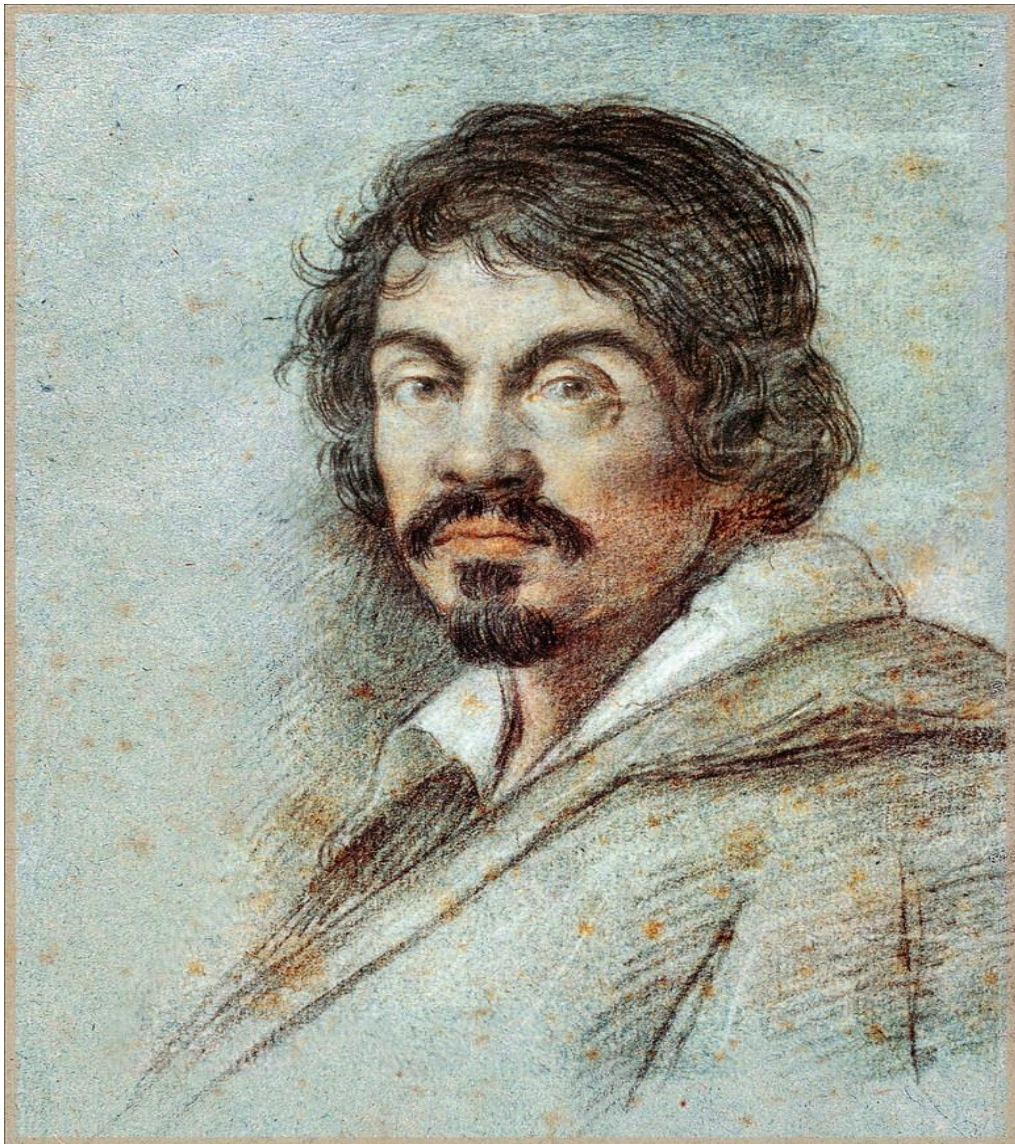


**LIVING GODS WILL**

**Biblical Artists**

**CARAVAGGIO**



**MICHELANGELO MERISI Da CARAVAGGIO**

**Born:** 1571 – Milan, Italy

**Died:** 1610 – Porto Ercole, Italy

## Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

**Italian painter with great influence both in Italy and abroad.**

**Caravaggio** is particularly renowned for his use of **chiaroscuro**, a technique that uses light and dark to achieve a **3-D effect**.

Caravaggio breaks away from the tradition of symmetrical figures and detailed backgrounds. His figures do retain a traditional monumentality. His later work is less plastic.

