of Christ spread quickly and even impacted the arts, thus we see a rapid production of the suffering Christ on the cross.

Both crucifixes are beautiful in and of themselves, but they both highlight in their artistic depiction a different aspect of Christ at the same moment in time during his crucifixion.

Monumental Crucifix
Spanish, 1150-1200



Cimabue crucifix commissioned by the Franciscans for the Basilica of Santa Croce, Florence
1268-1271

