



Castel Sant'Angelo (Castle of the Angel Saint) had its beginnings in 135 A.D. when the Emperor Hadrian decided to build himself a grand mausoleum. Throughout its history, however, the great castle has been more than a tomb. It also served as a prison and state fortress.

When Rome was attacked by plague, in 590 A.D., Pope Gregory the Great believed the scourge was caused by sins of the people. He ordered penitential processions to the papal fortress, but many citizens dropped dead en route.

As the pope, leading the survivors, reached the bridge, he believed he saw the Archangel Michael on the summit of the fortress, sheathing his sword. The plague ended soon thereafter, a new chapel was built on the spot and the place itself was given a new name - Castel Sant'Angelo.

Thereafter, the Archangel Michael was thought to protect people against disease. His image, used as a talisman, was appealed-to whenever individuals were threatened by pestilence or illness.

The castle is connected to St. Peter's Basilica by the *Passetto di Borgo* (a fortified, covered corridor). Click on the image for an expanded view.

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