**Caravaggio** takes his name from the village where he was born.

He receives his first training in Milan, specializing in still-lives. Around 1592 he takes to Rome, the spiritual capital of the Italian peninsula, switching his subject matter to street-life and young boys.

In 1595 **Caravaggio's** talent catches the eye of cardinal Francesco Del Monte, who subsequently becomes his first patron.

**Caravaggio's** three paintings on the life of **St Matthew** cause a sensation: never before has a saint, let alone an apostle, been shown like this.

**(calling, inspiration, martyrdom)**

After this *succès fou*, **Caravaggio** takes all his subjects from the New Testament.

**Caravaggio's** life is as turbulent as his personality. He has many run-ins with the law and is arrested on several occasions. In 1606 a bet over a game of tennis leads to an argument, at which point **Caravaggio** draws his sword and kills his opponent.

He flees to Naples, intending to take the long way home to Rome - where friends are lobbying for his rehabilitation - via Malta and Sicily.

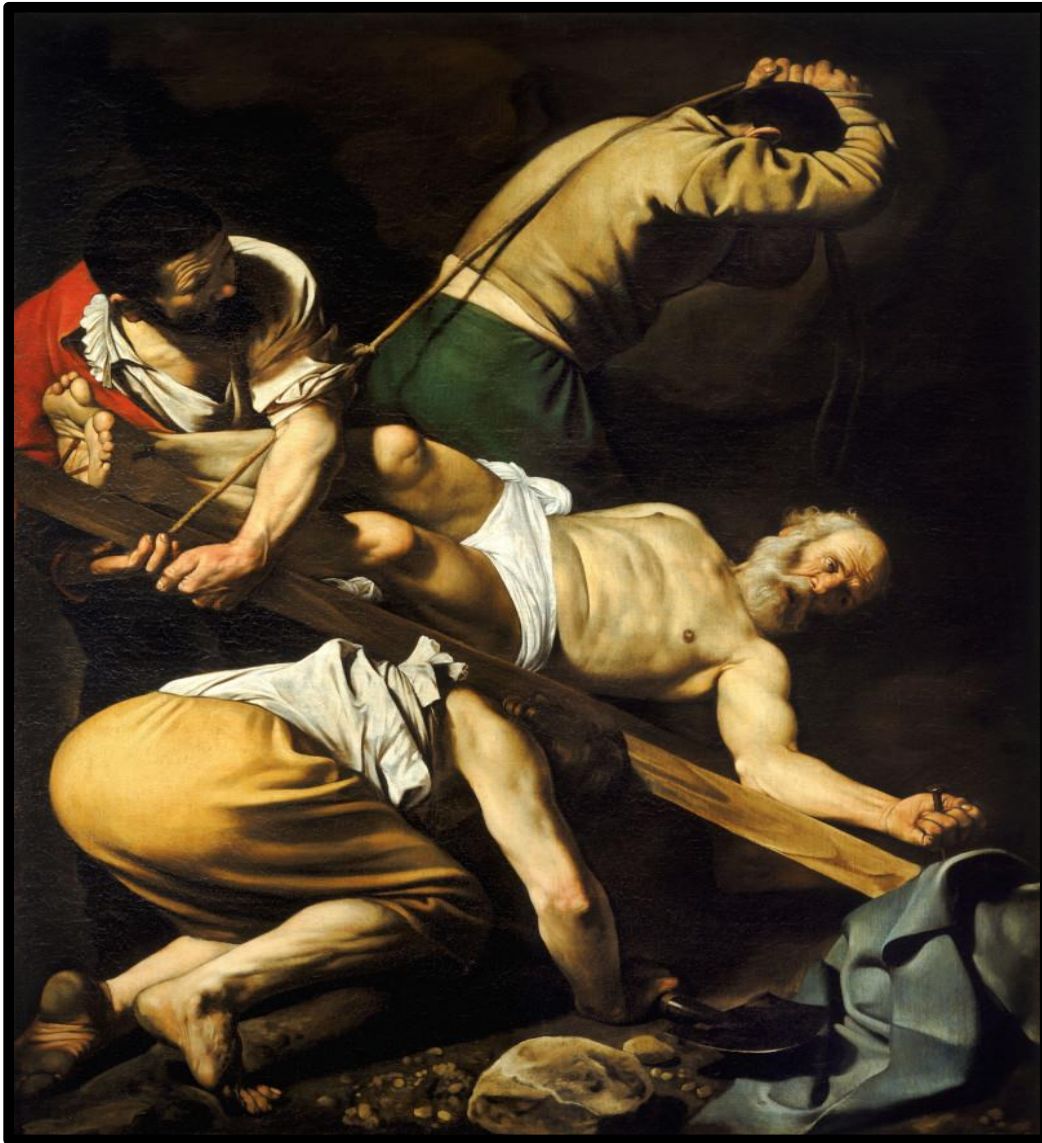
On his wanderings he produces several masterpieces, such as The Beheading of St John the Baptist, which he creates in Malta.

