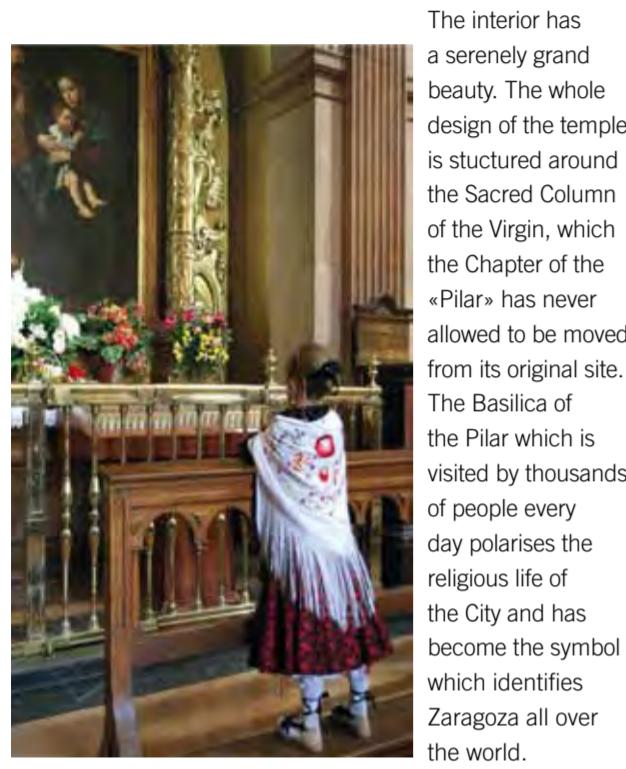


The Basilica of Our Lady of the Pilar

In Zaragoza, on the banks of the river Ebro, stands the imposing Basilica of the «Pilar», a jewel of baroque art in Aragon.

The present temple succeeds the Gothic one built in 1515, which in its turn replaced the Romanesque one, destroyed by fire in 1443.

The temple we see today was begun in 1681 to the plans of Felipe Sánchez y Herrera, «El Mozo». In 1718 the naves were finished and the reredos for the high altar and the choir were added. After a long interval, Ferdinand VI appointed Ventura Rodriguez as architect of the «Pilar» and Herrera's plans were completely transformed. The Holy Chapel was built and the outside was remodelled, additional domes were placed alongside the main dome, which was originally intended to be the only one, and towers which were not completed until the middle of 20th century. Thus we can now contemplate a building which is impressive from any perspective, its singular size, the severe use of brick which originates in the Mudéjar style, the polychromatic tiles of the domes and the Byzantine air of the roofs.



The interior has a serenely grand beauty. The whole design of the temple is structured around the Sacred Column of the Virgin, which the Chapter of the «Pilar» has never allowed to be moved from its original site. The Basilica of the Pilar which is visited by thousands of people every day polarises the religious life of the City and has become the symbol which identifies Zaragoza all over the world.

