

# INFORMATIVE BULLETIN OF THE PAPHOS LATIN PARISH

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**Stand fast by the faith**

## **THE “HOUSE OF MARY”**

Since Christianity was acknowledged to be of equal status to the pre-existing religions in the Roman Empire in 313 A.D. there has been in Ephesus a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Only in the 12c. , however, the tradition behind this church became widely known:

*“The Virgin Mary was settled in Ephesus with Saint John the Evangelist, and it was there that she ended her earthly life, i. e. the Dormition and Assumption of the Mother of God took place at her house near Ephesus”.*

All the above would have strictly remained in the domain of tradition if, in the 19th c. , a nun called A. K. Emmerich had not repeatedly had visions in which the Virgin Mary would describe in detail the passion of the Lord as well as the place where lies her house near Ephesus (nowadays S.W. Turkey).

In 1881 the French priest J. Gouyet, following the relevant instructions, discovered the remnants of a little house dating from the Apostolic Times.

Many Popes have visited the place and imparted their Apostolic Blessing to it as a place of pilgrimage, although the Church has yet to officially express herself regarding the authenticity of this tradition.

A. K. Emmerich has been beatified in 1975 by Saint Pope John-Paul II.



*Mosaic from Santa Maria Maggiore  
and  
The “house of Mary” 9km from the ancient city of Ephesus*



*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*

*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—**one Lord, one faith, one baptism**; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

*But to each one grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.*

*(Ephesians, ch.4, v. 2-7)*



# Santa Maria Maggiore

The design of the **basilica** was a typical one during the early Christian era in Rome: "a tall and wide nave; an aisle on either side; and a semicircular apse at the end of the nave".

The key aspect that made Santa Maria Maggiore such a significant cornerstone in church building during the early 5th century were the beautiful mosaics found on the triumphal arch and nave.

The mosaics found in Santa Maria Maggiore are among the oldest representations of the Virgin Mary in Christian Late Antiquity.

This is well demonstrated by the decoration of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, where the iconographic depiction of the Virgin Mary was chosen at least in part to celebrate the affirmation of Mary as Theotokos (Mother of God) by the third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431 AD.

These mosaics offer us insight into the artistic, religious, and social movements of that time.

The mosaics in Santa Maria Maggiore had two goals: to praise the Virgin Mary as Theotokos, (Mother of God); and to present a systematic and comprehensive articulation of the relationship of the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Scriptures. The Hebrew Bible foreshadows Christianity and Christianity fulfills the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament.

This is explained by the dual images of Old Testament and New Testament events depicted in the mosaics of the triumphal arch and the nave.



Above we see the magnificent mosaic depicting the Dormition of the Virgin Mary in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore.

The artists of long ago were able to produce works of art which were at the same time works and expressions of Faith; their art, be it architecture, painting, sculpture, mosaics, music or literature could inform, move, inspire, and present the mysteries of Faith in a solid manner accessible, beautiful, pleasing and sure of itself, uplifting and ennobling, by its very presence, every person coming into contact with it and, therefore, human society at large.

We are indebted to the numerous known and unknown Christian artists who have left for the benefit of future generations splendid witness of their living and vibrant Faith, which still can lead us into a deeper experience and understanding of our Christian heritage.

## Did you know...

**St. Maria Maggiore** is one of the only four churches which hold the title of "**major basilica**". The other three are the Basilicas of **St. John in the Lateran**, **St. Peter's**, and **St. Paul outside the Walls**.

Along with all of the other four Major Basilicas, St. Mary Major is also styled a "Papal basilica".

Before 2006, the four Papal Major Basilicas, together with the **Basilica of St. Lawrence outside the Walls** were referred to as the "**patriarchal basilicas**" of Rome, and were associated with the five ancient patriarchates, namely those of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Rome and Constantinople.

St. Maria Maggiore was associated with the Patriarchate of Antioch.

The five Papal Basilicas along with the **Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem** (actually in Rome) and **San Sebastiano fuori le mura** were the traditional Seven Pilgrim Churches of Rome, which were visited by pilgrims during their pilgrimage to Rome following a 20 km itinerary established by St. Philip Neri in 1552. (See *May 2017 bulletin*, or the blog post "Expressions of Faith" at <https://openreflections.me/>)



## The presence of the Holy Spirit

I exhort you, most blessed brethren, that love alone be regarded in which we ought to remain, according to the voice of John the Apostle whose relics we venerate in this city. Let common prayer be offered to the Lord. For we can form some idea of what will be the power of the divine presence at the united intercession of such a multitude of priests, by considering how the very place was moved where, as we read, the Twelve made together their supplication. And what was the purport of that prayer of the Apostles? It was that they might receive grace to speak the word of God with confidence, and to act through its power, both of which they received by the favour of Christ our God. And now what else is to be asked for by your holy council, except that you may speak the Word of the Lord with confidence? What else than that he would give you grace to preserve that which he has given you to preach? That **being filled with the Holy Spirit**, as it is written, **you may set forth that one truth which the Spirit himself has taught you, although with various voices.**

Animated, in brief, by all these considerations (for, as the Apostle says: I speak to them that know the law, and I speak wisdom among them that are perfect), **stand fast by the Catholic faith, and defend the peace of the Churches**, for so it is said, both to those past, present, and future, asking and preserving those things which belong to the peace of Jerusalem.

*From the letter of Pope Celestine to the Fathers of the Third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus, in the year 431.*

## A little litany

When God turned back eternity and was young,  
Ancient of Days, grown little for your mirth  
(As under the low arch the land is bright)  
Peered through you, gate of heaven -- and saw the earth.

Or shutting out his shining skies awhile  
Built you about him for a house of gold  
To see in pictured walls his storied world  
Return upon him as a tale is told.

Or found his mirror there; the only glass  
That would not break with that unbearable light  
Till in a corner of the high dark house  
God looked on God, as ghosts meet in the night.

Star of his morning; that unfallen star  
In that strange starry overturn of space  
When earth and sky changed places for an hour  
And heaven looked upwards in a human face.

Or young on your strong knees and lifted up  
Wisdom cried out, whose voice is in the street,  
And more than twilight of twiformed cherubim  
Made of his throne indeed a mercy-seat.

Or risen from play at your pale raiment's hem  
God, grown adventurous from all time's repose,  
Of your tall body climbed the ivory tower  
And kissed upon your mouth the mystic rose.

*(G. K. Chesterton, 1874-1936)*

## Forbidden to complain!



“You are forbidden to complain,” reads a notice attached recently to the door of Pope Francis’ apartment in Saint Martha’s House in the Vatican.

For several days, reports the Italian site, the red and white notice has explained to visitors that “transgressors are the object of a syndrome of victimization, which has as a consequence a low mood and of the capacity to resolve problems.” And the “sanction is double when the violation is committed in the presence of children.”

To give the “best of oneself,” explains the text, it is necessary “to concentrate on the potentialities and not on the limitations: stop complaining and act to change your life for the better.”

(Source: Zenit.org)