**He dies before reaching Rome, probably of pneumonia, in Porto Ercole.**

Several days after his death word arrives of papal absolution.

**Caravaggio's** influence is widespread: outside Italy he inspires painters as diverse as Georges de La Tour and members of the Utrecht School, e.g. Gerrit van Honthorst – artists who in their turn are later to influence Rembrandt.

## The Crucifixion of Saint Peter



**oil on canvas (230 × 175 cm) — ca. 1601**

Tradition had it that St Peter was captured and crucified head-down in Rome during the reign of Nero, between 64 and 67. Caravaggio's image of St Peter strongly resembles a mirror image of him in a fresco by Michelangelo.

Peter was crucified upside down because he saw himself unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as Jesus.

The Crucifixion was made for the Cerasi Chapel in the church of Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome, where it still is today.

Across the chapel is Caravaggio's Conversion of Paul.

**The Conversion of Saint Paul (1)**

**oil on panel (237 × 189 cm) — ca. 1601**

One of two known paintings by Caravaggio on the subject of the conversion of St Paul (or Saul). This panel is in the Odescalchi Balbi Collection in Rome. The other also dates from c. 1601.

Saul was on his way to Damascus, to destroy the Christian community in that city. He was struck by a flash of light, and heard the words "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

**The Conversion of Saint Paul (2)**

**oil on canvas (230 × 175 cm) – c. 1601**

A rather chaotic painting with all those legs diverting the attention from the figure lying on the ground, who in addition has to do without the usual illuminating beam from heaven by which we know that he is the main character of the scene.

The man is Saul, Roman citizen traveling to Damascus, who has just seen a vision of Jesus.

For the rest of his life he will be known as Paul, founder of the Church of Rome.

