

Santi Giovanni e Paolo al Celio



Santi Giovanni e Paolo is an ancient basilica church in Rome, located on the west slope of the Celian Hill. It is often referred to as *SS Giovanni e Paolo*. The church is dedicated to two officers in the army under the emperor Julian the Apostate, who suffered martyrdom under Apronianus, prefect of Rome A. D. 362. [4]

The site of the basilica was immediately adjacent to the southern corner of the enormous temenos enclosure of the temple of Divus Claudius, the deified emperor Claudius who died in the year AD 54. His wife Agrippina founded the temple, but the mature complex was built by the emperor Vespasian. It would have dominated the neighborhood in ancient times. [1]

Beneath the church, within its walls, and in the immediate vicinity, are the remains of 2nd and 3rd century AD buildings. One of these streets, the Clivus Scauri, has survived and runs along the southern flank of the church, passing San Gregorio in Magno down to the ancient Via Triumphalis. [1]

History

John and Paul were officers at the Imperial Court in the service of Constantia (+360), daughter of Constantine (306-337). Tradition says that the brothers had held high positions in Constantinople but left there and returned to their Roman home on the Coelian Hill when asked to serve Julian the Apostate (emperor 361-363) in the same capacity. Julian ordered them to be put to the usual trial of the faith, namely, to renounce their God in favor of the pagan deities. However, because of their great popularity and nobility, they were not martyred publicly; instead, they were beheaded secret in their palace on June 26, 362. Julian himself, ironically, was brutally killed exactly one year later, on the very same day. [1] [6]

The original sanctuary, founded in 398 by the senator Byzantius and his son, St. Pammachius (a friend of St. Jerome), was built directly over the saints' original house, which had been filled in with rubble and earth. The first church was known as *Titulus Bizantius* after Senator Byzantius. His son Pammachius built a basilica on the site, which was known as *Titulus Pammachii* and was one of the first parish churches in Rome. The synod listing from 499 uses this name. An inscription from the

5th century names Senator [Pammachius](#) (d. 410 AD) as the founder. He was a personal friend of St Jerome, and after several years of public service, as a senator like his father had been, he gave his money to the poor and retired to a life of seclusion and prayer; undoubtedly a result of St Jerome's influence. The synod listing of 595 also mentions the church, but by this time it is known as SS. Johannis e Pauli. [4] [6]

The present fabric shows evidence of early damage. Traditionally this has been ascribed to the sack of Rome by Alaric in 410, but this cannot be correct. The church was probably still under construction. Rather, the damage probably occurred in an earthquake later that century, necessitating a restoration by Pope Leo I (440-461). There were obviously worries about the church shifting on its re-cycled foundations, since the first of the supporting arches spanning the Clivus Scauri was erected about then (the rest came much later). [1]

Pope Adrian I (772-95) restored the roof. At this time the church was attached to a monastery of monks from the eastern Mediterranean, perhaps of the Byzantine rite. His successor, Pope Leo III, also instigated repairs to the fabric. [1]

In 1084, the complex was sacked by Norman raiders under Robert Guiscard. Pope Paschal II (1099-1118) authorized its restoration, initially under the supervision of Cardinal Theobaldo Boccapecora. The campanile was completed in about 1150, and the portico was erected in 1158 by Cardinal Giovanni da Sutri who became titular here in 1152. The present monastery with its attached campanile dates from this campaign. [1] [6]

In 1216, Cardinal Cencio Savelli (the future Pope Honorius III) effected another major restoration. To him is due the form of the present portico with a gallery above, the Cosmatesque pavement within the church and the arcade around the top of the exterior of the apse. He also provided a Gothic baldacchino for the high altar (destroyed in 1725) and an altar over the traditional location of the tombs of the martyrs (removed in the 17th century and replaced with a floor marker). Six further support arches were provided for the left hand side wall, spanning the Clivus Scauri, the church edifice actually curves slightly in that direction, so must have been threatening again to dump itself into the street. [1] [6]

In the mediaeval period the church was served by a college of secular priests, noted in the 15th century as eight in number. In 1448, the complex was granted to the Order of the [Jesuates](#) (Jesuati, not to be confused with Jesuits). This little religious order had originated at Siena in 1360, the founder being Giovanni Colombini. They supervised a restoration completed in 1598 which involved the provision of the existing nave ceiling. At this stage the entrance portico had two bays on either side walled up to create custodians' chambers. [1]

In 1697 the church was passed on to a community of [Lazarists](#) from France who established their Roman headquarters and a novitiate here. The church was heavily restored between 1704 and 1718 under the Lazarists, sponsored by Cardinal Fabrizio Paolucci and with Antonio Canevari and Andrea Garagni as architects. The baldacchino over the high altar was demolished, the nave arcade columns were replaced by piers and the side altars were remodeled. Also, much of the Cosmatesque floor was re-laid with marble tiling. The result was an interior in the late Baroque style. Also, the wrought iron railings were added in the three central portals of the portico. [1] [6]

In 1773, Pope Clement XIV granted the complex to the [Passionists](#), who still officiate the church. Their founder was St Paul of the Cross, who moved here just in time to die in 1775. Initially he was buried at the altar at the far end of the right hand aisle. Paul of the Cross was beatified in 1852, and in anticipation of his canonization in 1867 the brethren began an enormous new domed shrine-chapel for him in 1857. The architect was Filippo Martinucci, who died before it was completed in 1880. The work was completed by his son, Vincenzo Martinucci. [1] [4] [6]

