

The Rome Italy Temple Visitors' Center A Place of Learning, Peace and Contemplation

The Rome Italy Temple Visitors' Center of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints provides a multimedia experience complete with beautiful artwork and guided tours. It is a learning center, free to the public and open daily, for anyone who wants to know more about the temple and how it brings members of the Church closer to Jesus Christ.

Guests entering the Rome Temple Visitors' Center will immediately be drawn to a floor-to-ceiling, 5-panelled, stained-glass scene from the life of the Savior Jesus Christ. The art glass piece was created by Tom Holdman, who, along with his team of 25 artists, meticulously hand cut over 6,000 pieces of glass to give visitors a visual and spiritual experience with over 120 references to Christ's time on earth. It includes symbolism from every one of the Savior's parables in the New Testament.

The art glass also includes many elements from the Holy Land, including a shell from the sea of Galilee, salt from the Dead Sea and 2,000-year-old coins from the city of Jerusalem. These elements bring to life Christ's miracles, teachings and personal interactions with His followers. Holdman said, "What we are capturing is a moment of the Savior's earthly ministry. We want people to feel the moment of healing with an individual and illustrate a large portion of the New Testament."

As visitors continue around the rotunda of the building, they are greeted by a life-size Carrara marble statue of the resurrected Christ. Surrounding Him are His twelve apostles, also in Carrara marble, taken from the same quarry as Michelangelo's David in Tuscany. These statues are replicas of the Bertel Thorvaldsen statues from the Church of Our Lady in Denmark. The Church of Jesus Christ was granted special permission to digitally scan the statues and provide the scans to the Church of Our Lady to protect the work in case of damage and for future reproductions. The same statue of Christ is found in many other visitors' centers around the world, and the inscription on its base, "Come unto me," is central to their purpose, highlighting how belief in Christ can bring healing, peace and joy.

Behind the statue of Christ is a mural painted by artist Joseph Brickey, who took great care to ensure it would complement the statues. His scene includes light rays surrounding the Savior and olive and Cyprus trees to represent the Italian landscape. Brickey also painted 12 different types of lambs in the mural to represent the 12 tribes of the house of Israel. He said, "These lambs are encircled by the olive trees, which I hope will help visitors feel included as members of God's family."

Another compelling feature of the visitors' center is its multimedia experiences that explain some of the key doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ. For example, one of the central teachings of the Church is that families can be together forever and that this sacred union is made possible in holy temples. One video highlights a couple who tragically lost a child but has found peace in the knowledge that they will be with their little one again after this life because of sacred ordinances performed in the temple.

Explaining the purpose of the temple and its importance in the lives of Latter-day Saints is also a key message of the visitors' center. Although visitors will not be able to go inside the Rome Temple after it is dedicated, an exact model of the temple is on display at the center with cutouts to show the different rooms that are inside. Missionaries will also be on hand year-round to give tours and answer questions in a welcoming atmosphere.

Elder Brent H. Nielson, executive director of the Missionary Department, said, "All of the experiences we have at the visitors' center are designed to draw people's attention to the Savior, to invite their heart and their mind to be turned towards Him."