



attributed to St. Luke, the apostle and evangelist. Queen St. Helena and her son, the Emperor St. Constantine, brought the image to Rome from the Holy Land. Throughout the centuries, this picture has gained special devotion from many popes and peoples. The image has been claimed to be miraculous at times. Numerous healings and monumental deliverances from great oppressors have occurred in connection with its veneration or solemn processions. Copies of the *Salus Populi Romani* have, also, been believed to be miraculous.

The Basilica of St. Mary Major continues to celebrate the Divine Motherhood of Mary since the Council of Ephesus in 432 AD. At the Council of Ephesus, Mary was officially declared the, "Theotokos", or the Mother of God. It is because of its size and splendor that the church was named "St. Mary Major" and the basilica is adorned with some of Rome's finest mosaics and artwork.



During the feast day Mass on August 5<sup>th</sup> every year, beautiful and fresh white rose petals fall from the basilica's ceiling in honor of Our Blessed Mother. The white petals shower the sanctuary in remembrance of that miraculous snowfall that graced the future site of Our Lady's church on the Esquiline Hill.

\*(excerpted from: [www.marysource.com](http://www.marysource.com))

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## *Dedication of the Church of Our Lady of the Snows*

**Feast Day: August 5**



**Basilica of St. Mary Major  
Rome**

## Our Lady of Snow

\*Could it have snowed one hot summer night in August, in Rome, Italy? The pope, his entourage, and several citizens of Rome are said to have witnessed an amazing and miraculous snowfall in the early morning of August 5, 352 AD. The story of Our Lady of the Snow could be part legend, but it is much truth. Our Lady of the Snow is truly a feast day that commemorates the dedication of the Church of St. Mary Major (Santa Maria Maggiore) on the Esquiline Hill of Rome. In the fourteenth century, it was extended to all the churches of Rome and later made a universal feast by Pope Pius V.

An old Roman legend says that during the pontificate of Liberius (352-356), an aging aristocrat of the city named, John, and his wife, who were childless prayed to the Blessed Virgin Mary. They petitioned that she might make an heir known to them, someone to whom they could will all their possessions. On the night of August 4-5, they were blessed with a dream in which Our Lady appeared to them. She asked if they would build a church in her honor, on the Esquiline Hill, one of the seven hills of Rome. They would find the exact spot for its location on the hill the next morning, and it would be outlined in snow.

That same night the pope, Pope Liberius, was also visited by

Our Blessed Mother in a dream directing him to the same location on the Esquiline Hill. In the morning, John and his wife hurried to the site, as Pope Liberius arrived in solemn procession. Together, and with many others who followed, they beheld a large area marked by freshly fallen, thick snow! This was a very unusual occurrence on a warm August day. Upon hearing of our Lady's request, some of the men immediately staked off the area. A basilica was completed within two year's time. Pope Liberius consecrated it and Pope Sixtus III (432-442) included an eight-lined dedicatory inscription to Our Lady. But no mention of any alleged apparition was documented. Although the legend remained, and was for some time included in the office of the Breviary, it was later struck from the office in 1741.

Pope Clement VIII raised the feast of Our Lady of the Snow from a feast of double rite to double major. Reading of the alleged miracle is now included in the 'double major' feast day Mass every August 5<sup>th</sup>.

The basilica of St. Mary Major is the first and most important church in the Eternal City dedicated to Our lady. It is sometimes referred to as the basilica Liberius, after the pope who consecrated it. The church has also been called "Our Lady of the Snow" in commemoration of the miraculous snowfall in 352.

Within the Basilica, a great Marian treasure is housed -- a painting of the Madonna and Child known as the "*Salus Populi Romani* (The Protectress of the People of Rome),