

The Jesuits' Holy Family Church (MATARIYA)

THE FRENCH JESUIT [MISSIONARY](#) MICHEL MARIE JULLIEN (1827-1911) is the initiator of the modern [pilgrimage](#) to the “Virgin of al-Matariya” in Cairo. The archives of the “College de la Sainte Famille” at Faggala, Cairo for the years 1883,1885,1890,1910, and 1911 show that Father Jullien attempted, unsuccessfully, to purchase the garden and the land around the Tree of Mary. Instead, he purchased a plot of land very near to the Tree of Mary and enlarged it gradually. With the financial support of his family, in 1885 Father Jullien [constructed](#) a chapel surrounded by a fanciful garden. Processions were organized from Cairo to the chapel during the month of May. Many European pilgrims flocked to be blessed in that small chapel, and thus the need to build a church became imperative. The work began in 1902 under the supervision of Father Ponthier and the church was consecrated in December 8, 1904. Six large scenes were painted on canvas in Paris by Barbier, Schnorr, Overbeck, Zimmermann, and Esler. Each one is 1.5 meter high and 5 meters long. In August 1906 they were fixed to the church’s walls. They represent the Massacre of the Innocents, the Order of Depart, the Flight into Egypt (north wall), Rest on the Bank of the River Nile, the Tree of the Virgin, and the Entrance into Heliopolis (south wall). The murals are in fragile condition but are still a moving sight.

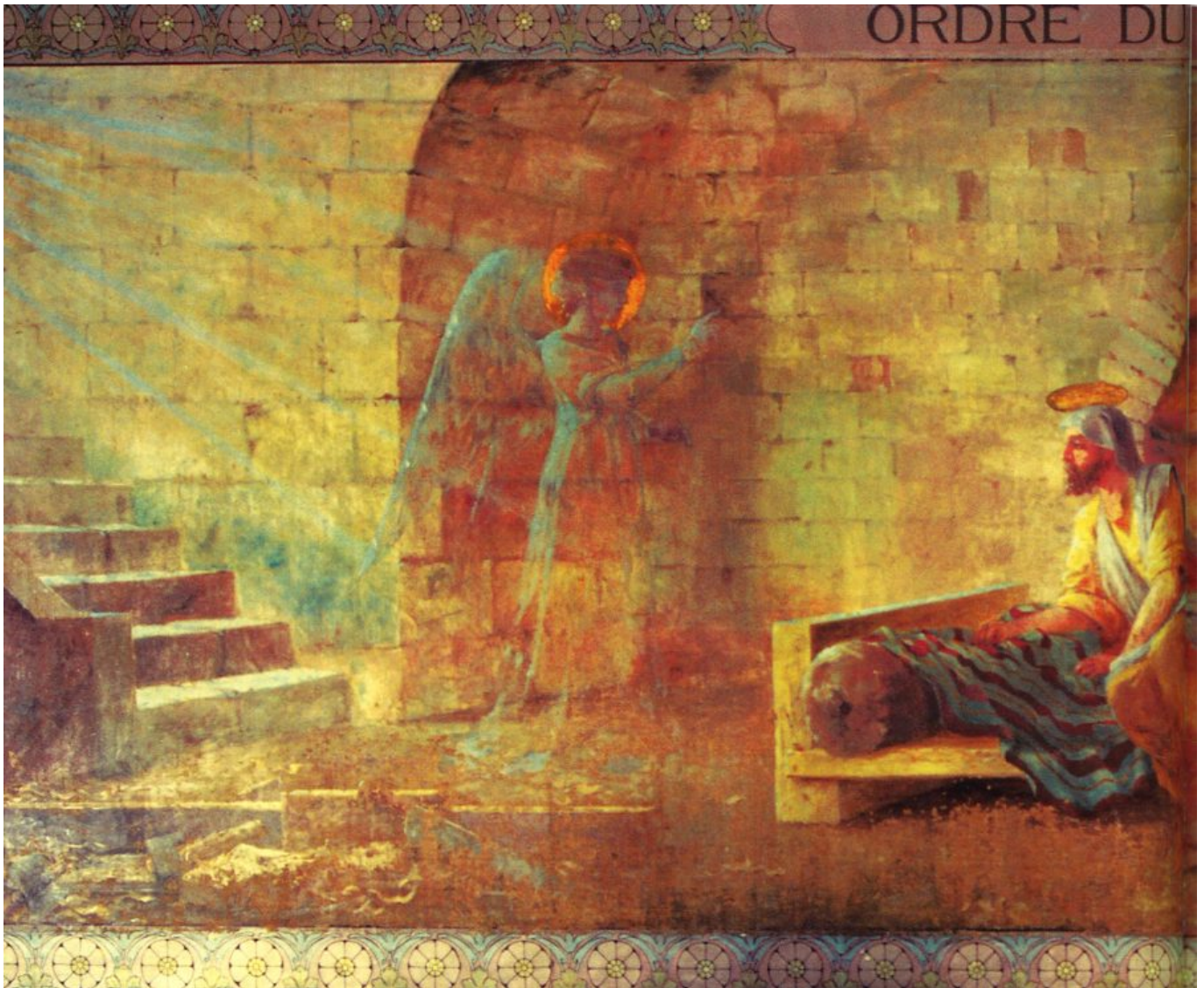
The group of statues of the Holy Family that surmounts the altar is the work of the sculptor Millifaut. A copy of the statues stands in the garden in front of the church’s entrance. The Coptic Catholic Church has been taking [care](#) of the church since 1997. The church commemorates the Flight into Egypt annually on February 17 by celebrating Mass.