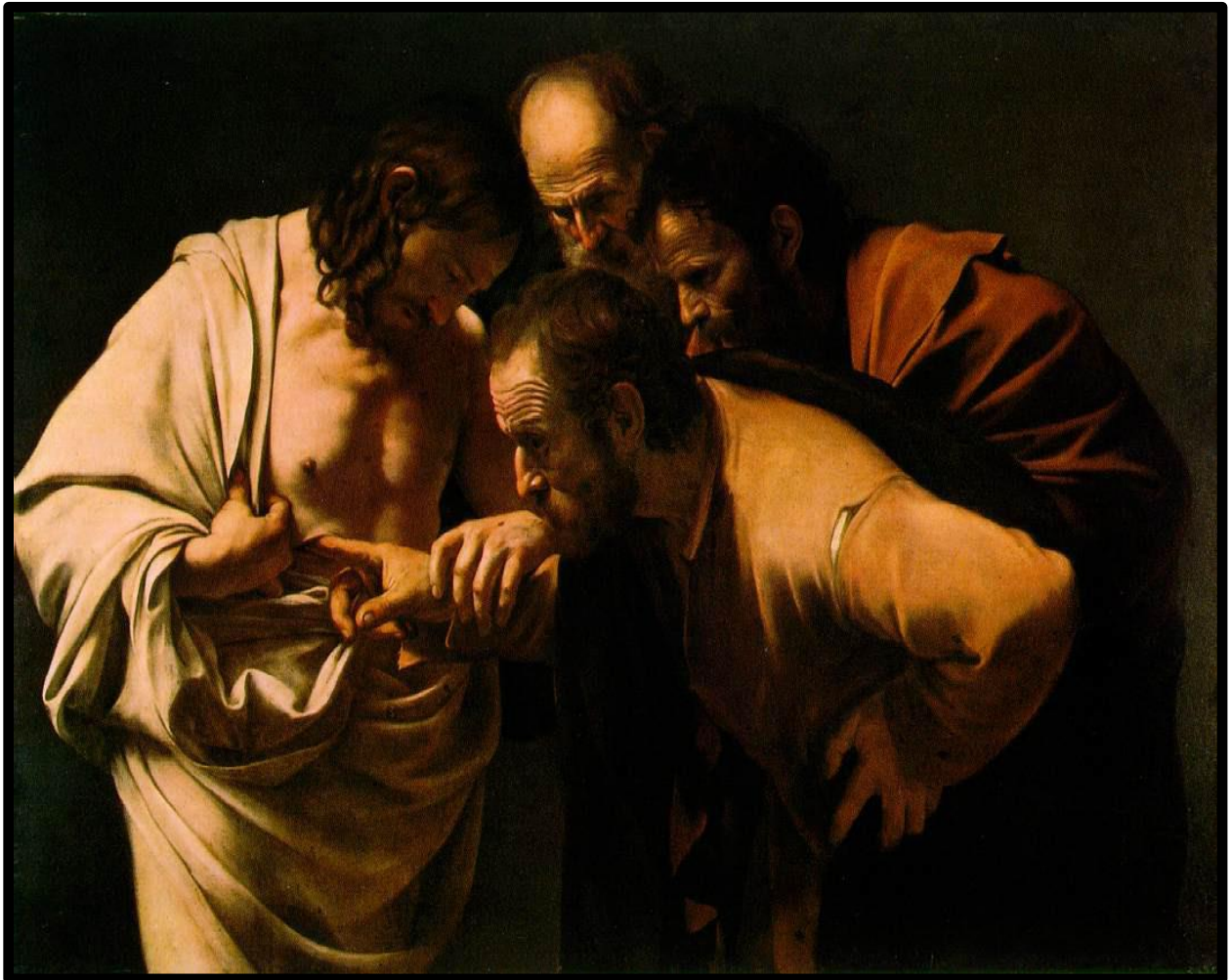
**Saint Matthew and the Angel**

**oil on canvas (297 × 189 cm) – 1602**

Matthew is portrayed in a remarkable pose – not as one would expect a devout evangelist to be depicted.

This work was sadly lost during WW2. It would seem as if the painter did not compromise his intentions, however – this time the evangelist has dirty feet.

It is clear that the angel is dictating something. Judging from his fingers he is enumerating. Maybe it is an opening chapter - often a long list of the forefathers of Jesus.

**Doubting Thomas**

**oil on canvas (107 × 146 cm) — 1602-1603**

Thomas is one of Jesus' twelve apostles. When Jesus shows himself to his followers after his resurrection, Thomas refuses to believe that this man really is his master. He demands evidence. Jesus shows him the wound caused by a Roman soldier's lance before his crucifixion. He invites Thomas to put his finger on it. Caravaggio shows that Thomas soon casts aside all doubt.

Almost identical copies of this painting and that of the Pilgrimage to Emmaus were found in a church in the French town of Loches, in 1999. After investigation, it was announced in 2006 that both works were authentic Caravaggio's. Both contain the shield of arms of Philippe de Bethune, a friend of Caravaggio's and French ambassador in Rome. Records show that Bethune acquired four paintings from the painter. Caravaggio often made several copies of his own paintings.

**The Entombment**

**oil on canvas (300 × 203 cm) — ca. 1602/04**

Monumental work by Caravaggio on the Entombment. Nicodemus and his helper (John?) have wrapped Jesus in cloths. The women look on and throw up their arms as the deceased is laid down. Hands and posture emphasize the arched composition.

Caravaggio shows himself a follower of Michelangelo and Raphael, two predecessors in art who had depicted the same scene – Michelangelo with his famous pietà, Raphael with his Entombment.



**The Betrayal of Christ**

**oil on canvas (133 × 169 cm) – c. 1603**

Jesus' face expresses both resignation and pain. He knows what is about to happen to him.

Note how he holds his hands. Judas Iscariot greets him with a kiss, so the soldiers know whom to capture.

To better see the face, it is illuminated by a lantern. The man holding the light is Caravaggio himself.

Breaking a rule of his craft, Caravaggio started this painting on a dark ground. The typical composition with the soldier stretching his arm was derived from an Albrecht Dürer woodcut.

