



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

A short history of the 'aedicule' which enshrines the empty tomb

Msgr. Jacques Perrier, who used to be Grand Prior of the French Lieutenancy, offers us an historic perspective on the subject of the aedicule, currently undergoing restoration, which enshrines the empty tomb of Christ in the basilica of the Holy Sepulchre.



The entrance into the "aedicule" of the Holy Sepulchre before the beginning of restoration

The angel announced to the women who had come to embalm the body of Jesus, **"Why look for the living amongst the dead?"** The fact remains that: the believer keeps the place where the body of Jesus was deposited, for veneration. It appeals to the concreteness of the faith. Particularly for the members of the Order.

During the second half of the 20th century, the basilica was restored. The cupola was once again opened to the sky and light came down on the **"aedicule"**, according to the term which refers to what the Greeks constructed at the beginning of the 19th century on the tomb itself.

Alas, the light showed that the aedicule was in very bad condition. The three principal communities, co-guardians of the edifice (Greek Orthodox, Latin Catholic and Armenian Apostolic) **decided to restore it**. Works started at the end of the summer.

In Constantine's basilica, the tomb had been excavated from the rock slope out of which it had been dug. But the tomb itself was conserved. On October 19, 1009, the **Caliph Al-Hakîm decided to destroy it**. The pics of those charged with demolishing it wiped out all that was in relief and halted at the funeral layer carved in the rock. A few years later, the basilica was restored, with much difficulty, until the arrival of the crusaders, which now leaves us with the current building.

Since this time, **the original rock has been put on top of a marble slab, that which the pilgrims venerate, which protects it**. It was in 1810, during the construction of the current aedicule, that the original rock appeared for the last time. Since an identical reconstruction has been planned for the restoration, there is a risk it will disappear, once again, for several centuries.

Msgr. Jacques Perrier

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