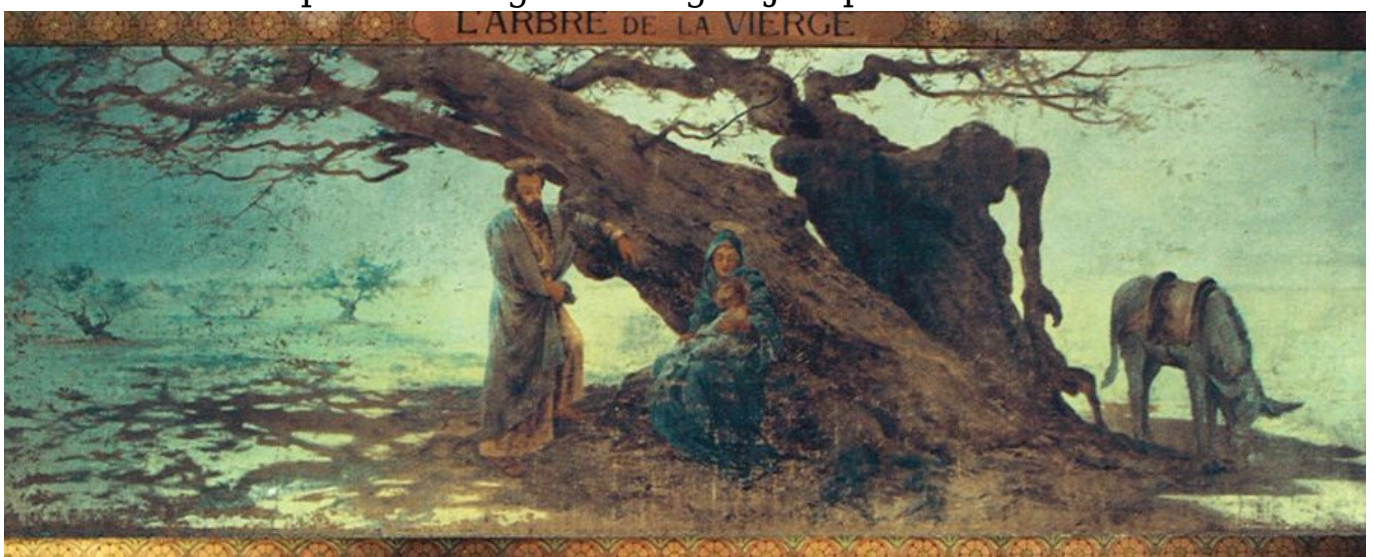
The Jesuits' Holy Family Church, Matariya: interior view toward the altar.



