

church with Perpetual Adoration in your area, sometimes a parish will have Adoration for a few hours a day or on a particular day of the week. Go! If you are unable to find a church that offers exposition of the Blessed Sacrament at all, simply visit any Catholic church and pray before the tabernacle. Jesus is there night and day. He waits for you. Be another St. Joseph for Jesus and Mary!

When you visit the Most Blessed Sacrament, approach Jesus with the love of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and St. John.¹²

— St. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar

O Blessed Joseph, I adore with you the first words that came from the mouth of the Incarnate Word. I prostrate myself with you to kiss with reverence the first footprints left by his adorable feet. O infinite God, You became weak in order to give us strength; You desired to speak like other children in order to teach us the language of heaven! O Blessed Joseph, inspire me with your feelings for Jesus, and obtain for me the grace to love God like you. Amen.¹³

— Blessed Bartolo Longo

The Holy House of Loreto

Has anyone ever visited Loreto who has not seen with his own eyes and heard with his own ears the mighty works of God, and felt them in his soul?¹

— St. Peter Canisius

The holiest house in the world is in Italy.

You read that right. It used to be in the Holy Land, but it moved.

The family home of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph is located in the town of Loreto, Italy. How did it get there? Well, what you are about to read is the true story of how the home of the Holy Family in Nazareth was transported to Italy by angels. The story is so fascinating that you are probably going to want to go to Loreto after reading it.

According to historians, the home of the Holy Family remained in Nazareth for 13 centuries. Then, on May 10, 1291, it suddenly disappeared! All that remained of the house was the foundation. The sudden disappearance of the house was noticed by everyone in Nazareth, leaving the entire community completely baffled. For a person or group of persons to remove it so quickly without anyone noticing was impossible.

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According to tradition, the Holy House was transported out of Nazareth by angels. In the reports of her mystical experiences, Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich spoke about the angelic transportation of the house. She states:

I have often in vision witnessed the transporting of the Holy House to Loreto. For a long time, I could not believe it, and yet I continued to see it. I saw the Holy House borne over the sea by seven angels. It had no foundation, but there was under it a shining surface of light. On either side was something like a handle. Three angels carried it on one side and three on the other; the seventh hovered in front of it, a long train of light after him.²

Fascinating stuff! What Blessed Anne Catherine did not observe in her visions, however, is that the angels first took the Holy House from Nazareth to the town of Trsat, an area in modern day Croatia. At the time, Croatia was known as Illyria or Dalmatia. Why did the angels take it there? What was the point in moving it at all?

The Holy House was moved in 1291. The reason for its transportation by angels out of Nazareth became clear three years later. In 1294, the entire town of Nazareth was sacked by invading Muslims. If the Holy House had remained in Nazareth, the Muslims would have completely destroyed it. God anticipated the act of sacrilege and sent his holy angels to relocate the house to another location.

Throughout the centuries, God has used people such as St. Helena to remove relics (holy objects associated with Jesus, Mary, and the saints) from the Holy Land and relocate them to safer places. Saint John Henry Newman once visited the Holy House and offered a very insightful statement about its relocation. He wrote:

He who floated the Ark [of Noah] on the surges of a world-wide sea and enclosed in it all living things, who has hidden the terrestrial paradise, who said that faith might move mountains, who sustained thousands for forty years in a sterile wilderness, who transported Elias and keeps him hidden till the end, could do this wonder also. And in matter of fact we see all other records of our Lord and his saints gathered up in the heart of Christendom from the ends of the earth as paganism encroached on it (that is, his relics). Saint Augustine leaves Hippo, the prophet Samuel and St. Stephen leave Jerusalem, the crib in which our Lord lay leaves Bethlehem with St. Jerome, the Cross is dug up, St. Athanasius goes to Venice. In short, I feel no difficulty in believing it.³

But why did it go to Croatia first, though? Why didn't the angels take it directly to Italy? No one really knows the answer. Perhaps God wanted to bless the land of Croatia with the presence of the Holy House before taking it to its final location. Jesus once healed a deaf man in stages and not immediately. The angels' moving of the Holy House to several locations before finally placing it in Loreto has the effect of supplying a multitude of witnesses to the miraculous disappearance and reappearance of the house. In other words, God allowing the house to be moved several times before having it placed in Loreto shows that it wasn't being moved by man, but by God's holy angels.

Let's take a closer look at all the miraculous transportations associated with the Holy House.

On May 10, 1291, the day the Holy House disappeared from Nazareth, people in the village of Trsat, Croatia, witnessed the sudden appearance of a new house in the village. Not one person in the village knew how it got there. Interestingly, the villagers observed that the four walls of the house were resting on the dirt. The house had no foundation.

