The Byzantine Fresco Chapel
A Family Adventure in Looking

Inside the main room of the Chapel you will notice the walls are dark and made of metal. The architect used this material to create the feeling of enclosure as if the frescoes were surrounded by a reliquary box. A relic is something associated with a holy person. These objects are kept in special containers or reliquary boxes.

Treasure Hunt:
This is a picture of a 6th century Byzantine reliquary box. If you go across the street to the Menil Collection, see if you can find it. Hint: it is in the first gallery on the east side of the Museum entrance.

Welcome to the Byzantine Fresco Chapel.
We hope you enjoy this Family Adventure.

A few reminders for your visit:
- touch only with your eyes not your hands.
- share your interesting ideas in a quiet voice.
In the 13th century the entire inside of a chapel would be covered from floor to ceiling with fresco paintings of different scenes. These frescoes are in Houston on a long term loan from the Church of Cyprus.

Fresco refers to a painting technique where the artist paints onto wet plaster. Plaster is a building material that is white in color. When you paint, what materials do you use?

Fresco was built to display and return to their spiritual function two magnificent 13th century frescoes. These frescoes are in Houston on a long term loan from the Church of Cyprus.

The dome fresco painting represents the heavens with Christ the Pantokrator (the All-ruler) in the center. How many angels do you see surrounding the image of the Pantokrator? Typical of Byzantine painting are the strong large eyes depicted on the faces. What do you think all the figures are looking at? Are they all looking at the same thing?

The apse painting shows the Virgin Mary in the center with archangels Michael and Gabriel adoring her. On Mary's robe is a circle medallion with a portrait of the young Christ as Emmanuel. What do you notice about the way the artist painted her gown?

The 13th century was a long time ago. What century do we live in? The frescoes you are looking at are examples of Byzantine art. Byzantine refers to both a period in time from about 334 A.D., which was the founding of Constantinople, to 1453 A.D. when the city fell to the Turks. Byzantine also refers to a style of art. Today we do not know the name of the artist who painted these frescoes, but we know that he was a very special and talented painter.