

# *Havana's oldest church: The Church of the Holy Spirit*

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The Church of the Holy Spirit o la Iglesia del Espíritu Santo is Havana's oldest church. It contains several notable paintings and a crypt with catacombs. Reputedly the Iglesia del Espíritu Santo was built by Africans who were brought to the island as slaves but later bought their freedom.

Within the church, improved by the bishops Jerónimo Valdés y Sierra and Pedro A. Morell, there is a chapel with a stone vaulted roof and a burial chamber beneath. The church tower has three stories and was, alongside the one at the Convento de San Francisco de Asís, one of the tallest in the city.

Inside the church are several notable paintings, including a seated, post-crucifixion Christ on the right wall. The crypt, entered from the left of the altar, contains the catacombs, which you can visit with the custodian-guide.

In 1936 the grave of the Bishop Valdés, a man who did so much for the city's poor, was discovered in the church.

The Church of the Holy Spirit is the only

church in Havana authorized to grant political asylum.

This Saturday the 3rd. of October at Havana's Church of the Holy Spirit on 161 Calle Acosta at 6 pm there will be a concert presented by the various choruses and orchestras of Havana featuring the work of Esteban Salas and Laureano Fuentes. Salas' Stabat Mater Dolosa will celebrate its world premier.

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