

Our Lady of the Pillar

SAINT OF THE DAY

12_10_2023



The Blessed Virgin appeared to the Apostle James during her earthly life on the night of 2 January 40. James was praying on the banks of the river Ebro and pleading for Mary's intercession for the success of evangelisation in Spain. Our Lady, accompanied by several choirs of angels and carrying a small jasper pillar and an image of herself, told the apostle of the divine will that a temple should be built and dedicated to her. Thus began the history of the first sanctuary in Spain and certainly one of the very first in the whole of Christianity. Only after having built the primitive chapel did James return to

Jerusalem where, first of all the apostles, he suffered martyrdom during the persecutions of Herod Agrippa.

The tradition of the Pillar is very ancient and is confirmed by the revelations made in modern times by Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerick and, even before that, by the detailed account of the Venerable Mary of Agreda, who reports the words of the Virgin to the apostle: “The heavenly King has chosen this place so that a temple might be erected in it, where under the title of my name, His name may be magnified [...]. He will give free rein to his ancient mercies for the benefit of believers, and they will obtain them through my intercession, if they ask for them with genuine confidence and pious devotion”. Our Lady added: “This pillar with my image on it will remain here and will last with holy faith until the end of time”.

Almost two thousand years have passed and the present gigantic sanctuary of Zaragoza - which survived three bombs dropped at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), none of which exploded - stands on the same site as the apparition. It houses the precious pillar inside a chapel, with an oculus that allows pilgrims to kiss and worship it. This great devotion to the Virgen del Pilar, patroness of Spain and of all Hispanics, can also be seen in the spread of the name Pilar, in the many votive niches, and in the songs dedicated to her.

But returning to the apparition, one fact is worthy of note: after having lived in obscurity during the earthly life of her Son the Redeemer, the heavenly Mother was already venerated by the apostles for her special role in the history of salvation. And she was invoked, as Emmerick informs us in the words of **St James the Greater**, as the “base and pillar of the Church on earth”.

To the intercession of Our Lady of the Pillar is attributed one of the greatest miracles ever, which took place in 1640, concerning the farmer Miguel Juan Pellicer. This story is told in detail in the book *Il miracolo (The Miracle)* by Vittorio Messori, which draws on several documents of the time with dozens of testimonies, including those of the doctors who could but verify the miracle.

Learn more:

Il miracolo. Spagna, 1640: indagine sul più sconvolgente prodigio mariano, di Vittorio Messori, Rizzoli, 1998