

# Join us on our pilgrimage!

## Station Churches 2022

In early Christianity the faithful would journey to notable shrines and churches significant to their Catholic faith to honor, show respect, pray and to draw closer in faith. There is a pilgrimage in Rome each year where the faithful are invited *each day* for the 40 days of Lent to visit and pray in a designated station church to meditate on the historical significance of the Church and its connection to our Catholic faith.

This Lent **a station church** will be highlighted in the bulletin each Sunday, beginning with **St. Peter's Basilica**. You are invited to take a mental pilgrimage to St. Peter's and spend a quiet moment in prayer. To learn more about the Station Churches in Rome visit online: [Lenten Station Churches of Rome \(frcoulter.com\)](http://frcoulter.com)



### San Pietro in Vaticano

#### A brief History

- The story of the basilica starts with the martyrdom of Peter. It is built on the site of the Circus of Caligula and Nero, where the Apostle Peter, first Bishop of Rome was martyred in the year 64 or 67 AD.
- The obelisk located in the Piazza was brought from Egypt by Emperor Caligula in 37 AD. St. Peter was martyred not far from the obelisk and placed in a grave nearby. It was moved to its present location in 1586 and crowned with a bronze cross which contains a relic of the True Cross. It is also used as a sundial and a compass.
- Constantine the Great commissioned a basilica be built over the grave of St. Peter. (Construction 324-326 AD)
- The Pope's original residence was The Lateran Palace in the City of Rome. In 1377, the Vatican was made the official residence of the Pope.
- The Old Basilica was torn down in 1506. Construction began to replace it soon after. The New St. Peter's Basilica was completed in the Renaissance and Baroque style of architecture in 1629.
- Many famous Italian architects were involved in building San Pietro including: Bernardo Rossellino, Raphael, Michelangelo, Vignola, and Bernini.
- In 1547, Michelangelo in his 70s was pressed by Pope Paul III to take over as principal architect for the Basilica. Michelangelo requested no payment for his work. He accepted the position for the glory of the work and for his own salvation. He passed away at age 88.
- The high altar, surrounded by the Bernini baldacchino canopy, Michelangelo's dome above, is the Papal Altar upon which **only the Holy Father** can celebrate Mass. Under the Papal Altar below the level of the floor is the tomb which contains the relics of St. Peter.



#### St. Peter's Basilica

- St. Peter's Basilica, the world's largest church includes 44 altars, 11 domes, 778 columns, 395 statues, 135 mosaic panels.
- Bernini built the Piazza of St. Peter's, which is the size of a football field and includes two fountains and 300 Doric columns. The colonnade columns, placed in a semi-circle, reach out to welcome the pilgrim into the arms of the Church. Don't rush through the Piazza, take time to appreciate where you are, even in your mind's eye, and take in this incredible moment. *You are home, in your faith, embraced in the heart of the Catholic Church.*
- In good weather canonization and liturgical masses, the Pope's Sunday Angelus, and the Wednesday audience are celebrated outside on the steps in front of St. Peter's. Pope John Paul II's funeral mass was celebrated here. The popemobile travels around a temporary barricade in the piazza allowing visitors to see the pope.



#### Important Statues of Saints

- There are 4 columns supporting Michelangelo's dome which have a niche displaying a statue of a saint holding a relic that saint is known for. St. Veronica is holding her veil with the face of Jesus. St. Helena is holding the True Cross from Jerusalem which she brought back to Rome. St. Longinus is holding the lance which pierced Jesus' side at the crucifixion. There is an X shaped cross behind St. Andrew the Apostle as he was crucified in that position. The relics are shown publically once a year on the fifth Sunday in Lent.

### Some Important Chapels

- *St. Gregory Chapel* -The mosaic behind the altar shows St. Gregory holding a cloth stained with the blood of martyrs, reminding us to remain faithful and to remember those who died for their faith.
- *Chapel of Michelangelo's Pieta*, is to the right after entering the Basilica.
- *San Sebastian Chapel* is where Pope John II is laid to rest a few steps after Michelangelo's Pieta.
- *Pope John XXIII* can be found under the St. Jerome Altar.
- *Holy Spirit Chapel* or the Altar of the Chair of St. Peter-The Holy Spirit alabaster window faces the main altar. Under the window is the Chair of Peter. Feast Day is February 22. Pope Francis is the Catholic Church's 266 pope.
- *Altar of the Immaculate Conception-the Mosaic of the Immaculate Virgin Mary* was crowned by Pope Pius IX on December 8, 1854, when the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception was decreed.



As large as St. Peter's Basilica is, one hears only low whispers in the Nave and silence in the chapels. Roaming around the Basilica is prayerful, praying in a chapel reflective and spiritual as Church and faith come alive. No matter how many times you have been in St. Peter's it is never enough, for in St. Peter's Basilica, the walls talk.

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

For an online visit

[St Peter's Basilica Info \(stpetersbasilica.info\)](http://www.stpetersbasilica.info)

<http://www.stpetersbasilica.info/index.htm>