

PILGRIM'S GUIDE

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SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS

MALAYALAM

ENGLISH

FAÇADE

Dressed in pristine white, the façade of Shrine Basilica is dominated by the soaring belfries at the entrance, pointed arches, external buttressing, along with elongated finials, pinnacles, intricate spires and ornate decorations. The 146 ft. (45 m.) tall twin front towers with the belfries, and the 260 ft. (79 m.) tall Steeple (Bible Tower) behind makes the church the third tallest in Asia. The front façade on the western side, which forms the main entrance to the Church, is flanked by twin tall towers and rises from a stately flight of steps. The twin front belfries are supported and divided vertically by narrow buttresses. It rises in three levels – the elaborate entry portals on the ground level, a large rose window above them and the top level with pointed gable walls. Resting within the decorative gable at the centre, is the statue of Our Lady of Dolours which is visible to many coming from far and wide. A large stone cross finial stands atop the gable.





INTERIOR

The church incorporates a masonry building style characterized by vaulted spaces with overlaid tracery to break up the large expanse of walls. The entrance hall or narthex opens into the Haikkala (where the people stand) of the church. The double storied aisles all along the nave and the transepts are laid out according to a conventional cathedral plan i.e. cruciform in shape with a dome at the crossing. The ground floor prayer hall area and the balcony inside in the conventional cruciform shape is 390 ft. long and 60 ft. wide. The total carpet area of the Church is 25,000 sq. ft. The spiral staircases on all the four sides takes us to the large balcony on the first floor supported by 32 huge stone pillars decoratively covered with marble chips.





MAIN ALTAR

Moving inside the church through the massive main doors, the eye is drawn forward, along the length of the nave, toward the elevated altar and the white pinnacles of the High Altar Screen. Behind the main altar stands tall the awe-inspiring reredos (the altar piece) which richly reflects the beauty of the Gothic style seen throughout the church building. The focal point of the altar piece is the colossal statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the centre, cradling the mortal body of Jesus Christ after his descent from the Cross. Behind Our Lady stands a 12 ft. high cross draped in white cloth symbolizing the resurrection of Jesus from death. At this higher level, on the left to the Statue of Our Lady is the stature of St. Raphael and to the right stands the statue of Archangel St. Michael. The composition draws the eye upwards towards the vaulted ceiling, indicating the path to heavenly happiness, with inscriptions and images of angels in an intense golden background. The indirect lighting used on the altar piece and all along the church interior adds to its ethereal feel and accentuates the ornamentation thus drawing one's attention to the grandeur of the space.





THRONE USED BY ST. JOHN PAUL II

The throne, the Pope John Paul II used when he visited Kerala was from this Basilica. On February 7, 1986, he arrived in Kerala. The historic reception awarded to His Holiness in the environs of this parish is a memorable event. On this blessed occasion, the Pope sat on the throne from this basilica. This relic has now been placed in the northwest corner of the main altar as a sign of respect and remembrance of the Pope's visit.





BEMA USED BY ST. JOHN PAUL II

The bema placed on the main altar of the church was used by the Pope St John Paul II. In 1986 when he visited Kerala, Thekinkad Maidan, Thrissur was the place of venue for his first public event. Lakhs of people attended the event in the scorching sun to hear him preach the Word of God. The bema used on this occasion was brought to this church. This bema (lectern) has been placed on the main altar of the church in his remembrance.



BIBLE TOWER

The Bible Tower is the tallest church tower in India and the third tallest in Asia, standing at a height of approximately 260 feet. On the 7th of January 2004, Cardinal Davudmosa I blessed and inaugurated the Bible Tower. On 3rd December 2006, Lopez Quintana opened a new chapter in the history of the city of Thrissur by dedicating the Bible Tower to the people of God. Bible Tower is packed with many features. It is worth mentioning that it is the viewpoint to enjoy the sight of the city of Thrissur. For this purpose, a space of about 5.5 meters in length and 1.5 meters in width has been prepared for the visitors in four parts. In this tower, different scenes from the Bible and the Kerala history are depicted. Above the viewpoint is the Old Testament, at the bottom is the New Testament, and in the final section is the history of the Church of Kerala. Major events in the life of Jesus are depicted in wood, glass, metal, and oil paint. The activities of the apostles are depicted in terracotta and the apostolic work of Thomas in the mural. Apart from this, pictures of the life of Jesus have been accepted and exhibited from artists who have received national awards. On the 20th floor we can see a very ancient collection of Bibles in Italian, Spanish, Croatian, Greek and many other languages. Introducing Jesus and the Bible to the world through art forms, Bible Tower is becoming a major spiritual tourist spot in Thrissur city.





