

Did you know . . .

Our Lady of the Pillar

Our Lady of the Pillar is the name given to the Blessed Virgin Mary in connection with an ancient Spanish tradition that she appeared to the Apostle James the Greater as he was praying. St. James, brother of St. John, whom our Lord called “Sons of Thunder”, had a special devotion to the Blessed Mother.



In 36AD, while Our Lady was still on earth, she bilocated and appeared to St. James on the banks of the river Ebro, near Caesar-Augusta (now Zaragoza). She was accompanied by celestial music, on a 6-foot pillar of jasper. She had come to comfort and encourage St. James and his disciples and requested that a chapel be built on the spot in Her honor and she promised her assistance to those who invoke Her.

St. James built the first shrine as instructed and later came the present-day Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar of Zaragoza. Not long afterward, St. James was recalled to Jerusalem where he was the first apostle to suffer martyrdom. As he prepared to endure death by beheading, Our Lady and her angels were present to fortify and console him.

In 1434, a fire burned down the church. The construction of the present Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar, Zaragoza was started in 1681 and ended in 1711. In 1753, a special side chapel was built; it houses Our Lady's pillar. On the pillar was built a 15" statue of Our Lady with the child Jesus who holds a dove.

During the Spanish Civil War, two bombs hit and damaged the basilica, but neither exploded. The event was considered a miracle. The diffused bombs have been on display, hanging on the ceiling of the basilica, ever since.

“The image of Our Lady of the Pillar is a wooden statue decorated with gold; it is about fifteen inches high. The crown adorning the head of the statue is very intricate. It was made in forty-four days by thirty-three workmen; in it there are 2,836 diamonds cut triangularly, 2725 roses, 145 pearls, 74 emeralds, 62 rubies and 46 sapphires. The crown of the Infant is identical with that of the Virgin, except in size.” [Roman Catholic Saints]

The Feast of Our Lady of the Pillar is celebrated on October 12. She is the Patroness of the Hispanic peoples and the Spanish Civil Guard. A grand nine-day festival known as *Fiestas del Pilar* is celebrated in Zaragoza every year in her honor. The feast of the Lady of the Pillar is also a national holiday in Spain as it coincides with the *Fiesta Nacional de España*, which commemorates the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas in 1492.

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