

MONASTERY OF SANTA MARIA DE LA REAL (PALMA)

ORIGINS OF THE MONASTERY

1

The Monastery of La Real, the only Cistercian monastery on Majorca, was erected here in 1266. It belonged to the Poblet Abbey (Tarragona) and became a very important place. Several alterations were made to the monastery in the 17th and 18th century. Then, after six centuries, the monks were forced to abandon permanently the monastery in 1835 due to the seizure being carried out by the Spanish Government at that time. The building was left in the hands of private owners for over half a century. Nevertheless, the church and several adjoining buildings remained in the hands of the Diocese of Majorca, as services kept being held at the monastic temple. In any case, a very substantial part of the artistic heritage of the monastery as well as the library and the archive were lost.

Finally, in 1897, the congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart was entrusted by the Bishop of Majorca Jacint Maria Cervera with the task of taking care of the Vicariate of La Real. The congregation promoted significant improvements to the building and ended up acquiring the whole property in different stages throughout the years. It still runs the monastery and the parish church, which is visited by the faithful from the nearby Secar de la Real neighbourhood.



A "ROYAL" NAME?

3

The origin of the name *La Real* ("the Royal") has been the subject of discussion for many years now. According to historians, the name could derive from the camp that King James I the Conqueror set up here. Another theory links the origin of this place name to a garden that used to belong to the Moslem governor and was located on these grounds. And then, some other experts state that the word comes from the Arabic word *arriat* (meaning "vegetable garden"), which in Catalan could have developed to become La Real.

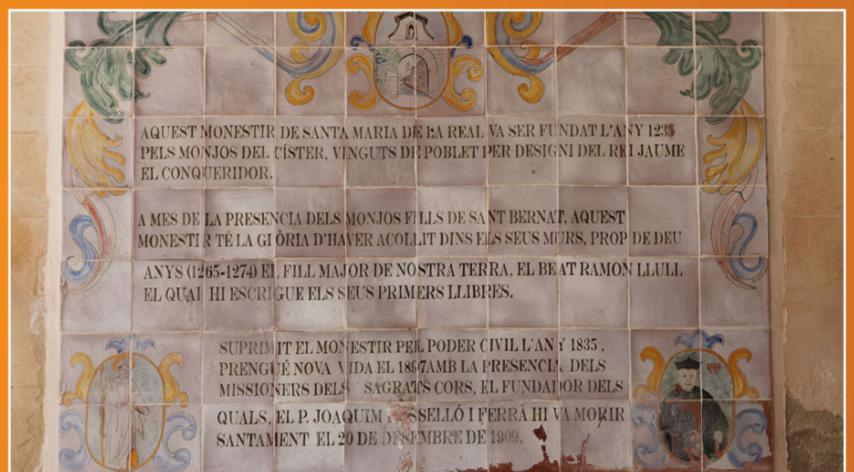


THE CISTERCIAN ORDER

2

The Cistercian Order (also known as "the White Monks") was founded at Cîteaux Abbey (Burgundy) in 1098. The aim of its founder, Saint Robert of Molesme, was to return to the original spirit of the Rule of Saint Benedict, which is summed up in the motto *ora et labora* ("pray and work"). The main responsible for the propagation of the Cistercian Order was Saint Bernard of Clairvaux.

The construction of Cistercian monasteries was linked with colonisation and farming in new territories. One example is the Monastery of Santa Maria de *la Real*, which was founded on a Majorca that had just been conquered from the Arabs and was erected in a rural setting where water was abundant. Today, thanks to its Cistercian origins, La Real is part of "La Ruta del Cister" ("Cistercian Route"), a wide religious and tourist network.



RAMON LLULL

4

The wise man Ramon Llull (Raymond Lully, 1232-1315) is the most important figure that has ever been linked to La Real. The great Majorcan sage used to frequent the library of the monastery during his self-teaching time between 1266 and 1275. According to the Catalan version of *Vita Coetanea*, Llull wrote several books at the monastery. In his will he declared that he wanted to donate a chest full of books written by himself to the Monastery of La Real. Unfortunately, the chest went missing at some point. The cloister garden features a statue dedicated to his memory.



THE ABBOT OF LA REAL

5

The abbot was regarded as the highest authority in a monastery. The abbot of La Real played a very important role within the formal ecclesiastical and political hierarchy on the island. In fact, he used to sit on the second chair after the bishop at the royal court according to the protocol in force in the Kingdom of Majorca.

