



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

Saint Mary of Peace, chapter church of the Order in Milan



Santa Maria della Pace, in Milan, is the chapter church of the largest Italian Lieutenancy, which includes the Sections of Piedmont, Liguria, Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, Veneto, Trentino-Alto Adige and Friuli Venezia Giulia.

In the centre of Milan, behind the gigantic Palazzo di Giustizia and surrounded by greenery, the title of the church of Santa Maria della Pace (St. Mary of Peace) reflects the wishes of its founder, the Duchess of Milan Bianca Maria Visconti, for an end to the violence of which her son Galeazzo Sforza had been a victim. But the life of the church, the third seat of the Lieutenancy for Northern Italy of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, was anything but peaceful.

Initially, the Milanese Knights met at the Church of the Holy Trinity, consecrated by Archbishop Ariberto da Intimiano in 1036, in which, after the First Crusade, the altar of the Crypt had been dedicated to the Holy Sepulchre. In 1940, they moved to the coenoby of the basilica of St. Simplicianus, seat of the Benedictine monks since the IX century, where tradition has it that the Lombard Knights called to fight in the Crusades gathered. Since 1967, the Order has been located in S. Maria della Pace, where there was a convent established in 1476 thanks to ducal donations.

In its long history the church has survived many vicissitudes. Deconsecrated, it was used as barracks, horse stables and a hospital. In 1901, as a concert hall, it hosted the first performance of the Moses oratorio by Don Lorenzo Perosi, who in a somewhat faded photograph can be seen flanked by Maestro Arturo Toscanini. Many of the most important works it housed have been removed, and now grace the exhibition venues most visited by tourists, such as the Brera Art Gallery, the Castello Sforzesco and the Museum of Science and Technology.

Restored and re-consecrated in 1906, it has nevertheless retained its main historical architectural features, the Lombard Gothic façade and the square Renaissance bell tower. The interior, displaying a single nave flanked by side chapels, in one of which is a XVI century effigy of Our Lady of Peace, is divided into five bays with cross vaults. The rectangular apse is decorated with XVII century frescoes

by Tanzio da Varallo; and the solemn ceremonies of the Order are accompanied by the monumental, fully mechanical organ from 1891. Its harmonies add to the beauty of the church, whose wide, expansive spaces confirm the sense of peace that is in its name and origins.

Santa Maria della Pace is today the seat of the largest Italian Lieutenancy, which includes the Sections of Piedmont, Liguria, Lombardy, Emilia, Romagna, Veneto, Trentino-Alto Adige and Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

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