

# Rotunda of Galerius



On 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019 during a school trip in the centre of Thessaloniki, we visited an important monument of the city, Rotunda, on the occasion of the exhibition “**The splendour of Mosaics: Originals and Replicas from Thessaloniki and Ravenna**”



- The famous Rotonda of Thessaloniki, Macedonia, the Rotonda (or Rotunda) is one of the most important Roman monuments in Thessaloniki. It stands just next to the Arch of Galerius in the city center and it is also known as the Church of Agios Georgios. This cylindrical structure was built in 306AD by the Roman tetrarch Galerius, who intended it to be his grave. At first, it worked as a temple but it remains unknown to which god this temple was dedicated.



- Eventually, Galerius died in 311AD and he was buried in Felix Romuliana, modern Serbia. In the 4th century AD, the Byzantine emperor Constantine I converted it into an Orthodox church and many frescoes were painted inside, some of which survive today on the walls of Rotonda.



- In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottomans occupied Thessaloniki and in 1590, the Rotonda was converted into a mosque. In fact, a minaret was added to the building that has been restored and survives till today. In 1912, the Greeks deliberated Thessaloniki and Rotonda was converted into an Orthodox church again, till 1979, when a strong earthquake caused serious damage to the structure. Presently, the Rotonda has been restored and works as a sculpture museum. Also, it frequently hosts various exhibitions, like Ravenna's mosaics which is currently held inside the monument.



- The Rotonda has a diameter of 24,5 mand its walls are more than 6m thick, which have protected the monument from time, sieges and earthquakes. This is one of the oldest Orthodox churches and has been included in the UNESCO list of the World Heritage Sites. In fact, all Paleochristian and Byzantine monuments of Thessaloniki were included in this list in 1988.



- Some words about Ravenna's mosaic exhibition in Rotunda:

Ravenna, a Roman city that was barely known until the early 5<sup>th</sup> century, turned into a major political and cultural centre when Emperor Honorius transferred in 402AD for security reasons his capital from Milan to Ravenna. The city acquired in the 5<sup>th</sup> century two of its most significant monuments: the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia and the Orthodox Baptistery.

Internal conflict resulted in the collapse of the Roman authority in the West in 476AD. Peace was restored in Italy in 493AD with the Ostrogothic prevalence. The palace and the mausoleum of the great Goth king Theodoric the Arian Baptistery, the church of Saint Apollinare Nuovo and the Archiepiscopal Chapel date to the sovereignty of the Ostrogoths who were Arian Christians.

In 540AD the Ostrogoths were defeated by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I and shortly thereafter Ravenna, during the reign of Maurice, became the seat of the Byzantine Exarchate. The magnificent churches of San Vitale and Saint Apolline in Classe date back to the Byzantine Rule. Ravenna preserves to this day many of its medieval monuments that have endowed the city with special prestige.







# Some photos of our visit at the exhibition “The splendour of Mosaics: Originals and Replicas from Thessaloniki and Ravenna”





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