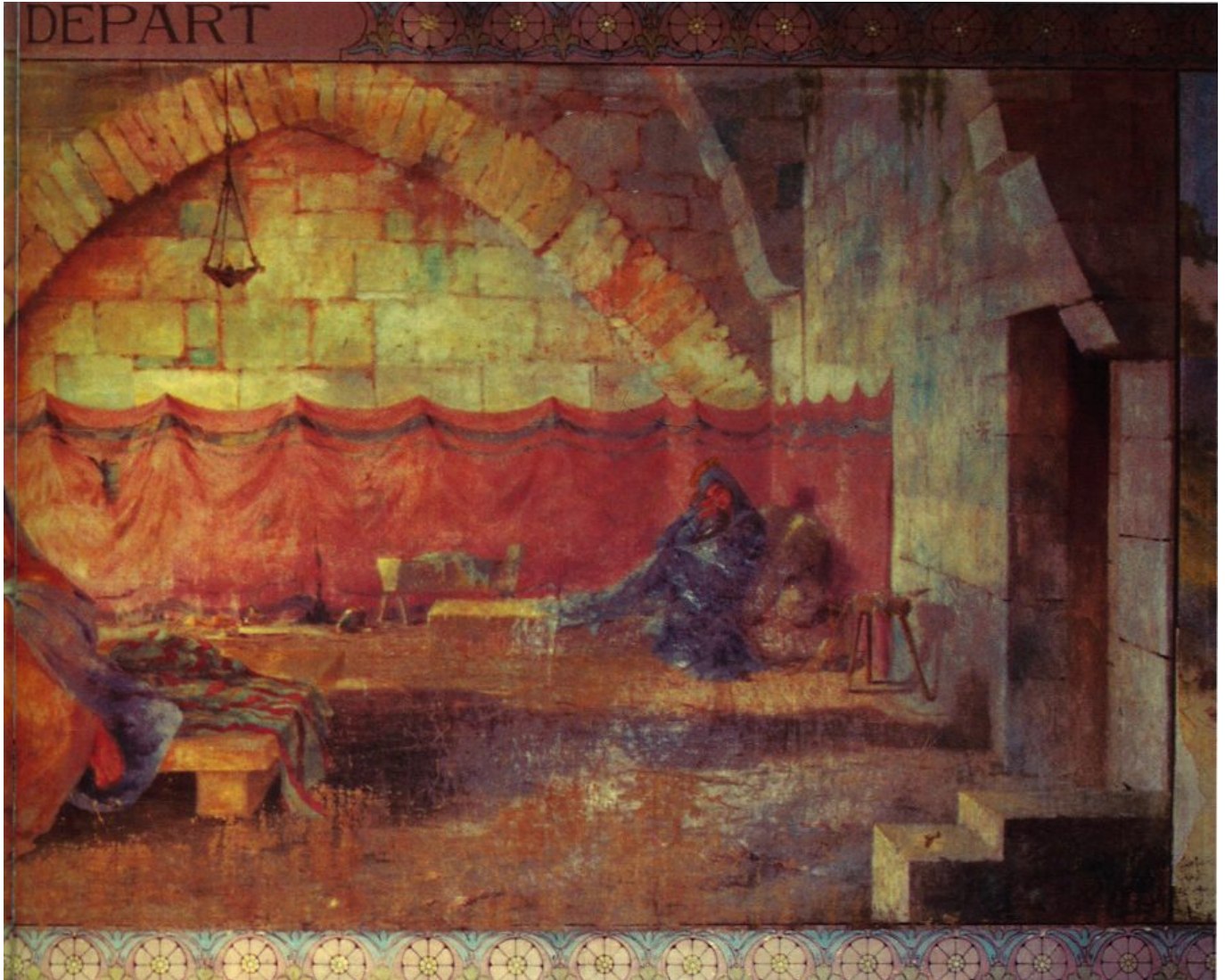
Exterior view of the Jesuits' Holy Family Church, Matariya.



The Order of Departure: angel coming to Joseph.



Tree of the Virgin.



Massacre of the Innocents



Tags: [Places](#)