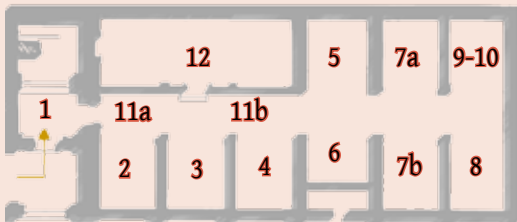


# The Museum of the Christian Origins

Guide in ENGLISH

STUDIUM BIBLICUM FRANCISCANUM  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

Plan  
your  
visit



The Museum belongs to the Custody of the Holy Land, and was first opened in 1902 in the Monastery of St. Saviour's (New Gate). After the foundation of the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum* in 1924, it was relocated in the Flagellation Monastery and has been gradually enlarged mostly with finds coming from regular excavations conducted in many of the Holy Places by Franciscan archaeologists.

Open Tuesday to Saturday, 9-13 / 14-16 (tel. 6270456/444)



## 1. The Entrance

In the Museum's entrance lobby, are Sculptured marble from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and elsewhere. In the centre of the room, stands a medieval mystical lamb found in the area of the Hospital that formerly stood in front of the Holy Sepulchre.

On the left wall, along with some ancient masonry, a collection of funeral busts and sculptures from Palmira in the Syrian desert, is on display. The sculptures are accompanied by three fragments of a 3rd cent. AD mosaic floor found at Balqis in Turkey, on which three Roman Provinces (GERMANIA, AFRICA and MAURITANIA) are personified.



## 2. Nazareth

The first room is dedicated to the excavations at Nazareth directed by Fr. Prosper Viaud in 1909 and by Fr. Bellarmino Bagatti in 1956-1970. On the wall to the right, are copies of five magnificent capitals discovered by Fr. Viaud in a grotto near the northern wall of the basilica. On the floor, two original capitals found in recent excavations and other small fragments. Also on display there are pottery vessels from the Late Bronze Age (14th-13th c.BC); from the Early Iron Age (10th-9th c.BC); Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and Arabic pottery (3rd c.BC-12th c.AD); along with coloured plaster from the walls of the pre-Byzantine shrine.



## 3. Capharnaum

Excavations at Capharnaum, were conducted by Fr. Gaudentius Orfali in 1921, then by Fr. Virgilius Corbo and Stanislao Loffreda between 1968 and

2003. In this room are preserved, among the findings of the greatest importance, those related to the house of St. Peter. The two plastic models afford an idea of the ancient village.

Special note should be taken of the graffiti on the coloured plaster from the domus-ecclesia, and also of the pottery vessels found in the sacred house: three small oil lamps, and a cooking pot.

A special section is assigned to the excavations conducted by Frs. V. Corbo and S. Loffreda from 1971 to 1976 at Magdala. The digs have unearthed a Byzantine monastery, a square plaza with private and public buildings on the side of the main road.



#### **4. Dominus Flevit**

The excavations at Dominus Flevit, on the western slope of the Mount of Olives, were directed by Fr. Bellarmino Bagatti from 1953 to 1955. On the right wall there is an exhibit of the rich funeral deposit found in two Jebusite tombs (1500-1400 BC.). The exhibits are excellent examples of the culture of the pre-Davidic inhabitants of Jerusalem, and their commercial relations with the outside world.

On the room's left wall, are Jewish ossuaries of the Roman period with names scratched or traced in charcoal on their walls. Along with the familiar Gospel name like Jesus, Mary, Martha, Zachary, Shimon, Salome, John etc., there is a "Constantinian" monogram traced in charcoal, and other faith related symbols.

In the showcases of the central wall there are golden jewellery, glass vessels and pottery from the Roman-Byzantine necropolis.

Placed at the entrance of the room is a Herodian period sarcophagus, one of the most beautiful yet discovered in Jerusalem, its sides and cover decorated with geometric and floral patterns.



