



## BASILICA OF SAINT PETER



It was erected in the 4<sup>th</sup> century by Emperor Constantine on the Vatican Hill, the site of the martyrdom of the apostle Peter, buried, according to tradition, where the papal altar would have been built in the Vatican Grottoes. It is the largest papal basilica in Rome, referred to as the largest church in the world both for its size and its importance as the centre of Catholicism.

From 1506 with Julius II, a long process began that, in about 200 years and with the help of many artists, as Bramante, Raphael, Michelangelo, led to its complete renovation. The seventeenth-century façade by Carlo Maderno, at the centre of which is the Loggia delle Benedizioni, where the newly elected Pontiff faces, and preceded by Gian Lorenzo Bernini's colonnade, is dominated by the immense dome, created by Michelangelo and completed by Giacomo Della Porta. Inside are universal masterpieces including Michelangelo's *Pieta*, and Bernini's bronze *Baldacchino* and *St. Peter's Chair*.

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## BASILICA OF SAINT PAUL OUTSIDE THE WALLS

It stands along the Via Ostiense, outside the Aurelian Wall, on the site where, according to tradition, the apostle Paul was buried, whose tomb is under the papal altar. Constantine's basilica, consecrated in 324, was entirely rebuilt under the joint reign of the three emperors Theodosius I, Gratianus and Valentinian II (late 4<sup>th</sup> century) and this structure remained intact until the disastrous fire of 1823. The transept miraculously withstood the collapse of part of the nave, largely preserving Arnolfo di Cambio's ciborium and some mosaics. The apse, the triumphal arch, the marvellous cloister and the Easter candelabra, both of them of Cosmatesque workmanship, were also saved, but the wall structures were rebuilt and the vast quadriporticus was added in 1928.



## BASILICA OF SAINT SEBASTIAN OUTSIDE THE WALLS



It was erected in the 4<sup>th</sup> century with the ancient title of *Basilica Apostolorum*, in honour of the apostles Peter and Paul whose relics were temporarily kept here to save them from persecution.

The veneration for St Sebastian, a soldier and martyr at the time of Diocletian, whose remains were kept in the adjoining catacomb, later prevailed in the naming of the Basilica. The attribute “outside the walls” is in reference to the fact that the church is located outside the Aurelian Walls, on the ancient Via Appia.

The present building dates back to the reconstruction ordered by Cardinal Scipione Borghese in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to which the *titulus* on the 17<sup>th</sup> century façade by Giovanni Vasanzio refers.

The Basilica of St. John Lateran is the Cathedral of Rome and has the role of mother church of the Diocese of Rome. It is the first of the four major papal basilicas and the oldest and most important in the West.

The primitive Constantinian church, with the adjoining Lateran Palace, consecrated by Sylvester I in 324, was restored over the centuries. Charlemagne was baptised here in 774. New works in the early 10<sup>th</sup> century saw the inauguration of the adjoining Baptistry. Boniface VIII held the first Jubilee here in 1300.

The façade of the transept and the new Lateran Palace are due to Domenico Fontana, Sixtus V's trusted architect, while in the 17<sup>th</sup> century important works were entrusted to Francesco Borromini. The 18<sup>th</sup> century main façade is the work of Alessandro Galilei. The Cosmatesque cloister, where the remains of the Annibaldi Monument by Arnolfo di Cambio are preserved, is truly magnificent.

## BASILICA OF SAINT JOHN IN LATERAN



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## BASILICA OF SAINT CROSS IN JERUSALEM



It was built in the 4<sup>th</sup> century near the Sessorium Palace, the residence of Helena the mother of Constantine, to preserve part of the Cross of Jesus with other relics of the Passion that Saint Helena had transported to Rome on her return from her journey to the Holy Land.

In the Middle Ages it was a destination for pilgrimages, especially during Lent.

Its state of total abandonment, apart from restoration in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, only ended with Benedict XIV who had it completely rebuilt in 1743 by Pietro Passalacqua and Domenico Gregorini, who also designed the façade. The relics traditionally linked to the Passion of Jesus are three fragments of the True Cross, part of the crown of thorns, a sacred nail and the *titulus crucis*, the original scroll affixed to the Cross of Christ.



## BASILICA OF ST. LAWRENCE OUTSIDE THE WALLS



It was erected in the 4th century by Constantine near the tomb of the martyr Lawrence. The church consists of two basilicas built at different times: that of Pelagius II (6<sup>th</sup> century), raised and transformed into a presbytery; and that of Honorius III (13<sup>th</sup> century), which forms the main body of the building. On July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1943, during World War II, it was severely hit during the first Allied bombing raid on Rome.

It was rebuilt and restored with the original material: the restoration, completed in 1948, allowed the removal of structures added in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Admirable works by the Cosmati are the cloister, the floor and the ciborium dating back to 1148. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the first municipal cemetery in Rome, the Verano cemetery, was built next to the basilica.

## BASILICA OF SAINT MARY MAJOR

It is the only basilica in Rome to have preserved the primitive early Christian structure. Built by Pope Liberius, hence also called the Basilica Liberiana, it was renovated in the 5<sup>th</sup> century by Sixtus III who dedicated it to the cult of the Virgin Mary. The mosaics in the nave with Old Testament stories date back to this period.

For the first Jubilee in 1300, the transept and a new apse were created, decorated by Jacopo Torriti with mosaics depicting the Coronation of Mary. From this period are the mosaics by Filippo Rusuti on the façade, later preserved in the 18<sup>th</sup> century façade by Ferdinando Fuga, and the Nativity Chapel by Arnolfo di Cambio. This was incorporated into the chapel dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament, built by Sixtus V as his burial place. Paul V also wanted his family chapel here, the Pauline Chapel, on whose altar is the icon of the *Salus Populi Romani*, venerated by Pope Francis, who chose to be buried in the basilica.

