

Church of Panagia Pantanassa in Monastiraki, Athens



Panagia Pantanassa is one of the oldest churches in Athens located at one of the busiest spots in Athens, Monastiraki Square.

The church is referred to as a Big Monastery in a post Byzantine sigillum of 1678 and it is thus named during these years. Furthermore, in the same document it is mentioned that during the period of the Frankish rule it was annexed as a men's monastery to Kaisariani Monastery.



From 1690 onwards the church became a parish, same as the Kaisariani Monastery. From the revolution onwards, the church was no longer called Big Monastery but Mikromonastiro (Small Monastery) or Monastiraki. The monastery cells used to be in the location of today's Square, while the whole area was full of small shops, many of which can still be found in the neighbouring Pandrosos Street. The church is a barrel-vaulted basilica, namely a church type characteristic of the transition from the early Christian basilica to the cross-in-square church. In general, it signifies the transition from Late Antiquity to the Byzantine and Medieval World.

The wall paintings are more recent.

The present-day surviving church dates probably from the beginning of the 17th century and is built over an older monument, and it was the catholicon of a women's monastery. Initially it was called Mega Monastiri (Large Monastery), however, a few years later it declined and since 1821 the name Monastiraki prevailed and it was given to the wider area as well.

Nowadays, the church is lower than the ground level, due to the newer formation of the area around it. In its original form, however, it dominated this central area of the city.

The church of Pantanassa is a three-aisled basilica, whose middle aisle is roofed with a semi-circular vault, which on the east and west ends in conches with squinches. This way of roofing is characteristic of the Ottoman architecture and is

applied to mosques and secular buildings already from the 15th century, imitating the conches of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. The side aisles are roofed with cross-vaults.



For the construction of the walls, abundant material from ancient buildings was used. The interior of the church is decorated with more recent wall paintings, while significant portable icons survive as well.

Following the earthquake that shook Athens in 2019, there was damage to the church's bell tower.

The church of Panagia Pantanassa in Monastiraki celebrates on the 15th of August.

greekcitytimes.com