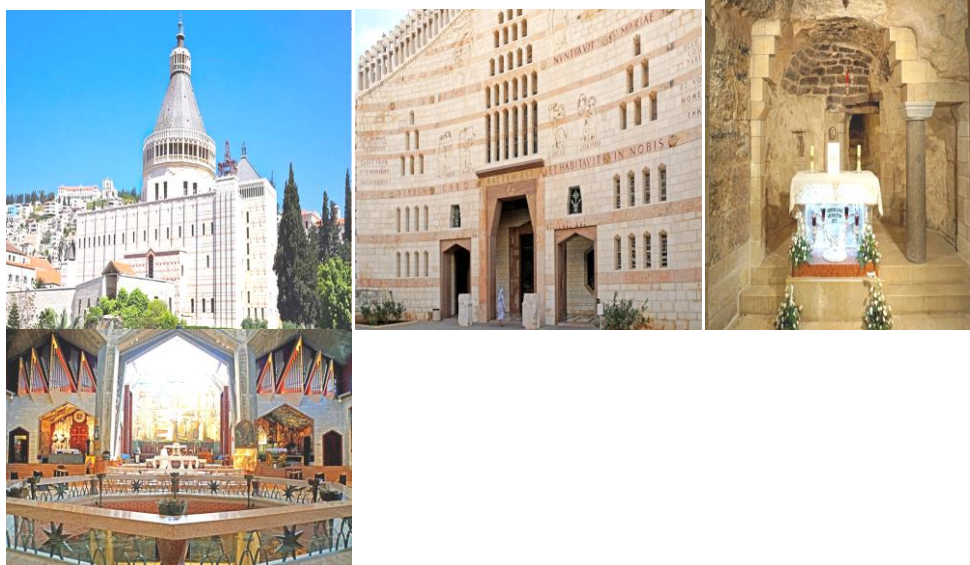


Church of the Annunciation, sometimes also referred to as the Basilica of the Annunciation, is a [Catholic Church](#) in [Nazareth](#), in northern [Israel](#). It was established over the site where the [Catholic](#) tradition holds to be the house of the [Virgin Mary](#), and where angel [Gabriel](#) appeared to her and announced that she would conceive and bear the [Son of God](#), [Jesus](#) – an event known as the [Annunciation](#).

The first shrine was probably built sometime in the middle of the 4th century comprising an altar in the cave in which Mary had lived, it was destroyed in the 7th century after the Muslim conquest of Palestine.

The second church was built over the ruins of the Byzantine era church during the [Crusades](#). The Crusader era church was never fully completed. In 1260, an army destroyed the church during their attack on Nazareth. A small number of Franciscans managed to stay in Nazareth until the fall of [Acre](#) in 1291. In the three centuries that followed, the Franciscans were in and out of Nazareth, depending on the local political situation, which was constantly in flux. Franciscan accounts of this period document their expulsion in 1363, their return in 1468 and a massacre of some of their members in 1542. Local Christian families with Franciscan support took care of the holy site even during this difficult period. The Franciscans were granted permission to return to Nazareth and the church ruins in 1620, at which time they constructed a small structure to enclose the holy grotto that is venerated as the house of Mary. In 1730, permission was granted for the construction of a new church, which became a central gathering place for Nazareth Latin community. The church was enlarged in 1877.



This 18th century altar is located on the bottom level of the Basilica of the Annunciation. Tradition holds that it contains the remains of Mary's childhood home and is the location where the annunciation took place. The altar's latin inscription reads, "Verbum Caro Hic Factum Est," which means, "here the word was made flesh (Jn. 1:14)." The stairs behind the altar lead to "Mary's kitchen" and a yard exit. The pillar to the right of the altar, most likely built around the 4th century, [represents](#) the location where the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary.