

Our Lady of the Way (Madonna della Strada)

The Feast Day is May 24.

The title “Our Lady of the Way” (*Madonna della Strada*) comes from a beautiful shrine kept in one of the streets of Rome, where a picture painted in the fifth century was venerated. This lovely picture, to which Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, was so devoted — and before which he and his early companions used to assemble when first they came to the Eternal City — is now kept in the Church of the Gesù, in Rome, a church of the Society of Jesus. Pilgrims visit it there every day and keep constantly telling of the favors they receive from the Mother of God after kneeling and praying before it.

Our Lady of the Way is the patroness of the Society of Jesus. Its founder, Ignatius of Loyola, was said to have been protected by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary during battle in his service as a soldier. The name goes back to a shrine established in Rome in the 5th century by the Astalli family, originally known as the Madonna degli Astalli, at a crossroads along the ceremonial route of the popes.

The 13th-14th century fresco (a wall painting done on damp plaster) was originally painted on the wall of Saint Mary of the Way in Rome, the church of the Jesuits, given to Saint Ignatius by Pope Paul III in 1540. In 1568, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese erected the Church of the Gesù in Rome, the mother church of the Jesuits, in place of the former church of Santa Maria della Strada.



The fresco was moved there in 1575 to a side chapel where Jesuits pronounced their vows. Sometime in the 19th century, the image was transferred to canvas and affixed to a slate panel. The icon is located between two altars, the first dedicated to St Ignatius, the second, the main altar of the Church, dedicated to the Holy Name of Jesus.