PERPETUAL ADORATION CENTRE

It was Cardinal Lourdes Swamy who proposed the idea of having a daily worship centre in the city as a memorial to the centenary of Thrissur Archdiocese. Following this, on 23rd August 1987, the Perpetual Adoration Centre was established on 23rd August 1987 with a temporary system in the southern part of the Basilica as a pilgrimage centre directly under the Archdiocese by order of Mar Joseph Kundukulam. Later, the part of the huge sacristy behind the church was changed to the Adoration Centre and came to a permanent system. On April 23, 1989, Mar Joseph Kundukulam performed the blessing of the Perpetual Adoration Centre. The constitution states the purpose of this Adoration Centre as follows: "The 'Perpetual Adoration Centre' or 'House of Worship' is the centre of worship established in the Basilica Church under the direct administration of the Archdiocese of Thrissur. The aim of this centre is to help people find solace, peace and hope in the God of Mercy who is the One who labours and carries burdens. Also, the centre takes the initiative to promote devotion to Mary and the sacrament of reconciliation." Thousands flock here every day to worship and meditate on the Lord of Divine Mercy in a silent atmosphere that makes this purpose meaningful.





DOME

A gigantic dome rests on four spectacular pillars just above the chancel that houses the main altar. The triangular segments of the pendentives are vividly decorated and illustrate the four evangelists with their attributes. The inner side of the dome is beautifully adorned with a vivid display of mural paintings depicting the sorrows of Our Lady. The vibrant colours with imprints, exquisite detailing, outlining and gold leafed gilding all along the dome and the central supporting columns uplifts the grandeur of the main altar area.



ARTWORKS

At Shrine Basilica, we can see a wide array of art forms from mural paintings and relief works to a variety of gilded dome murals. As one enters the church, overhead we have a visual treat with the breathtaking mural painting of the holy trinity. The large window openings of the aisles along the nave are masked with low relief sculptures which illustrate the 14 Stations of the Cross that depict Jesus' journey to Calvary for crucifixion. Standing 12 ft. high and 6 ft. wide, these impressive relief artworks use fiberglass casting over clay moulds to achieve perfection. On either side walls of the chancel and facing away from the altar, we can see 60 ft. high wall murals - on the right, depicting the assumption of Mother Mary to Heaven and on the left, the multiplication of loaves and fishes by Jesus. These oil paintings are sublime and vibrant portrayals executed with clarity and in bright colours. Vaulted ceilings over the side altars are similarly treated with dramatic portrayals of scenes of the life of saints they house, and the symbols & signs associated with them. The most breathtaking of all are the wide array of gilded dome murals that are housed within the



massive dome at the centre of the church. Imprints along with gold-leafed detailing and outlining on the enormous central pillars and all along the church interiors add to the overall visual appeal of Shrine Basilica.



REPLICA OF THE STATUE OF PIETA

The statue of Pieta in the Basilica placed on the right side (when we face the altar) of the altar is the replica of Michelangelo's Carrara marble sculpture representing the sixth sorrow of the Blessed virgin Mary. The original sculpture is a key work of this Italian renaissance artist, which was now enshrined within Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican City. The sculpture captures the moment when Jesus was taken down from the cross and given to his mother Mary at Mount Golgotha. The Italian word "Pieta" means "pity" or "compassion".





STATUE OF INFANT JESUS

On 1st May 1999, the one-piece carved statue of Infant Jesus in the south wing of the Basilica was blessed by the then archbishop of Trichur, Mar Jacob Thunkuzhi. The three gifts that Jesus gave to mankind are symbolically depicted in the chains around His neck: the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, and the Heart of the Holy Mother with her seven sorrows. The globe at Infant Jesus' feet shows that He is the Lord of the world. The crown, mantle and the Holy Scripture respectively indicate that He is the King, the Priest, and the Prophet. The right blessing hand indicates the blessing of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (indicated by the three fingers) through the Son, Jesus.



OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL: REPRESENTATION OF THE EVENT

The representation of Holy Mary's apparition to St. Simon Stock is located in the south wing of the Basilica, near the Statue of Infant Jesus. According to the traditional accounts, in the middle of the 13th century, the Blessed Virgin appeared at Cambridge to Simon Stock, who was the prior general of the Carmelite order. Holy Mary appeared to him holding the scapular in her hand. She promised Simon Stock that those who wear the scapular would have Her protection. Wearing the scapular is a devotion signifying the wearer's consecration to Mary.





RELIQUIAE OF SAINTS

Reliquiae is the material remains of a saint after his or her death, as well as objects sanctified by contact with his or her body. Inside the Basilica there are two grand collections of reliquiae, each containing the reliquiae of 75 saints (total 150). These collections are situated in the two wings of the Basilica on the west-side wall. They are protected with locked glasses. In addition to these two collections, reliquiae of different saints are kept for veneration in the small chapels and the side altars.



