

The Holy Courtyard

A square area which lies in front of the entrance to the Holy Church of the Resurrection, its sides measuring 20 m. each. The Holy Courtyard used to operate as a market where products and memorabilia were available for sale. Today it is used only by the Orthodox on Holy Thursday for the Service of the Washing of the Disciples' Feet [the Service of the "Niptiras"] – and on Holy Friday, as the procession representing the Lord's martyrdom begins from the Praetorium and ends here.

To the east of the Holy Courtyard stands the Monastery of Abraham. At the southeast corner of the Courtyard, a set of steps lead to the Golgotha. By means of these steps, Heraclius carried the Holy Cross in 629 AD, on his return from the successful campaign against the Persians. A small church dedicated to St Mary of Egypt stands at the entrance to the steps, commemorating the fact that she was stopped from entering the Church by an invisible power, on account of her sins. To the west of the Holy Courtyard stands the Church of St James the Brother of God, first Bishop of Jerusalem. Near the Church of St James lies the chapel of the Myrophorae, and further north the chapel of the Forty Martyrs, wherein the relics of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem are kept. To the south of the Holy Courtyard stands the Dependency of Gethsemane with the icon of the Epitaph of Theotokos.