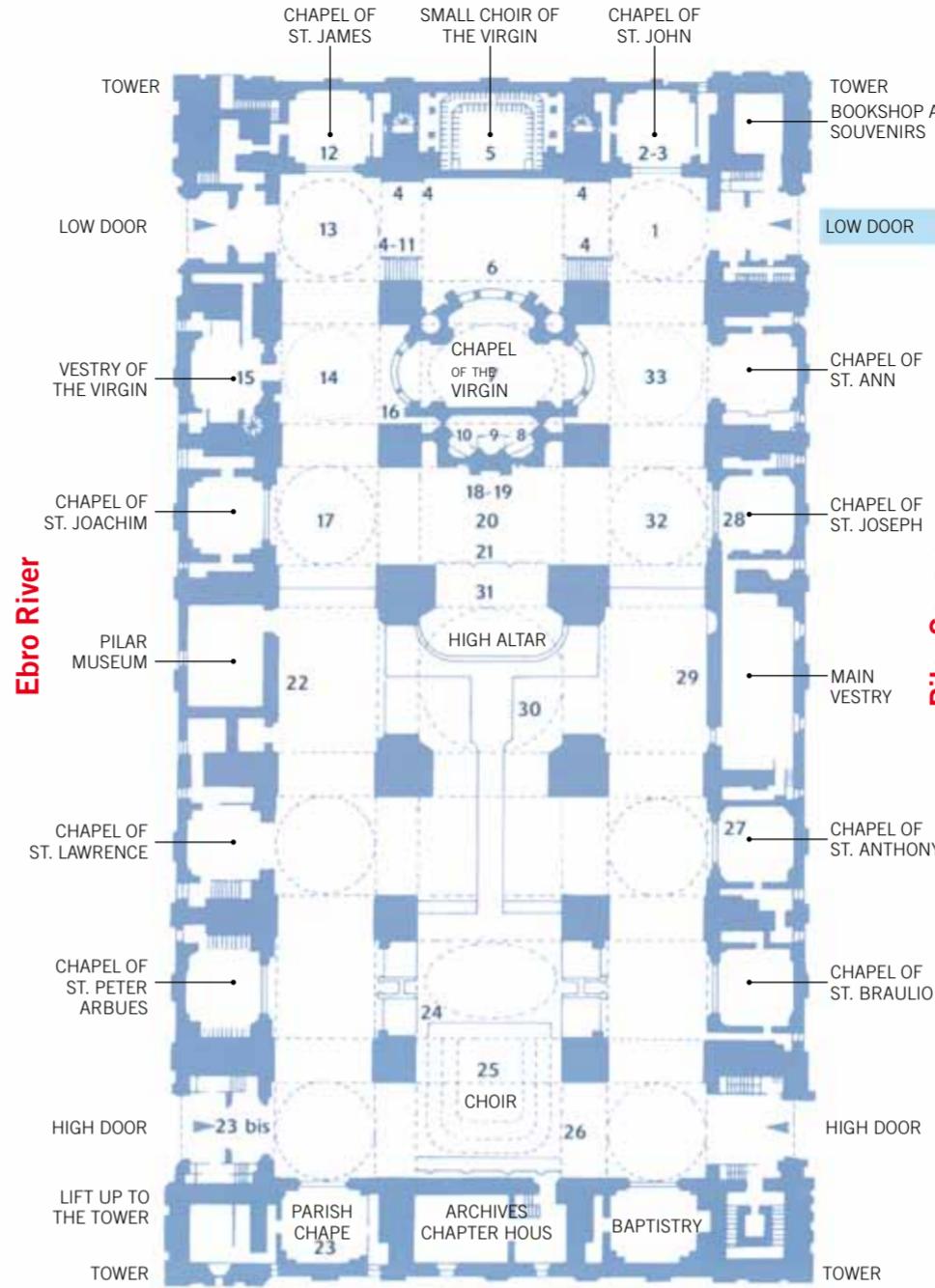
The tradition of the Pilar

According to a venerable and very old tradition, the Virgin Mary, whilst still living in Jerusalem and before her glorious Assumption to heaven came to Zaragoza to console and encourage James the Apostle. He could be found, with the first converts, on the banks of the river Ebro, preaching the Gospels. From time immemorial, these acts are said to have taken place on the night of the 2nd January of the year 40 of the Christian era.

There are three peculiar features which characterise this tradition and distinguish it from others:

Firstly, it is a coming, not an apparition of the Virgin. Unlike so many apparitions which the Virgin Mary has undoubtedly made, for different reasons –Lourdes, Fatima, Banneux, La Salette, Higüey, and so many others– in the case of Zaragoza the Virgin comes when she still lives in Palestine: «She did not do anything like this with any other nation», the liturgy of the 2 January, festival of the Coming of the Virgin, will rightly sing. A second typical feature of this tradition is the Column or «Pilar» which our Lady herself brought so that the first chapel should be built on it, which, in fact, would be the first Marian Temple of all Christendom. Finally, there is a third distinctive note. That is the link between the Pilar tradition and the Jacobean tradition. That is why Zaragoza and Compostela, the Pilar and James, have constituted two essential axes, around which the spirituality of the Spanish country has rotated for centuries.

Itinerary: Entrance through the Low Door in Pilar Square



1. Dome painted by Ramón Bayeu (1781): «Regina Patriarcharum».
2. et 3. Chapel of St. John Baptist, 18th C. baroque altar piece. Murals by Raviella. Christ Crucified. (Grenadine School 17th C.) Receives especial devotion from the people of Zaragoza.
4. Flags of the Latin American Republics. In the words of Pope John Paul II, The Virgin of the Pilar is the «Mother of the Hispanic World».
5. Small Choir: The small choir of the Virgin, with choir stalls designed by Jose Ramirez, the statuettes on balustrade are by Carlos Salas. The ceiling was painted by Francisco de Goya in 1772.
6. Vault fresco painted by Francisco Bayeu (1772-1780): «Regina Sanctorum Omnium».
7. Holy Chapel: Temple of marble, jasper and gilt to house the Image and the Column placed by the Virgin; the work of Ventura Rodriguez (1765). The elliptical vault is pierced to allow the decoration of the cupola, painted by Antonio González Velázquez, to be seen. The religious life of Zaragoza is centred here, many people «visit the Virgin» daily. As this area is one of intense religious feeling, visitors are requested to be quiet, and we invite them to pray for the Pope and the Church in Spain and Latin America.
8. Sculptural group by José Ramírez de Arellano, in marble from Carrara, representing James the Apostle and the seven converts.
9. Sculptural group by José Ramírez de Arellano representing the coming of the Virgin Maria.
10. The Chapel of the Virgin. The Sacred Image, a 38 cm high mid-15th C. gilded wooden figure stands in a niche on the Sacred Pillar, which is 180 cm high and 24 cm in a diameter, and covered in silver. The back of the niche is of Tynos marble with 77 fine gold and gemstone stars.
11. Two unexploded bombs dropped on the Basilica on 3 August 1936.
12. Chapel of St. James, the Holy Sacrament is kept here. The 19th c. sculpture of the Apostle is by Palao.
13. The cupula fresco is by Ramón Bayeu (1781) «Regina Virginum».
14. Vault fresco painted by Francisco Bayeu (1781) «Regina Apostolorum».
15. Vestry of the Virgin. Paintings by Joaquín Inza. Heads carved in wood and polychromed by José Ramírez de Arellano.

