

Join us on our mental pilgrimage to the 2nd Station Church
The Papal Archbasilica of the Most Holy Savior and Saints John the Baptist and John the Evangelist at the Lateran

Omnium urbis et orbis ecclesiarum mater, et caput
[Mother and head of all the churches of the city [of Rome] and of the world]

- The palace was originally occupied by the Laterani family during the reign of Nero. A member of this family, P. Sextius Lateranus, was the first plebian to attain the rank of consul in the time of Nero. Nero reigned 54-68AD.
- Constantine, the first Christian Emperor of Rome gave The Laterani Palace to the Catholic Church to Pope Melchiade, Bishop of Rome about 311AD and the property became the first official Papal residence and cathedral.
- The history of the Egyptian obelisk located in front of St. John Lateran is inscribed in hieroglyphs. The obelisk dates back to BC, is believed to be the oldest Egyptian obelisk and is the largest in Rome. It symbolizes Emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity. *The cross (which is placed as a crown), should both bear witness to the fact that ancient history found here it's fulfillment, and that all human history is completely fulfilled in Christ, who died and rose.*¹
- The name of the Cathedral Lateran was added onto by various popes beginning with the Cathedral to the Holy Savior (318AD), the Cathedral of the Most Holy Savior (324AD), Basilica to St. John the Baptist (9th Century), adding St. John the Evangelist (12th Century). The official name is The Papal Archbasilica of the Most Holy Savior and Saints John the Baptist and John the Evangelist at the Lateran; short name St. John Lateran.
- Through the centuries the Cathedral was destroyed by an earthquake, fires and looting, rebuilt several times to what it is today.
- Outside on the roof of the basilica in the center Christ holds the Cross of redemption, Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist stand on either side of Him.
- The Lateran Palace and Basilica remained the Papal residence until the papacy moved to Avignon between 1309-1377. When Pope Gregory XI returned from Avignon to Rome in 1377 the Lateran Residence and Basilica were in disrepair. The residence was moved to Santa Maria in Trastevere, then to Santa Maria Maggiore before the decision was made to move to Vatican Hill near St. Peter's Basilica.
- Inside the Basilica the eye is drawn to the canopy surrounding the altar where the reliquary above the altar contains the heads of Saints Peter and Paul.
- The wooden altar St. Peter used when celebrating Mass in the catacombs and during his residence in Rome² is encased in marble for protection on the high altar.
- Above the tabernacle encased in a relief of the Last Supper is the cedar table Jesus consecrated bread and wine into His Body and Blood at the Last Supper. One of the treasures Empress Saint Helena brought back to Rome from Jerusalem.
- Along the nave of the Church are statues of the Apostles, above them parallel scenes taken from Holy Scripture from the Old and New Testament. (List of the statues of the Apostles, in parenthesis how he was martyred or symbol for what he was known for; above the statue is a scene from the Old Testament, across the aisle an Apostle and corresponding scene from the New Testament)³.
 - Simon (saw); *relief of Jonah and the Whale.*
 - Bartholomew (skin and flaying knife); *relief of The Crossing of the Red Sea.*
 - James the Less (book and walking stick); *relief of Joseph being Sold by his Brothers.*
 - John the Evangelist (book of the Gospel and eagle); *relief of The Sacrifice of Abraham.*
 - Andrew (St Andrew's cross); *relief of The Flood.*
 - Peter (keys); *relief of The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise.*
 - And on the right side, again starting from the entrance:



- Thadeus (lance); *relief of The Resurrection of Christ.*
- Matthew (book of the Gospel); *relief of Christ entering Limbo.*
- Philip (cross overwhelming the Dragon); *relief of The Arrest of Christ.*
- Thomas (set square and cross with dove); *relief of Jesus Falling.*
- James the Great (walking stick); *relief of The Baptism of Christ.*
- Paul (sword and book); *relief of The Crucifixion of Christ.*

- The Baptistery of St. John Lateran, an octagonal structure, was requested by Constantine to be built near the Basilica.
- Outside the Basilica in a small park is a bronze statue of St. Francis gazing at the Basilica. Pope Innocent III dreamt of a poor beggar holding up in his hands a crumbling Lateran Basilica. In 1209 a beggar asked for an audience with the Pope to approve his new order and way of life. Pope Innocent III recognized St. Francis of Assisi as the beggar in his dream.
- Saint John Lateran is visited 2 times as a station church (1st Sunday of Lent and Palm Sunday. The Triduum begins here on Holy Thursday). Mass is also celebrated on the Feast Day of the Dedication of the Saint John Lateran Basilica on November 9.
- Across the street from St. John Lateran are the Scala Sancta (Holy Stairs). Empress Helena (Constantine's mother) brought the stairs back to Rome from her pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The 28 white marble steps are believed to be those that once led to the Praetorian of Pontius Pilate. Believing this to be true, each step is sanctified by the footsteps of Jesus on his way to trial. Pilgrims ascend the steps praying on their knees honoring the Passion of Christ.
- At the top is the Sancta Sanctorum (Holy of Holies), a private chapel used by popes, containing priceless reliquaries, relics and the Acheropita miraculous image of Christ, our Most Holy Savior (miraculous as it is said it was not made by human hands). The private chapel is not open to the public, however there is a window one can gaze into the chapel and say a prayer.



May the spirit of the holy pilgrims inspire your prayers and reflections. Peace be with you!

- ¹ [Basilica of St. John Lateran \(piercedhearts.org\)](http://piercedhearts.org)
- ² [CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA: Saint John Lateran \(newadvent.org\)](http://newadvent.org)
- ³ [Wayback Machine \(archive.org\)](http://archive.org)