OUTER PORTAL

7

The outer portal leads to the monastic ensemble. It has a large jack arch and is topped by a niche from the 17th century featuring a sculpture of the Virgin Mary holding baby Jesus. The portal was restored in 1929.



CLOISTER

9



The cloister is the place around which monastic life is organised, a place where monks take a gentle stroll and pray. The cloister of La Real was built between the 15th and 18th centuries and was partly restored in the late 19th century. It has two floors featuring basket-handle arches supported by octagonal, spiral, fluted and cylindrical columns. The walls display tombstones from the church, among which it is important to highlight that of Abbot Onofre Pol, boasting colourful marble ornaments. The garden also houses a cedar, a well and a statue of Ramon Llull holding *Llibre d'Ave Maria (Book on the Hail Mary)* by sculptor Andreu Orell Salvà (1952). Next to the entrance are ceramic tiles depicting the sage.

CHAPTER HOUSE

12

A chapter house is a building or room in which monks would assemble. The chapter house of La Real can be reached through a jack arch dating from 1600 located at the cloister. The chapter house was altered and recovered in 1950s. It has a rectangular floor plan and four ribbed-vault sections. The walls feature Lullian-themed engravings.

MONKS' MUSEUM AND FOUNDER'S CELL

13

The first floor houses the Monks' Museum, which has pieces linked with the history of the monastery on display. One of the most important items is a sceptre from the 15th century. The first floor also houses the simple cell in which the founder of the congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Venerable Father Joaquim Rosselló i Ferrà (1833-1909) used to live in.

SAINT BERNARD PILGRIMAGE

6

This pilgrimage takes place on 19th August on the eve of Saint Bernard's Day, and is one of the oldest and most popular traditions in Palma. Pilgrims are blessed with a basil leaf when they reach the monastery. The traditional and highly popular holy mass of Saint Bernard is held on the 20th.

VERANDA

8

This beautiful four-arch veranda welcomes visitors when they arrive at the monastery. Above the arches, the outer wall features a sundial that brings us the "Liturgy of the Hours" to mind, the official set of prayers "marking the hours of each day and sanctifying the day with prayer". On the right is the entrance to the cloister, featuring a tympanum from the 17th century.



SACRISTY

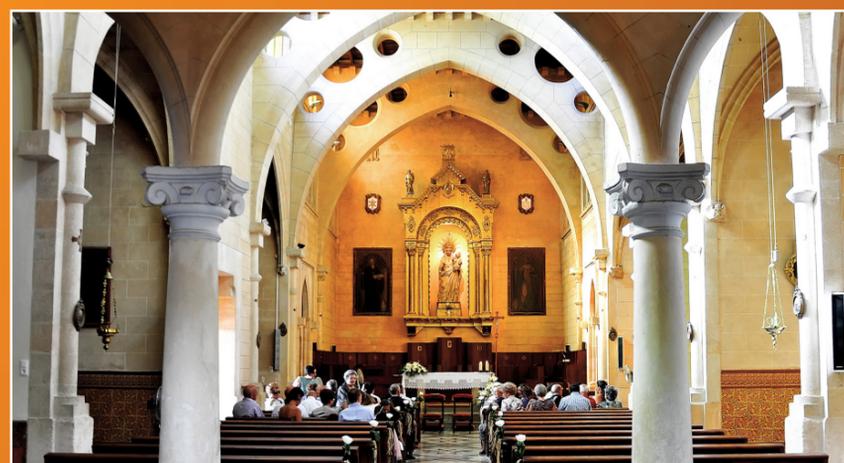
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The sacristy is a room in a church where a priest prepares for a service. The sacristy in La Real boasts very high ceilings, a two-sided roof. The room has modernist-style elements, just like the church, which was restored in the early 20th century. However, some of the original features such as a large pointed arch have been preserved.

CHURCH

11



The church is dedicated to the Virgin Mary of the Life Giving Fountain and to Saint Bernard. This single-nave church has a rectangular floor plan and four chapels on both sides. The present building is the result of the renovations made on the original Gothic and Renaissance style monastic church in 1908 by modernist architect Guillem Reynés. This major renovation works were promoted by bishop Pere Joan Campins, who, according to several experts, had the advice of Antoni Gaudí.

The most remarkable interior features are:

- A sculpture of Virgin Mary of La Real at the high altar wearing white vestments decorated with golden flowers (16th century)
- A wooden sculpture of Christ from the 16th century in the Chapel of the Most Blessed Sacrament
- A Renaissance-style altarpiece of Saint Onuphrius by Guillem Homs dating from 1601 (chapel next to the sacristy).