After being in Croatia for three years, the house miraculously disappeared again on December 10, 1294. No one in the village saw the house leave. The only thing that was left at the spot where the house once stood was the outline of the house in the dirt. To this day, a monument marks the exact spot in Trsat, Croatia, where the Holy House was located for three years.

Where did the house go after Croatia? It was taken by angels across the Adriatic Sea to the town of Piceno, Italy. Incredibly, the same thing happened in the town of Piceno: Nobody witnessed the house arrive, and nobody knew where it had come from. The house remained in this location for eight months. It was only in Piceno for eight months because robbers began to steal from the pilgrims (many from Croatia) who were coming to the Holy House. In August 1295, the house disappeared again. It reappeared on a hill not far from the town of Piceno. However, the hill where the house was placed was owned by two brothers, and they began to fight over ownership of the house. Unable to resolve their dispute, the brothers started to exploit the pilgrims for financial gain. The Holy House only remained on their property for several months before it miraculously disappeared again!

Near the end of December 1295, the Holy House was taken by angels a stone's throw away from the previous location, far enough

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not to be on the property of the two brothers. This location is known as Loreto, the town where the house is located today. (The miracle of the Holy House being transported by angels four times is the reason the Catholic Church has declared Our Lady of Loreto the patron of aviation.)

How do we know all this is true? Well, in 1296, one year after the Holy House arrived in Loreto, the Catholic Church appointed 16 envoys to investigate everything. The envoys visited Loreto, Croatia, and Nazareth, and conducted extensive studies in order to verify the events. The envoys went to Loreto first.

At the site in Loreto, they took precise measurements of the house, noting every detail. The envoys then traveled to Trsat, Croatia, to the place where the house had rested, and took measurements of the marks left in the dirt by the house. Next, they traveled to Nazareth to compare the measurements from Loreto and Trsat to the original foundation. Incredibly, at all three locations (Loreto, Croatia, and Nazareth), the measurements were exactly the same! There were no discrepancies whatsoever. Everything matched perfectly.

Centuries later, scientists conducted a chemical analysis of the stones of the walls of the Holy House in Loreto. Chemical studies on the wood used for the ceiling of the Holy House were done as well. Guess what they discovered? The walls of the Holy House are made from stones unique to the area of Nazareth, and the wood in the ceiling of the house comes from the exact area of Nazareth! Even the mortar used for the house was determined to be made of material originating in the Holy Land.

As a result of the studies, a larger church began to be built around the house to accommodate the many pilgrims arriving in Loreto. Further attesting to the truthfulness of these miraculous events, pilgrims continued to travel to Loreto from Trsat, Croatia, every year, asking heaven to bring the Holy House back to Croatia.

After the arrival of the Holy House in Loreto, Italy, in 1295, nearly 50 popes have affirmed its miraculous transportation by angels, sometimes referring to the transportation as the "translation" of the Holy House. In the 15th century, two popes were miraculously cured at the Holy House. In the 16th century, a fortified basilica was completed around the Holy House to protect it from Muslim attacks. Later, to fortify the structure even more, the Holy House was encased in Carrara marble.

Nearly all of the popes after Pius II [one of the popes from the 13th century who was miraculously healed] have spoken of its miraculous translation.⁴

— St. Alphonsus Liguori

Why have God and the Church taken such measures to preserve this house? Because it is the site of the Incarnation! Tradition holds that Mary was born and raised in the Holy House, and that it was in that house that the Archangel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin, and the Word became flesh. It is a house of supernatural wonders!

She [Mary] is said to have been born in the city of Nazareth itself, and, indeed, in the same chamber in which, overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, she afterwards conceived at the Angel's salutation.⁵

— St. Jerome

It is in reality the House of Nazareth that is venerated at Loreto, that House dear to God by so many claims, built originally in Galilee, separated from its foundations, and carried by Divine power across the seas into Dalmatia first, and thence into Italy — the blessed House where the most Holy Virgin, predestined from all eternity and perfectly exempt from original sin, was conceived, was born, was brought up; where heaven's messenger saluted her as full of grace; where she became the mother of the only son of God.⁶

— Blessed Pope Pius IX

The Holy House is also where the Holy Family lived in Nazareth. The house is often called the "Holy House of Mary," but it also deserves to be called the "Holy House of Joseph." When and how St. Joseph came into possession of the house is not certain, but it most likely occurred as a result of his marriage to Mary. In fact, recent excavations near the Basilica of the Annunciation offer clues as to how Mary's childhood home became the home of the Holy Family.

When pilgrims travel to the Holy Land, they usually journey to Nazareth to see the Basilica of the Annunciation (where the Holy House used to be and where the foundation of the chamber of the Incarnation remains). What many pilgrims are completely unaware of is that very close to the Basilica is the workshop of St. Joseph.