CHAPELS AND SIDE ALTARS

The basilica has four chapels and ten side altars. The Calvary Chapel is located on the north side of the altar in the main wing of the church, while the “Pieta” Chapel is located on the south side of the altar. In the narthex, the chapel of St. Vincent de Paul is situated on the north side, and the chapel of St. Francis of Assisi is located on the south end. The basilica’s eastern wall houses ten side altars in its two side wings. The north wing of the basilica features the Altar of St. Francis Xavier, the Altar of St. Therese of Lisieux, the Altar of St. Thomas the Apostle, the Altar of Christ the King, and the Altar of the Holy Family. On the other hand, the south wing of the basilica houses the Altar of St. George, the Altar of St. Joseph, the Altar of St. Antony, the Altar of St. Sebastian, and the Altar of St. Maria Goretti.



BISHOP MAR FRANCIS VAZHAPPILY'S CRYPT

Bishop Mar Francis Vazhapilli's crypt is located under the main altar of the Basilica of Our Lady of Dolours, which is the result of his hard work. He was the first bishop of the Eparchy of Trichur and passed away in a car accident on May 12, 1942. The way to the tomb is arranged from the inside of the Perpetual Adoration Centre of the basilica to the left side and goes down to the lower chamber. There his mortal body rests amidst the Bible verses and ancient terracotta images of the Lord's resurrection and ascension. Unfortunately, public access to the crypt is not possible now. (In 1999 a part of his mortal remains was brought to Lourde's Metropolitan Cathedral and interred in its crypt.)





STONE COLUMNS

A notable feature of Shrine Basilica is the colonnades of hefty stone pillars that reach towards the ceiling. These are actually granite pillars covered in chips. Each pillar is made of two B-shaped stone columns facing each other giving an appearance of a cluster of slender columns which rise up and curve at the top to form ribbed vaults. These stone pillars are approx. 70ft high and have a glazed mosaic finish adding to its grandeur.



GALLERY (BALCONY)

Shrine Basilica has two levels of arched openings along its length: the high arches of the main arcade, and the gallery-like openings at the upper level. The arches of the main arcade carry a tribute gallery (balcony) directly above them which overlooks into the nave below. The gallery at the upper level, runs all along the nave and transepts and supports a smaller vaulted ceiling. Large windows with pointed arches, blind tracery and ornate decorations decorate the external walls of the gallery bringing more light into the church.



MUSIC BELLS

The bell tower of the Basilica of Our Lady of Dolours is home to eight musical bells that were imported from Germany. These bells are a special attraction of the basilica and are known for their beautiful sound. These bells can be used to produce seven musical notes. They are manually played to create beautiful music at fixed moments during the morning, noon, and evening hours.



SHANTHI DHARA



Based on "The Canticle of the Sun", a hymn composed by St. Francis of Assisi, a meditation centre named SHANTI DHARA" for people of all religions was inaugurated at Bible tower square, by Mar Bosco Puthoor, on August 30, 2015. A lot of people with no boundaries of religion visit SHANTHI DHARA to relax their minds in the peaceful and positive atmosphere. Infront of the SHANTHI DHARA stands a model of the stage (Papal Rostrum) used by the Pope St. John Paul II to address the people when he visited Thrissur in 1986.



CONFESSION CENTRE

Being the prominent Marian pilgrimage centre in Thrissur, the Basilica of Our Lady of Dolours offers confession facilities to thousands of pilgrims. Due to the large number of believers who come for confession, confessionals have been prepared in the hall named BASILICA SILVER JUBILEE CENTRE FOR CONFESSION on the south side of the church. Confession facilities are available here from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm and from 2:30 pm to 5:00 pm on all days except Sundays.



GROTTO OF OUR LADY OF DOLOURS

Grotto of Our Lady of Dolours is situated outside the Basilica in the north-west side of the compound (near to the main gate). Blessed Mother Mary with seven swords (seven sorrows) piercing her heart is portrayed in this grotto. Virgin Mary is in mournful state with tears, bleeding in her heart. Outdoor candle cradles are kept next to the grotto where



candles can be lit (This is the only place in the Basilica where it is allowed to light the candle).



BASILICA BOOK CENTRE

Ahead of the 10th anniversary celebrations of the Perpetual Adoration Centre, the plan for the development of the Basilica Pilgrimage Centre was presented at a meeting held at the Archbishop's House on 23 June 1997. Accordingly, it was decided that steps should be taken to make available devotional materials, books, etc. in connection with the basilica. The Basilica Book Centre was opened on 14th August 1997 in the lower room of the presbytery after making necessary arrangements. The administration of this centre is carried out by a committee led by the Assistant Vicar of the Basilica.





BASILICA

St. Thomas, one of the twelve chosen Disciples of Christ and the Apostle of India who sowed the seeds of Christianity in India, set foot at Cranganore (Kodungallur) in 52 AD.

CONTACT

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ACCOUNT DETAILS

Bank : FEDERAL BANK

A/c. Name : Dolours Basilica Charity Fest

A/c. No : 13680200010357

Branch : Thrissur City

IFSC : FDRL0001368

A/c. Type : Current