

THE APPEALS  
OF OUR LADY  
APPARITIONS  
AND  
MARIAN SHRINES  
IN THE WORLD

# Apparition of the Virgin Mary in ROME

ITALY, August 4-5, 352

The Basilica of Saint Mary Major, situated at the top of the Esquiline Hill, is one of the four patriarchal basilicas of Rome and it is the only one that has retained its paleo-Christian structures. One noted tradition says that it was the Virgin who indicated and inspired the construction of her abode on the Esquiline Hill, appearing simultaneously in dreams to the Patrician John and his wife who nurtured in their hearts a desire, not being able to have children, to transfer their means for the construction of a temple in honor of the Virgin Mary and Pope Liberius in the location that Mary had miraculously indicated. The morning of August 5, the Esquiline Hill appeared covered by a blanket of snow in spite of the hot weather. The Pope then traced out the perimeter of the new church and John provided the finances. There is nothing left of this church except a passage from the Liber Pontificalis (The Book of the Popes), where Pope Liberius confirms "Fecit Basilicam nomini suo iuxta Macellum Liviae". The bell tower is built in Roman Renaissance style and stands 75 meters tall, making it the tallest one in Rome. It was built by Gregory XI upon his return to Rome from Avignon and it contains five bells at the summit. One of them is called "the lost one" and it rings every evening at nine o'clock, with a distinctive sound, a call to prayer for all the faithful. Upon entering the portico, to the right stands a statue of Philip IV from Spain, the benefactor of the basilica. The scale model of the work, completed by Girolamo Lucenti in the XIII century, is by Gian Lorenzo Bernini.



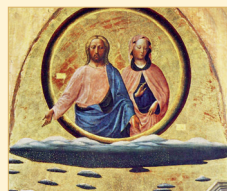
The apparition of Our Lady to Pope Liberius



The icon *Scolari Populi Romani* (children of the Roman people) is a Byzantine icon from the First Millennium of Christianity



Pope Liberius was successor to Julius I in 352. Faced with the heartfelt favor by the Emperor Constantian II in regard to Arianism, he defended the doctrine of Athanasius. In 355 Pope Liberius and Saint Eusebius de Verceil, Dionysius of Milan and a few others refused to sign the conviction of Saint Athanasius and the Council of Nicaea that confirmed the human and divine nature of Christ. In fact the Arianes held opposing views, backed by the emperor, admitting that Christ had superhuman powers, but not divine powers



An icon that depicts the miracle



The mosaic of Italian painter and mosaic artist, Joasop Torrisi is divided into two distinct parts: in the apse-niche is the Coronation of the Virgin, on the underlying strip there are representations of the two most important moments of her life



Facing the altar of Ippoco, in front of the status of Pope Pius IX and under his coat of arms, an obelisk relic that commonly called the "Sacred Orb" is kept and guarded. This offers to the view of the faithful, a precious oval of crystal and silver completed by Valadier



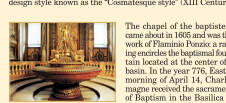
A frontal view of the Basilica Saint Mary Major with the tallest bell tower of the city



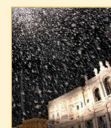
Basilica Saint Mary Major



Upon entering the Basilica one stares in admiration of the details of the mosaic floor by the Cosmati masters of the marble design style known as the "Cosmatesque style" (XIII Century)



The chapel of the baptismary came about in 1665 and was the work of Flaminio Piccini: a relieving encircle the baptismal fountain located at the center of a basin. In the year 776, Easter morning of April 14, Charlemagne received the sacrament of Baptism in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major



The "Miracle of the Snow" is remembered every year on August 5th with a solemn ceremony during which the faithful are showered with white flower petals hushed from the ceiling



In the center of the apse, surrounded by a large circle, Christ and Mary are seated on a great throne painted like an oriental couch. The Sun is putting the crown of gemstones on her head. In the mosaic Mary is not seen only as the Mother, put rather as the Mother of the Church, bride of the Son. At their feet the sun and the moon and around them adoring angels joined by Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Saint Francis of Assisi and Pope Nicholas IV in the left, John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, Saint Anthony and the deacon Cardinal Columba and the right



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