## 5. Mount of Olives

Excavations on the Mount of Olives include the basilica of Gethsemani, the Grotto of the Apostles, the Tomb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the sanctuary of the Ascension, Bethfage and Bethany.

The central wall is occupied by findings from Bethany, the village of Martha, Mary and their brother Lazarus. The excavations have proved that the village dates back at least to the Persian period (5th c.BC), although Middle Bronze Age period tombs have been found.

In the centre of this room there is a fragment of a tempera, with the head of an angel, from the Crusader basilica at Gethsemani.



## 6. Herodion - Machaerus

The left wall is dedicated to the excavations at the Herodion fortress near Bethlehem directed by Fr. V. Corbo in 1962-1967. Among the small finds there are Greek and Hebrew ostraka, one with a Hebrew alphabet. On the right wall are the findings of the Machaerus fortress in Peraea (excavations by Fr. V. Corbo, 1978-1981). A capital from Herodion is placed at the room's entrance.

In the showcases on the front wall there are Herodian and Roman coins, two small fragments of the Qumran scrolls, a papyrus from Wadi Murabba'at, an ink-pot of the first century AD, and some *Legio decima* stamped tiles.



## 7. Pottery

One room of the Museum is devoted to a systematic chronological display of ancient, local pottery from the third millennium BC to the Ayyubid Islamic pottery of the 13th century AD. In the center there is a chronologically ordered exhibition of oil lamps.

In the opposite room, among the Byzantine artifacts, of particular interest is a type of lamp, studied by Fr. Stanislaw Loffreda, with the Greek inscription “The light of Christ shines to everyone”, and other smaller oil-lamps bearing a variety of symbols relative to the Christian faith. Many typical vases from the times of Jesus (1st cent. AD) are also on display there. In the centre, liturgical implements made of bronze: censers, lampstands, etc. (5th-6th cent. AD).



## 8. Mount Nebo

At the Memorial of Moses (Siyagha), the excavations were directed by Fr. S. Saller (1933-1937), Fr. V. Corbo (1963-1970) and Fr. M. Piccirillo (1976-2008). The exhibition on the left wall shows pottery of different periods, and fragments of a Samaritan inscription. The wall on the right is dedicated to the town of Nebo, Khirbet el-Mukhayyat, with Bizantine mosaics and some Iron Age finds.

On the front wall there is on exhibit a rich collection of pottery vessels found in tombs at Bab ed-Dhra', on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, dating back to the third millennium BC. Some vessels are unique with painted or incised decoration.

At the room's entrance there is a beautiful Byzantine capital with a cross and doves, found in the Memorial of Moses.

## 9. Monastic Movement

The findings come from monasteries excavated by Fr. V. Corbo in the area of Bethlehem, at Siyar al-Ghanam, Khirbet Makhrum, Khirbet Juhdom and Bir el-Qutt. Displayed on the front wall there is a mosaic inscription from Bir el-Qutt, of great historical value to the antiquity of the Georgian language. A small funerary stele, pertaining to a monk named Elias, comes from Khirbet Juhdom.



## 10. The Egyptian and Kloetzli collections

The Egyptian collection was acquired in Alexandria, Egypt, by Bro. Cleophas Steinhauer in the years preceding World War I. It includes miscellaneous objects from Pharaonic to Coptic periods, funerary masks, sarcophagi fragments, epigraphs, stelae, etc. Among minor objects, some being gifts offered by generous benefactors, one can find a fairly good collection gathered by the late Fr. Godfrey Kloetzli († 1992). The best part of his vast collection is exhibited: You can find ancient keys, fish-hooks, crosses, lamps, etc.



## 11. Galilee and Judea

A section of the Museum is dedicated to the excavations undertaken in different localities of Galilee, in Judea and in the neighbourhoods of Jerusalem.

The reconstruction of Mount Tabor's Basilica of the Transfiguration made possible to examine the remains of the previous Byzantine and Crusader Churches, as well as the Ayyubite Islamic fortress which occupied the top of the mountain from 1212 to 1219 AD.

The grottos of St. Jerome, beneath the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem, and an area by the College of Terra Santa, were excavated in 1963-64, with Iron Age remains (8th cent. BC).

Other objects come from the sanctuaries of the Visitation and St. John's at Ain Karim, Emmaus (el-Qubeibeh), the Holy Sepulchre Basilica, and the latin cemeteries on the southern slope of Mount Sion. Of special interest are the terracotta ampullae (small flask) with a representation of the Cross on the rock of Calvary.



## 12. The Large Hall

*Model of the Holy Sepulchre.* During the 17th century a number of similar devotional objects were produced by craftsmen in Bethlehem and sold to western pilgrims as souvenirs of their pilgrimage. The craftsmen

based their work on the detailed plans of the sacred edifice drawn by the Franciscan Architect Fr. Bernardino Amico.

*Picture-gallery.* The seven panels were donated by Prof. Johann Nepomuk Sepp of Munich in 1861 to the chapel of St. Peter of Tiberias. The altarpiece is attributed to Friedrich Pacher. We have St. Peter walking on the water, the Conversion of Saul, Ananias Healing Saul, the Liberation of St. Peter, the Parting of the Apostles, the Martyrdom of St. Peter and the Martyrdom of St. Paul.

*The Pharmacy of St. Saviour's.* The carefully preserved array of apothecary jugs and jars was commissioned by the Custody of the Holy Land to several firms in Savona, near Genoa in Italy, the collection was embellished by other pieces coming from Venice. The pots are dated from the middle of the 17th cent. up to the end of the 18th century. On the face of the jugs, along with the name of the drug and decorations, are painted the coats of arms of the Custody of the Holy Land and of the donors: a red cross points to Genoa and a white one to the Duke of Savoie, while the lion represents the city of Venice.

*The Treasure of Bethlehem.* On the western wall visitors will find the medieval liturgical objects of the Basilica of the Nativity found in Bethlehem on two different occasions: in 1863 a crosier, candlesticks, and two copper basins were found and in 1906, 13 bells and 250 copper organ pipes were also discovered. The life of St. Thomas

is narrated on the two copper basins. The bells form part of two carillon sets which were played together with the organ (12th cent.).

*Bronze Objects.* A number of bronze objects of Roman and Byzantine manufacture are on display in a showcase on the south side: some incense shovels, a decorated lamp from Alexandria, a Byzantine censer found at Jericho, a plaque with St. George, and a gilded bronze crucifix of the Crusader period (12th cent. AD).

*Glassware.* The vessels were collected in the past in the Nazareth Museum and come from the necropolis of the cities of the Decapolis like Gadara, from Magdala on the shore of the sea of Galilee, or from other towns and villages of Galilee, like Seforis, Cana etc.

*Seals.* In a showcase in the centre of the northern hall there is a collection of seals from the Paleo-Babylonian and Persian periods along with Byzantine and Crusader bullae. A special group of stamps, with Christian signs, was employed for the making of bread.

*Mesopotamic Collection.* The small collection is made of 13 clay tablettes and a foundation cone in Sumerian script, a fragment of an Assyrian royal inscription from the walls of the Assurnasirpal II royal palace of Nimrud (883-859 B.C.), and 30 cylinder seals.

*Weights.* The weights in bronze, lead or glass, had different forms. They are square, round, in the forms of a small ball, an animal or a person, ordinarily with an inscription giving the exact weight. On the Byzantine weights a cross is added.

*Amulets.* Among the small devotional objects there is a gold ring with the Annunciation scene, some neck crosses in both bronze and stone, several copper amulets upon which an equestrian Solomon is depicted vanquishing the demon. There are also three lamels: one of them, made of gold, is from pagan origin, while the other two, both silver, have Aramaic inscriptions and symbols.