

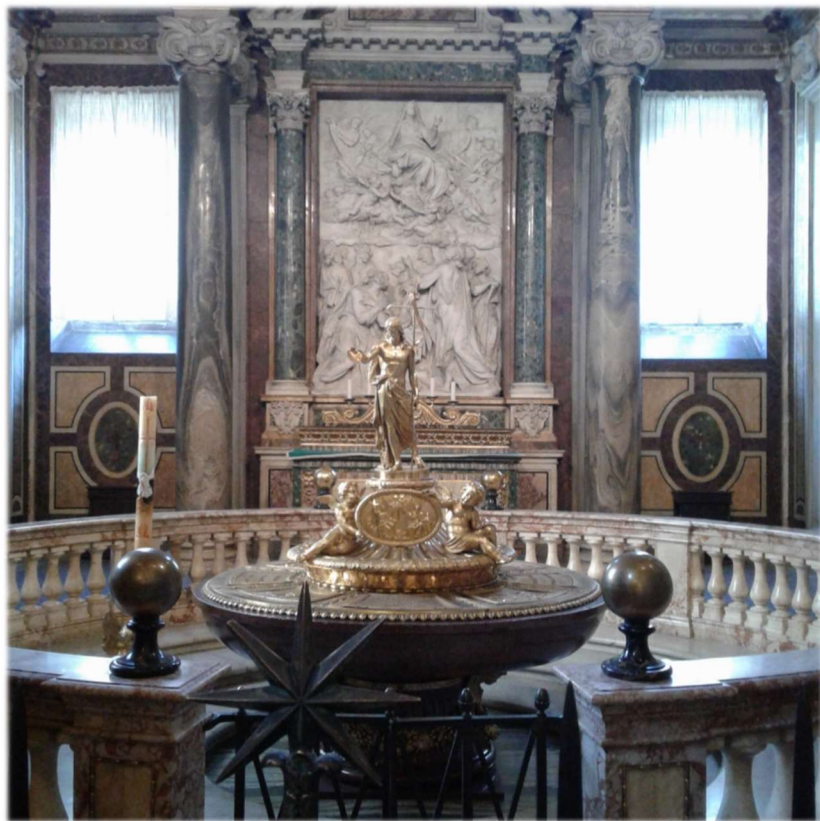
From Fr. Melvin: Entering the period called Easter Time, I share Part 3 of this series on the Basilica of St. Mary Major, dedicated to her title: Mother of God. Blessed and fortunate, to say, I visited this basilica only once, but these photos offered me a spiritual revisit in this series. Our priest group had a daily Mass in the side Chapel, an educational session with tour, and a personal time-out for personal prayer, and the museum shop with that 1 visit for perhaps all-time. In this 4-photo arrangement, I will share the recognition of 2 major popes regarding this basilica: Pius V and Sixtus V. The other 2 photos reveal a mystical beauty of art while maintaining a pastoral purpose in sacrament and the embodiment of Christ and the Church. ***

In this photo, is the statue and the tomb below of Pope Pius V. His headpiece, the tiara, is easily seen in view of the striking gold rays emanating from it. His right-hand gestures peace and welcome; his beard was likely a common appearance among religious of the time. He preferred wearing his Dominican robes with his papal attire though the material was coarse (The Papal Encyclopedia. 278). Pius served as the Church's shepherd from 1566-1572, and was a staunch (strong defender) leader of the faith and spearheaded the Council of Trent and promulgation or issuance of pastoral decrees. ***



Pope Sixtus V, successor to Gregory XIII, appears here with praying hands, the tiara is not worn but is below on the right side; his lengthy stole lays prominently across his neck to the floor and like his predecessor, revealing a heavier bearded feature. According to my text, he is specially regarded for various architectural works in Rome—"the Piazza del Popolo and the completion of the cupola (dome roof) of St. Peter's Basilica" (Procedamus in Pace, 33). He reigned from 1585-1590 and strengthened the "soul" of the Church against marauders who ventured into parts of Italy only to be turned away by Sixtus and the leadership of his army. Therefore, he was aptly referred as the "Iron Pope." ***

Surely, after covering much of the church, one may ask where Baptisms are held? In this photo, we made it to the Baptistry, finally! St. John the Baptist together with assisting angels, appear in splendid gold; the Baptist quite resplendent with a “bannered” cross and in his right hand a kind of shell from which Baptisms are given by the action of the hand. Interestingly, the Font is located in the back until it is prepared for a Baptism. ***



In this closing photo, I offer a majestic and brilliant display of a Tabernacle in the form of a church supported by 4 angels. Significantly,

angels are depicted at various heights, postures, and here, in an appearance of strength. The angels not only support the Tabernacle (the place for the Blessed Sacrament of our Lord) but also behold candles on the other hand. As God’s messengers, they are generally present around a holy presence of Jesus, Mary, the saints, and tombs of the faithful. Near the ceiling, one can see angels all along the sides. *Even our Sanctuary beholds angels adorning each side revealing our Lord’s presence at the altar.* According to my text, this Tabernacle shown here was typical during the period of the Counter Reformation. This was a difficult period in our Church’s history; I like to call it the rallying cry of the Church’s tradition versus its past issues. ***



In closing, I will share 3 more important photos to close out our series on St. Mary Major. From our veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her title coming from this basilica, *O Holy Mother of God, pray for us and protect our families.* ***