



The shrine had comprised for a long time an orphanage, and a boarding school. Today it is a guest house and a retreat center for the faithful and the pilgrims visiting the Holy Land.



There are 60 beds in rooms set for 2, 3 and 5 persons. The shrine and the guest house are under the care of the sisters of St. Dorothy of the Two Sacred Hearts.



sized copies have been printed so far, with the prayer to our Queen of Palestine at the back. In the original painting, Virgin Mary appears in her glory, surrounded by angels and extending her hand blessing Palestine and the Holy Land. The viewer can also see two angels presenting to the Virgin royal badges: the crown, the rosary and the king's mace. At her feet, the Mediterranean sea, the city of Haifa and then the city of Jerusalem surrounded by a series of mountains and hills. The most splendid in the painting is the graceful meek face of the Virgin and her tender look while stretching her hand in a motherly compassion to protect her native land. This picture became a model for a huge bronze status 6m long, rising over the façade of the shrine.

Rafat Shrine

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The Shrine of Our Lady "Queen of Palestine" and the Holy Land at Rafat





The shrine is located at 35 kms from Jerusalem, midway between Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv near the town of Beit Shemesh. Nearby are Kibbutz Zora which was mentioned in the Bible as the birthplace of Samson, Latroun Trappist Convent, Beit Jimal Salesian Convent, and another monastery for Nuns and Monks living in reclusion known as the Bethlehem Congregation. In the same area, is situated the Benedictins' Convent of Abu Ghosh, one of the three places believed to be the site where Jesus met the Disciples of Emmaus after his resurrection. The other two sites are Emmaus near Latroun and the Franciscans' Convent of Al-Qubeibeh, in the Ramallah district.

The Shrine was established by Patriarch Louis Barlasina, who created in 1927 a Feast, known as the Feast of our Lady of Palestine, amid the difficult circumstances the Holy Land was going through, appealing for the protection of our Lady, the Virgin Mary," the Lady of Palestine" on her earthly home. It was decided to celebrate this Feast on the Sunday that follows the 25th of October of each year.

Rome approved the Feast in 1933 and regarded it as "a beseech to request a special protection from our Lady to the land where she was born." Patriarch Barlasina built the church called "our Lady of Palestine." For this purpose, he asked for the help of the Benedictin monk and architect, Don Maurizio Gisler, who was living in the Dormition Abbey, on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. He asked him to draw the plan for the



convent and the church. So, he placed the church in the center of the complex which includes the school, Orphanage and Convent. The church was north-south situated. On the façade of the Church, he wrote in Latin "Reginae Palestinae", i.e. to the

Queen of Palestine. The visitor coming from a far distance will see an elevated statue of Our Lady, opening her hands and blessing her earthly home.

The Patriarch wanted to decorate the roof and the walls of the church with the first words of "Hail Mary", in as many languages of the world as possible. He asked the Bishops around the world to provide him with the official translation of that prayer. By doing this, the Patriarch wanted the peoples of the world to participate in honoring "the Queen of all Peoples" and "the most outstanding daughter of the church".



The Patriarch received 404 translations and chose 280 to decorate the roof and the walls of the church. The Jerusalemite artist, Mubarak Sa'ad, painted angels carrying banners on which the first words of the angel are written. Whereas, the full texts of the prayer were printed separately in Milan by the knights of the Holy Sepulcher in an exceptional book.

Our Lady of Palestine has an original beautiful oil painting 4m X 3.50m hung to the left of the main altar inside the church. Thousands of small