The 1st millennium

Rome at its height, Rome's fall, and a West rebuilt on faith.

The first thousand years after Christ. Rome reached its height and its long peace, built the Pantheon and wrote down its law. The Western Empire then fell, and the West shrank to its lowest point. Monks kept learning alive, and by the year 800 Charlemagne had begun to rebuild.

What rose

27 BC–AD 180. The Roman peace, two centuries of order across the Mediterranean. Source: Pax Romana

c. 126. The Pantheon in Rome, still the largest unreinforced concrete dome in the world. Source: Pantheon, Rome

313. The Edict of Milan makes Christianity legal. Source: Edict of Milan

529–534. Justinian's code gathers Roman law, the base of law across Europe since. Source: Corpus Juris Civilis

c. 530. Benedict writes his rule for monks; monasteries keep books and learning alive. Source: Rule of Saint Benedict

800. Charlemagne is crowned emperor and starts a revival of learning. Source: Carolingian Renaissance

What fell or stalled

The Western Roman Empire falls in 476; cities, trade and literacy shrink for centuries. Source: Fall of the Western Roman Empire

The Plague of Justinian, from 541, kills a large share of the Mediterranean's people. Source: Plague of Justinian

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