

Athens Metropolitan Cathedral

Organizational Info

- The Metropolitan Cathedral is dedicated to the Annunciation of the Mother of God, but is colloquially known only as the “Metropolis.”
- It is the cathedral church of the Archbishopric of Athens, which is the senior diocese, or episcopal jurisdiction, in Greece and the primary seat of the Orthodox Church of Greece.
- As an autocephalous (independent, but in communion) Orthodox Church, the Church of Greece’s highest position does not directly report to any other authority. The position is dubbed the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece.
- The archbishop seat in Athens is currently held by Ieronymos II, who was elected in 2008.
- In addition to regular liturgical services, the cathedral is the site of many important services and ceremonies and is considered a major city landmark.

Construction

- The first plans were drafted by the same Danish architect who constructed the Academy of Athens and the National Library, Theophil Hansen.
- In order to build the church, marble was gathered from 72 different demolished churches and brought to the site in Athens.
- The cornerstone was laid by King Otto and Queen Amalia in December 1842; construction was completed in May 1862.
- Building was briefly interrupted early on due to financial struggles. However, after the return of the project, it was taken over by Dimitrios Zezos.
- After Zezos’ death, the construction was completed by French architect Francois Boulanger.
- The building is a three-aisled, domed basilica.
- The cathedral was constructed directly beside a 15th century Byzantine church, commonly known as the “Little Mitropoli,” dedicated to Saint Eleutherios.
- The church suffered damages from two earthquakes and was supported for decades by scaffolding.
- In 2009, the cathedral was closed in order to undergo renovations and restorations. Work was paused in 2010 due to the financial crisis. The scaffolding was finally taken down in 2016 and services resumed as normal.

Holy Relics

- The cathedral is home to the relics of two saints: Saint Philothei and Gregory V the Ethnomartyr.
- Philothei was a 16th century nun from Athens who established a monastery and is remembered for her abundant philanthropy. She is famous for buying the freedom of women sold to Ottoman harems. Philothei was martyred in 1589. Her veneration is February 19.
- Gregory V was an Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople at various periods in the 18th and 19th centuries. In response to the Greek independence movement, Gregory was hung on Easter Sunday in 1821.