The Last Supper, by Domenico Ghirlandaio

Art selection and commentary by Heidi J. Hornik and Mikeal C. Parsons
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The many and varied portrayals of the Last Supper continue to attract viewers not only because of the sacramental importance of the event they depict, but because they explore the relationships between Christ and the apostles. Domenico Ghirlandaio (1448/49–1494) painted his fresco for the dining area of the Dominican monastery of San Marco in Florence. The monks were reminded of the Lord's Supper while they were eating. The Beloved Disciple is represented as a younger friend who is allowed the very comfortable position of resting on the breast of Jesus (John 13:23), and he is the only apostle Jesus physically touches in the scene. The older and bearded Peter is placed on the favored side of Jesus in a position of honor. Judas, the one who isolated himself from his friends and betrays his Lord, is placed by himself, across the table from Christ—a traditional approach until Leonardo da Vinci painted his version of the scene in Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan.