

# DISCOVERING SCALA SANTA



The “Saint” climbs up the Scala Santa steps on her knees - but it’s not the real Scala Santa! The scene of her great struggle is a post-production reconstruction. It is said that Christ went to Pontius Pilate by the Scala Santa, or holy stairway, made up of a single flight of steps. Even today, thousands of the faithful come to the Scala Santa to re-enact this stage of the Passion of Jesus.

Legend has it that Helena, the Emperor Constantine’s mother, brought the steps to Rome in 326 AD and installed them next to the Basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano, built by her son.

In 1589, Pope Sixtus V called on the architect, Domenico Fontana, to build a sanctuary to which the steps were transferred (the steps were installed from the top down in such a manner that the builders would not place their feet on the steps, which were only to be touched by the knees of the faithful). Sixtus V also commissioned the wall frescoes, which were executed by the many Sistine painters, supervised by Cesare Nebbia. The Scala thus joined the complex of the Sancta Sanctorum, which includes a number of chapels and cult objects, such as the image of the Most Holy Saviour (an example of the acheiropoeita, namely an icon not painted by the hand of a man).

*For visitors*

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