



BASILICA of VIRGEN del CAMINO

Patron Saint of León

Apparition of the Virgin
and Construction of the original Shrine: 1505
Construction of the present Shrine: 1961
(Since 2009: Minor Basilica)

Benefactors: D. Pablo Díez
Dña. Rosario Guerrero
Architect: Fr. Francisco Coello, O.P.
Sculptor: José María Subirachs

Stained-glass windows: Facade, Rafols Casamada
Inside, Fr. Domingo Iturgáiz, O.P.

The Shepherd's Door: *(The furthest external door of the church, near the main road).* It tells the story of the original Shrine; the allegory of the shepherd, with his sling and stone.

Facade of the present Shrine: It represents the mysteries of the Rosary in bronze. The joyful mysteries on the door, the glorious mysteries in the sculptural statues, and the sorrowful mysteries in the stained-glass windows of the Guadalupe Chapel.

Main door: Above, on the left, the Annunciation, with the Virgin seated; above her, the Holy Spirit, and opposite the words of the Angel's greeting. The lower section depicts the Visitation; the youthful Mary and opposite, Elizabeth, bent over because of her age and pregnancy. In the center, on the right, is the Nativity. And below, the Presentation in the Temple. Also, on the right, the child Jesus, lost in the Temple.

Main Entrance: The Fish, first Christians' symbol.

Large Statues (from left to right):

Matthias: The disciple who was chosen to take the place of Judas caresses in his hands a stone, the instrument of his martyrdom. His neck shows that he was beheaded after death.

Philip: Holding a cross to his chest, suggesting his crucifixion. In his hand he holds some fishes, given to Christ by him on the miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand.

Matthew: Apostle and Evangelist. He is depicted holding the Gospels showing the family line of Christ.

Thomas: Looking up to heaven as a sign of his incredulity, before placing his fingers in the wounds of Christ. He holds in his hands a spear, symbol of his subsequent unshakable faith.

James, the Great: Patron Saint of Spain and focus of pilgrimages his symbol, the shell, figures on his robe and with his left hand he shows the pilgrim the way to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia.

John: The young apostle standing by the Virgin with the chalice in his hands.

Mary: After the Assumption and Coronation in heaven. Above her head, a crown, and above each of the apostles the tongues of fire of Pentecost.

Peter: Giving the papal blessing. In his left hand a large key and at his feet, an inverted cross. On his left knee the ear he cut from Malchus.

Andrew: His arms in the form of a cross on which he was crucified.

Bartholomew: In his left hand, a knife, the instrument of his death.

James the Less: Bishop of Jerusalem, in his left hand a staff and in his right hand a miter. And, on his chest, the pectoral cross.

Judas Thaddeus: In his left hand his canonical letter and in his right hand, the ax with which he was beheaded.

Simon: Leaning against the saw with which he was martyred.

Inside of the church:

Chapel of the Virgin of Guadalupe: *(On the left as you enter).* A stained-glass window by Rafols Casamada, representing the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary: a cross, a crown of thorns and three nails.

Stained-glass window of the facade: *(Seen from the altar rail looking back),* also by Rafols Casamada, representing a large white cross, wrapped in a net and symbolizing Christ as the Fisher of the Apostles.

Rectangular side windows: The colors of these windows change from green to white, from white to yellow and from yellow to red as they approach the main altar, symbolizing the gradual growth towards perfection in the souls of the congregation receiving communion.

The Pulpit of the Evangelists: *(On the left of the altar).* Above left, the head of an ox, symbol of St. Luke. Above right, the head of a lion, symbol of St. Mark. Below left, the gospel of St. John and below right, a man with the wings of an angel and book on his knees: St. Matthew.

The Pulpit of the Commandments: On the left, three positive commandments referring to God in high relief. And, on the right, the remaining seven negative commandments in low relief.

The statue of the Virgin: 1505-1512. Unknown author.

The Baroque Altarpiece: 1730. By Pedro and Antonio de Valladolid.

The Christ in the "Camarín": *(Chapel behind the main altar).* Inspired by Psalm 21. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?... But I am a worm, and no man; scammed by men, and despised by the people. Ali who see me mock at me, they make mouths at me, they wag their heads".

Stained glass windows in the "Camarín": *(Fr. Domingo Iturgáiz, O.P.)* Representing the origins of the shrine: The shepherd, with his sling, the sheep and the large stone beside the shrine.

Votive Offerings Room: *(Stained-glass windows by Fr. Domingo Iturgáiz, O.P., depicting the miracles of the Virgin).* A shell room off the chapel used to house offerings to the Virgin.

The Arch of the Moor: An explanation of the Arch of the Moor is given on parchment. The chains relating to the story are inside the Arch (1522).

The other side door is dedicated to St. Froilán, patron saint of the province of León. The external side door, opposite the bell tower, tells the story of St. Paul.

The Bell Tower: The Bell tower represents the last Station of the Cross and measures 53 meters. At its base is a large stone symbolizing Christ's tomb. His sacred wounds, feet, hands and face are carved on the surface. This stone sometimes serves as an altar on important occasions when Mass is celebrated outside to accommodate congregations of as many as fifty thousand people.