

The Catholic Company presents



Why Should I Visit The Dome At St. Peter's Basilica?

Have you ever been to St. Peter's Basilica, or at least seen pictures of it? If you look closely at its features, you can discover deep Catholic treasures. Learn more here.

St. Peter's Basilica is one of the most extravagant Catholic pilgrimage sites in the world. Rich in Church history, up to ten million people visit the basilica each year.

The dome at St. Peter's Basilica is a particularly breathtaking site. Not only is the exterior of the structure richly intricate, the interior is just as awe-inspiring, because it features several different paintings of Catholic saints and figures. The dome was designed by Michelangelo.

Elizabeth Lev, in her book *How Catholic Art Saved the Faith: The Triumph of Beauty and Truth in Counter-Reformation Art*, explains how between 1603 and 1612, Cavalier D'Arpino sketched drawings for the interior of the dome. The best mosaic artists of that time transposed these drawings into mosaics. The dome contains ninety-six figures. The lowest row depicts the first sixteen canonized popes that were buried in the basilica.

Above the popes are large, full-length figures that depict Jesus, Mary, St. Paul, John the Baptist, and the twelve apostles. Above them are angels, who serve as messengers to the saints lined above them. Elizabeth Lev explains the significance of the top, or apex of the dome:

A ring of blue flecked with golden stars frames a final burst of light from the lantern, where, at the apex of the dome, the viewer can make out the image of God the Father hovering above. Completely executed in shimmering gold mosaic tiles outlined in the blue of grace or the white of purity, the dome of St. Peter's dazzles but also firmly unites Heaven and earth through the ranks of angels.

Lev explains how St. Peter's Basilica is "the most ambitious project of the Catholic Restoration," especially through how it depicts scenes of Heaven to remind people of the Communion of Saints and the truth of salvation through faith in the Catholic Church.

St. Peter's Basilica is a must-see sight for any Catholic looking to complete a pilgrimage at least once in their lifetime.