



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

*At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land*

## The Royal Collegiate-Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre of Calatayud



**On June 12, two hundred Knights and Dames of the Order in Spain commemorated the elevation, in 2020, of the Royal Collegiate Church of the Holy Sepulchre of Calatayud to the status of Minor Basilica, an event that could not be held at the time because of the pandemic.**

On 25 November 2020, the Royal Collegiate Church of the Holy Sepulchre of Calatayud, of the Lieutenancy for Eastern Spain, was elevated to the rank of Minor Basilica.

The request, which the Collegiate Chapter had addressed to Bishop Eusebio Hernández Sola, was favorably received by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments late last year. On behalf of the pope, the bishop of Tarazona was informed of the favorable decision to make it the Mother House of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre in Spain, by virtue of the fact that it is the first instance, outside Jerusalem, of the Order of the Canons of the Holy Sepulchre. In addition to this, there is a unique artistic value given by the exclusive consecration to the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ, and the splendor with which the Eucharist and the other sacraments are celebrated in it.

The history of the Royal Collegiate- Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre of Calatayud began in 1146, when the Prince of Aragon Raymond Berengar IV donated to the Order of the Canons of the Holy Sepulchre, among other assets, a plot of land in Calatayud to build a convent of their Order, in compensation for the Order's renunciation of the will of King Alfonso I the Warrior who, in 1131, had linked his kingdom to the Orders founded in the Holy Land to protect the Holy Places. The dedication of the original church took place in 1156 in the presence of the Prince of Aragon himself and of the canon Friar Giraldo – who would become the first prior – as well as of the archbishops of Toledo and Tarragona, and the bishops of Tarazona and Zaragoza. During the second quarter of the 13th century, the architectural structure was renovated and considerably enlarged. It was consecrated by

the archbishop of Tarragona, Pedro de Albalade, on 11 November 1249 and only forty-nine years later, on 6 June 1262, with the bull of Pope Urban IV the church of Calatayud direct began to depend directly on the Holy See and the Patriarch of Jerusalem.

The current church was built in the early 17th century at the request of Prior Don Juan de Rebolledo y Palafox, by the architect Gaspar de Villaverde, who, on the same site, erected a Latin cross church with three wide naves, covered by a central vaulted lunette, cross vaults on the sides, while in the transept, a large dome on pendentives. The presbytery of great depth hosts the high altar and, behind this, the choir. Along the naves are the side chapels, all decorated with retables representing the complete cycle of the Passion of Christ, making this church unique. The iconographic cycle ends with the monumental canopy above the high altar, with the image of Christ lying in the tomb, the sculptures of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea and a representation of the risen Christ.

The Aragonese monarchy granted the Order and the Collegiate Church the utmost protection, which was crucial for the continuity of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, particularly when Pope Innocent VIII, with the Bull *Cum Solerti* of 28 March 1489, integrated the Order of the Holy Sepulchre to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. King Ferdinand II "the Catholic" of Aragon firmly opposed it, asking the pope to revoke this bull in his kingdom. He obtained this in 1494 from Pope Alexander VI, with ratification by Pope Leo X in a Brief of 29 October 1513, in which he ordered that, since the suppression of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem decreed by Innocent VIII had not become effective in many areas, including the Kingdom of Aragon, and since in the city of Calatayud there was a church and a Priory of the said Order, it was declared that such church, priory, persons, goods, and properties could and should not be included in the abovementioned bull of extinction. In this way, the Collegiate Church of Calatayud became the only survivor of the suppression of the Order in all of Spain.

The Collegiate Church was served by canons regular who followed the Rule of Saint Augustine, fulfilling their obligation to live communally and celebrate in choir the liturgy of the Church of Jerusalem. The Prior of the Collegiate Church was also the superior of the Order of Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia and Majorca. Since 1431, the priors were chosen and appointed directly by the Holy See until 1746, when the Collegiate Church of the Holy Sepulchre of Calatayud was declared a Royal Patronage and its prior was elected by the King of Spain. The patriarchal cross with its six fleur-de-lis extremities became the emblem of the Collegiate Church: the canons wore it on their chests and in crimson fabric on the side of their choir robes. The prior began to use it as a pectoral cross and, following the privilege granted by Pope Clement VII on 25 May 1385, also used a crosier.

In 1851, following the Concordat between the Kingdom of Spain and the Holy See, the regular Chapter of the Collegiate Church was suppressed, making it a major parish, dependent on the bishopric of Tarazona and endowed with secular clergy. After the transformation of the Order into its modern form in 1868, the Spanish Knights of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre organized to recover the collegiate community of the church (always considered as the mother house) making the request to the crown that, on 28 August 1893, communicated to the Ministry of Grace and Justice, the authorization to ask of His Holiness the pope, the title of Honorary Collegiate for the Major Parish of the Holy Sepulchre of Calatayud. The church was granted the dignity of Collegiate *ad Honorem* thanks to the apostolic Brief *Templa Dei* of Pope Leo XIII, signed in Rome on 18 September 1901. As a sign of gratitude for their efforts, the Chapter named the Spanish Knights honorary canons and granted them the use of the patriarchal cross.

A few years later, in 1916, the Feast of the Holy Sepulchre was reinstated as the Collegiate's major solemnity on the second Sunday after Easter, on the eve of which the Chapter and the two Spanish Lieutenancies gathered to recite the canonical hours and take possession of the choir stalls by the new Knights and Dames. The church has hosted many of the Order's events, such as the first Investiture ceremony of a Knight in 1920, the first meeting of the two Spanish Chapters in 1953, the solemn mass at the opening of the Order's first study days – which led to the creation of the Study

Center of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre – as well as the Investiture ceremonies of Knights and Dames in 1991, 2001, and that of 2008, presided over by the Grand Master of that time, Cardinal John Patrick Foley.

As an outward symbol of the new phase that had begun, the Royal Collegiate-Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre of Calatayud incorporated into its coat of arms and seal the patriarchal lily cross, red on a silver base, as insignia proclaiming it a Minor Basilica, as well as the stamping of the basilica umbrella in red and gold, half-open and surmounted by a globe and the cross. Attached to the coat of arms are the papal keys, bearing the motto “Mortem tuam annuntiamus et tuam resurrectionem confitemur”, which masterfully summarizes the rich and centuries-old spiritual and artistic tradition of which the new Basilica of Calatayud is the depository and which it will continue to hand down as a testimony to the faith we profess.

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**Lieutenancy for Eastern Spain**

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