16. Small vestry which children pass through to kiss the Virgin's cloak.
17. Dome fresco painted by Francisco de Goya (1781) «Regina Martyrum». Representation of the Virgin Mary with the Holy Aragonese Martyrs.
18. Place where the Holy Pillar can be seen and kissed by the faithful. It is surrounded by a golden fringe. Pope John Paul II venerated and kissed the Pillar in 1986
19. The Assumption of the Virgin. Marble relief by Carlos Salas.
20. Vault decorated by Francisco Bayeu. «Regina Angelorum».
21. 16th C. Figure of Christ taken from the old Prayer Room, today the «Pilar» Museum, and the «Dolorosa» (Lady of Sorrows) by Buenaventura Salesa.
22. «Pilar» Museum. This contains important paintings (Goya, Bayeu, etc.) and a splendid selection of crowns, jewels, cloaks and other donations to the Virgin. The Surrender of Granada, amural painted by Ramón Stolz Viciano (1952).
23. Chapel of St. Augustine, which serves as the parish chapel of the «Pilar». It has a gilded wood, baroque altarpiece. Between the two right hand columns there is a high relief of St. Judas Tadeo.
- 23 bis. Exit via the High door to the river bank and to the lift to the tower.
24. Choir screen by Tomás Celma (1579).
25. Main Choir. The choir stalls, in the plateresque style, were made of Flanders oak by Esteban de Obray from French Navarre, Nicolas Lobato from Zaragoza and Juan Moreto from Florence. It has scenes from the life of Christ, of the Virgin and from the Old Testament. The decorative motifs cover the enormous variety of the Renaissance styles. The organ was carved by Moreto, Ropic and Guillermo Lupe, and has been constantly extended and remodelled since the 16th Century. Today it has 4 keyboards, 1 set of pedals, 80 sets of registers and 6,500 pipes, some dating from the 16th Century. The vault above the choir was painted by Ramón Stolz Viciano in 1952 with the «Allegory of Music».
26. «Ecce Homo» A panel of the 16th C. Flemish school. The Panel above it (the attic) is a magnificent Flemish depiction of the «Visitation».
27. Chapel of St Anthony, with a splendid statue of the Saint by José Ramírez de Arellano.
28. Chapel of S. Joseph. Its importance lies in the fact that it is one of the chapels reserved in the Basilica to administer the Sacrament of the Reconciliation.
29. «Miracle of Calanda». Mural painted by Ramón Stolz Viciano (1952) showing the restitution of the leg of Miguel Pellicer, which was amputated on 29th March 1640.
30. Central dome, 80 metres high with frescos by Montañés, Abadías, Unceta, Pescador and Lana. Pulpits in walnut (1871).
31. High Altar, with reredos in polychromed alabaster from the quarries of Escatón. Gothic masonry with Renaissance decoration and sculptures carried out by Damian Forment (1509-1515). In the «predella» seven fine compositions and three large scenes in the body of the altarpiece. Purification of the virgin, The Assumption (centre) and the Nativity of Our Lady. Above, the «Oculo», behind which the Holy Sacrament is reserved in the style of the Aragonese altarpieces. Under the altar table there is a tomb with the remains of the great Bishop of Zaragoza, St. Braulio, Glory of the Church of Aragon and of Visigoth Spain.
32. Dome decorated by Ramón Bayeu (1781) «Regina Confessorum».
33. Vault fresco painted by Francisco Bayeu (1781-1782) «Regina Prophetarum».

INFORMATION

Visiting hours

Monday to Friday, 6.45 to 20.30 h (in winter) and from 6.45 to 21.30 h (in summer).

Saturdays, days prior to public holidays, Sundays and public holidays from 6.45 to 21.30 h.

Further information

- Masses
- Confessions
- Rosary
- The presentation of the children to the Virgin
- Visit to the Pilar Museum
- Panoramic View of the city from the Tower
- www.basilicadelpilar.es
- www.cabildodezaragoza.org

Responsibility for services

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