Tradition holds that when Joseph and Mary were engaged, but before they lived together, Joseph lived and worked in his own house nearby. Once Mary and Joseph began to live together, they chose to live in Mary's childhood home, and Joseph used the other house as

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his workshop. This helps us to understand why St. Joseph was not present when the angel came to Mary at the Annunciation; he was not living with her at the time.

The Holy House is a unique relic that hundreds, if not thousands, of saints have visited. Prior to its being transported to Loreto, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Helena visited the house in Nazareth. Since its mystical transportation to Loreto, countless saints have made a pilgrimage to Loreto to see it, including:

- St. Ignatius of Loyola
- St. Francis Xavier (He made a pilgrimage to Loreto before setting off on his missionary journey to India.)
- St. Francis Borgia
- St. Charles Borromeo
- St. Peter Canisius (He defended the truth of the Holy House against the Protestants who called it a legend.)
- St. Aloysius Gonzaga
- St. James of La Marca
- St. Stanislaus Kostka
- St. Francis de Sales
- St. Louis Guanella
- St. Lawrence of Brindisi
- St. Benedict Joseph Labre (He is called the "Saint of Loreto" because he visited the Holy House so frequently.)
- St. Francis Caracciolo
- Blessed Anthony Grassi (He grew up near the Holy House. On one occasion, while kneeling in prayer at the house, he was struck by lightning. The lightning strike miraculously cured his life-long acute pain from indigestion. As a result of the healing, he vowed to visit the Holy House once a year on pilgrimage.)
- St. Alphonsus Liguori (He once stated that he "left his heart" in Loreto.)
- St. Maximilian Kolbe
- St. Josemaría Escrivá (He visited the Holy House seven times and consecrated Opus Dei to Mary in Loreto.)
- St. Pope John XXIII
- St. John Paul II

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux visited the Holy House in 1887 as she made her way to Rome with her father. She wrote about her visit in her autobiography:

I was indeed happy when on the way to Loreto. Our Lady had chosen an ideal spot in which to place her Holy House. Everything is poor, simple, and primitive; the women still wear the graceful dress of the country and have not, as in the large towns, adopted the modern Paris fashions. I found Loreto enchanting. What shall I say of the Holy House? I was overwhelmed with emotion when I realized that I was under the roof that had sheltered the Holy Family. I gazed on the same walls Our Lord had looked on. I trod the ground once moistened with the sweat of St. Joseph' toil, and saw the little chamber of the Annunciation. I even put my rosary into the little porringer used by the Divine Child. How sweet these memories!⁷

The Holy House is a powerful relic. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph lived, slept, ate, and prayed there. It's so powerful that the devil wants nothing to do with it. Blessed Baptist Spagnoli of Mantua (1447-1516), head of the Carmelite Order from 1513-1516, and a priest very devoted to the Holy House, offered the following eyewitness account of an exorcism performed on a woman in the Holy House of Loreto on July 16, 1489:

I will not pass over a thing which I saw with my own eyes and heard with my own ears. It happened that a French lady of some means and of gentle birth named Antonia, who had long been possessed by evil spirits, was brought into the holy place by her husband that she might be delivered. Whilst a priest named Stephen, an exemplary man, was reading over her the usual exorcisms, one of the demons who boasted that he had been the instigator of the massacre of all the Innocents, being asked to his confusion whether this had been the Immaculate Virgin's chamber, replied that it had been so indeed, but that he owned [confessed] it against his will, compelled by Mary to confess the truth. He moreover pointed to the places in the Holy House where Gabriel, and where Mary, had each of them been.⁸

The Holy House even has its own liturgical feast day. On April 12, 1916, Pope Benedict XV issued a decree establishing December 10 as the annual liturgical Feast of the Translation of the Holy House. To this day, the Feast of the Translation of the Holy House is celebrated with great festivity every December 10 in Loreto.

In that most blessed House took place the beginnings of man's salvation by the great and admirable mystery of God made man. Amid the poverty of this retired dwelling there lived those models of domestic life and harmony.⁹

— Pope Leo XIII

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Is it not by an unparalleled miracle that this Holy House was brought over land and sea from Galilee into Italy? By a supreme act of benevolence on the part of the God of all mercy, it has been placed in our pontifical domain, where for so many centuries it has become the object of the veneration of all the nations of the world and is resplendent with incessant miracles.¹⁰

— Blessed Pope Pius IX

The Holy House of Loreto is the dwelling in which the divine Word assumed human flesh, and which was translated by the ministry of angels. Its authenticity is proved by ancient monuments and unbroken tradition as by the testimony of Sovereign Pontiffs, the common consent of the faithful, and the continual miracles which are there worked even to the present day.¹¹

— Pope Benedict XIV