Name _____ Mod _____ Ms. Pojer Euro. Civ. HGHS

Constantine's Dilemma – Part 2

You and your advisors have had a chance to think about what you have just said. You now give your advisors a chance to react. Your political and governmental advisor speaks first:

"Sir. I can see that the move to Byzantium would be attractive to the middle class citizens of Rome who could afford to move the 450 overland miles to your new capital city. They would be closer to the riches of the Far East, which would help the merchants and traders grow in wealth. As a result, the eastern half of the empire would grow even richer than it is today. From the standpoint of the middle class citizens who are able to move, your suggestion will be a very good thing, but I beg you to give some thought to the effect this move would have on the lives of Rome's upper-class citizens.

These people have their wealth tied up in land, large country estates, and slaves. Slaves are easy to move, but land and buildings are not. I fear that the upper class will refuse to move. Rome has always been the real center of the government of the empire. The upper class has always had power to influence it. I fear that they would risk civil war rather than give up the government to a city so far away.

Most of the social events, traditions, and legends of the people of Rome revolve around the founding of the city by Romulus and Remus and the Roman gods. These stories will not be easy to abandon or transplant. Many members of the ruling class have families who have lived in Rome for many generations and who consider Rome a sacred city. I am sure that they will refuse to leave the city. What you propose may bring only more years of civil war and bloody fighting—the very things that you say have helped to cripple the Empire."

The Commanding General of the Imperial Army of Rome now speaks: "Sir. I do not think that the legions of most of the several Roman armies will oppose you. Those that have supported pretenders to the throne have become your allies because you defeated the impostors and their treasonous armies. Remember that most of the Roman armies of the western empire are made up of barbarians rather than of citizens of the city of Rome. These barbarian legions could not care less where their distant capital city is located. They owe allegiance to the empire, not to a city. They care only that they have food, money, and something to do. Thus, the armies of the empire are pledged to protect and support you in everything you do. I believe we can control the armies under your command.

"From a strictly military standpoint, a move to Byzantium is an excellent one. We all know that Rome is no longer the center of the empire. Byzantium is nearer the center and thus would allow for faster communication to all parts of the empire. The location would allow better protection of the naval trade routes and the strategic Hellespont region. In short, I believe you have everything to gain by such a move."

Finally, Pope Sylvester I responds: "Emperor Constantine. From the standpoint of

the only true Church, your decision to abandon the city of Rome is intolerable. As Pope of the Most Holy Christian Church, I must tell you that the Church cannot and will not leave Rome. I cannot permit you to move the Pope or the center of our Christian faith from this city.

"I know that you have given the Church your support and protection ever since your conversion to Christianity some fifteen years ago, after the Battle of Milivion Bridge. I know that Christ, himself, appeared to you and guided you into battle under the sign of the cross. You even proclaimed the Edict of Milan, which elevated Christianity to the same level as paganism. With this, you extended religious freedom to all peoples of the empire.

"As Pope, I also realize that the city of Rome and many of its people are rotten and evil. It is still a pagan city. If you want to save this empire, one way would be to pull the government out of this city. Yet I am not sure that moving the capital would, in itself, solve the problems you mentioned. A new capital would only change the location of the government. A different capital would not change the way the people live or how the empire's government works.

"With the Church's well-being in mind, I must say that, as Pope, I cannot allow you to move the Pope or the government of the Catholic Church to Byzantium. Peter, holy disciple of Christ and the first Pope of the Christian Church, established the center of Christianity and the Christian Church in Rome. Rome was the center of the world at that time. As far as the Church is concerned, Rome is the center of the Christian world for all time. As Pope, I must tell you that I would rather die than allow you to move the capital of the Church from Rome.

'There are other factors to be considered. Some of them are good, while others are not so good. The eastern part of the empire is almost completely Greek in its cultural heritage. I fear their influence on the doctrines, teachings, and administration of the Church. On the other hand, Byzantium is closer to the Holy Land than is the city of Rome. It would be more convenient for pilgrimages and would place the center of the Church in closer contact with the land of its birth. I am well aware that you, Constantine, who put an end to the persecution of Christians, could and would protect the Church more if we moved to your new city. For the reasons given before, however, I must tell you that neither I nor the Church will move to Byzantium. If you try to set up a second Pope and church in that city, it will not be Christian or the True Church."

As the Pope finishes, you thank all three advisors for their cooperation and honesty. You also tell them that their reactions will be considered. They may even cause you to rethink your final decision about the move to Byzantium. With the news out that you are to proclaim an important decree in the morning, you know that your decision on this matter must be made now!