**The Sacrifice of Isaac**

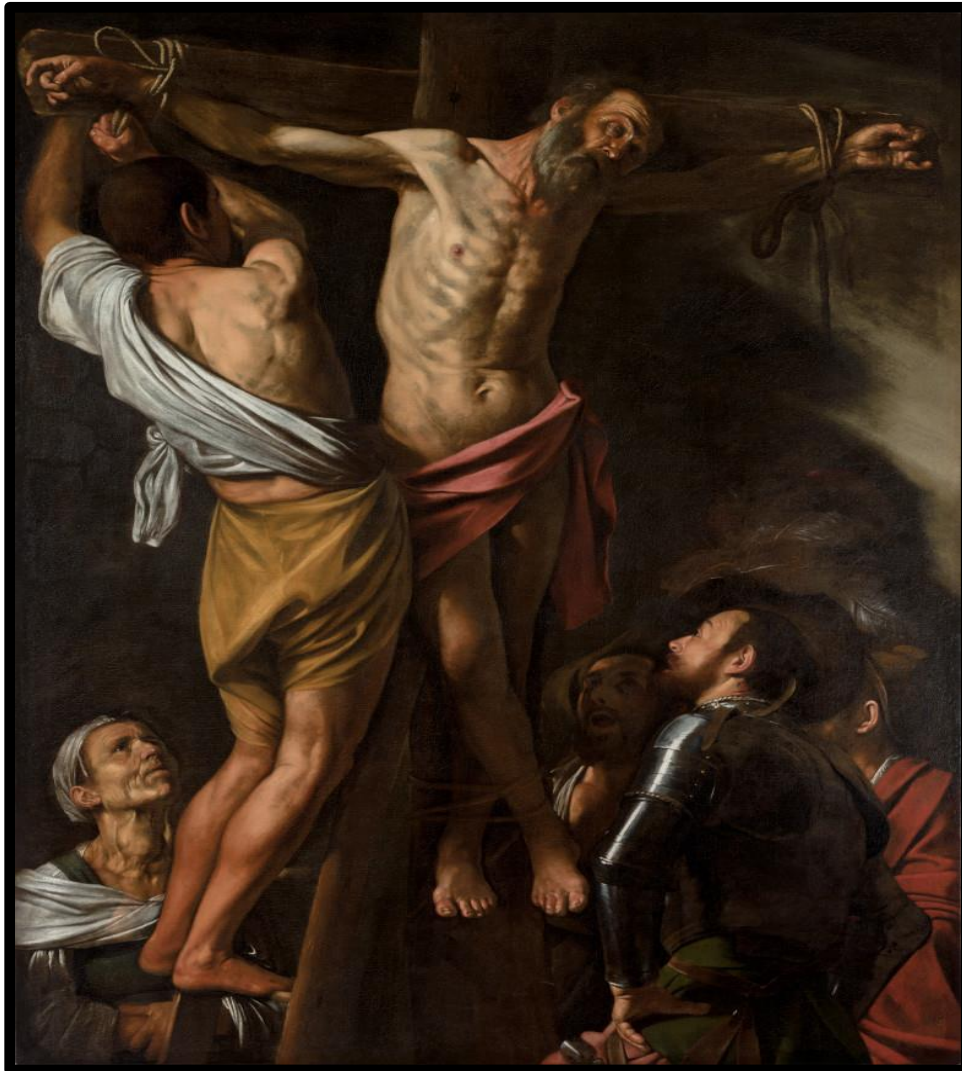
**oil on canvas (204 × 135 cm) — ca. 1603**

The expression on Isaac's face says it all: he is scared to death, with his father about to cut his throat.

At this exact moment, an angel intervenes, suggesting that Abraham had better sacrifice a sheep.

Please note the sharp contrast between the unpleasant scene in the foreground and the rustic landscape in the background.

This painting was most likely commissioned by Cardinal Barberini, the future Pope Urban VIII.

**The Crucifixion of Saint Andrew**

**oil on canvas (202 × 152 cm) — c. 1606**

The apostle Andrew was the brother of Peter and one of Jesus' most loyal followers. A legend has it that he too died on the cross, in the Greek city of Patras. To prolong the dying, the local proconsul had him tied to the cross, not nailed. Andrew grasped his chance to continue preaching. After two days, the growing multitude demanded that he be taken down; otherwise, they would revolt.

The painting shows the moment that the executioner tries to untie the ropes that hold Andrew. The apostle prays that he may die in the same way as his master did. Divine intervention makes his wish come true. The impatient man in black armor is the proconsul, Aegaeus.

**David with the Head of Goliath**

**oil on canvas (125 x 100 cm) – 1610**

David has killed the Philistine giant Goliath with a stone from his sling. He then cuts off the head to show it to his brothers-in-arms.

This is one of Caravaggio's last works. Some claim that the giant's head is a self-portrait. David does not seem to celebrate his victory. Maybe he is disgusted with the killing of a man, even though it was an enemy.

Or maybe Caravaggio is projecting his own disgust. Caravaggio had some experience as a killer: in 1606, he had killed a man with his sword during a quarrel over a bet.