In 1882 Andrea Busiri Vici did a restoration, aimed at treating serious humidity infiltrations and reconstituting the internal stylistic unity, with the architect engineer Gaetano Bonoli. [6]

In 1873 the basilica was expropriated and forfeited by the state of the Kingdom of Italy, subsequently passed into that of the Italian Republic, which still manages it through the Fund for

Buildings of Worship (FEC). Unusually the brethren seemed to have arrived at an arrangement to enable them to remain here. [1] [4]

The brethren were impressed by what the Dominicans found under San Clemente, and so decided to have a dig under their own church. Work on excavation was begun by [Germano di San Stanislao](#), the rector of the retreat, in 1887. He was one of the most notable archaeologists in the city at the end of the 19th century, at a time when the discipline was in its infancy. Excavation here was to continue intermittently until 1958. (see below) [1]

In 1911, there was a restoration of the interior during which wall surfaces formerly painted in pastel monochrome were repainted so as to resemble polychrome marble revetting. The floor was also restored. [1] [5]

The last major restoration of the church fabric took place in the mid 20th century, when Cardinal Francis Joseph Spellman, titular of the church from 1946 to 1967, obtained financial support from Joseph Kennedy to restore the façade and to carry out new excavations. This work took place from 1948 to 1952, with further excavations under the church continuing until 1958. During this time the façade was returned to its medieval appearance. The interior was also restored; among the additions were chandeliers that had previously hung in the Waldorf-Astoria hotel in New York. [1]

Santi Giovanni e Paolo was one of the original twenty-five station churches in Rome. The church has absolutely no pastoral justification nowadays. Fortunately it is one of the most popular and prestigious marriage venues on the Centro Storico wedding circuit.

The church is currently a subsidiary place of worship of the parish of Santa Maria in Domnica alla Navicella and the adjacent monastery is the seat of the general curia of the Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ. [4]

The Cardinal Priest of the *Titulus Ss. Ioannis et Pauli* is Jozef De Kesel (as of 2024). He was appointed on November 19, 2016. Among previous Cardinal Priests of this Title are two who became Pope: Pope Honorius III (Cencio Savelli, elevated to cardinal in 1198) and Pope Pius XII (Eugenio Pacelli, elevated to cardinal in 1929). [2]

Exterior

The church's fabric is in red brick, which is mostly now visible. The central nave has a normal pitched and tiled roof, but the large semi-circular sanctuary apse has a rather unusual radially tiled roof instead of the usual tiling in sectors to be found on external apses. The left hand aisle has a normal single-pitched tiled roof divided into three sections by a pair of buttresses supporting the upper nave wall, and the outer wall of the aisle here is itself supported by seven arches that span the street -flying buttresses, basically. [1]

Off the right hand aisle of the church is the enormous domed Chapel of St Paul of the Cross, which has a floor area about a third of that of the central nave of the basilica. It is on an almost square external plan, with a chamfered north-eastern corner. The right hand aisle roof has the normal single tiled pitch on the far side of this chapel, but the stretch on the near side is now flat. [1]

Portico

In front of the church, and stretching for its entire width, is the portico with an enclosed gallery above. This, since the mid 20th century restoration, also has a flat roof. It joins onto the restored mediaeval entrance frontage of the convent to the right, and tucked away in the angle behind the junction is an octagonal sacristy. The monastery's original frontage is in between the church and the campanile. The corner of the subsequent ranges around the cloister is to the right again of the latter, and then comes the contemporary main entrance of the monastery which is at an elevation and is hence approached by steps. [1]

The portico was built in 1158, and the second-storey gallery added in 1216. The portico has eight re-used ancient columns supporting a horizontal entablature. The end columns are Corinthian, while the others are Ionic; three are in pink granite from Aswan in Egypt, three are in grey granite and two are in the so-called marmo tasio which is from the island of Thasos in Greece. The columns are not

quite equally spaced, and the composition as a whole is slightly skew in relation to the church itself by the original presence of a tiny custodian's kiosk at the right hand end. This has left a wall with a window having two narrow round-headed lights separated by a thin marble colonnette with an impost. To the left above the window is a faded fresco representation of the coat-of-arms of Cardinal Matteo Orsini, who was titular here from 1327 to 1338. [1]

The columns support an entablature which also runs over the kiosk at the right hand end. The architrave of this is in re-used ancient marble revetting slabs cut to size, with an inscription reading:

Presbiter ecclesi[a]e roman[a]e rite Johannes h[a]ec animi voto dona vovenda d
martyribus Christi, Paulo pariterque lo[h]anni passio quos eadem contulit esse pares.

("John, a priest of the church of the Roman rite, by a willed vow gave gifts promised to the martyrs of Christ, Paul and with him John, those who shared the same suffering").

The center of the archivolt over the entrance is marked by a porphyry disc. The frieze above now shows a row of extremely shallow relieving arches in brick, but these would have been rendered over until the 20th century. There is a small relief coat-of-arms of a cardinal in the middle of the frieze. The cornice is dentillated, and has a row of tiling marking the original roofline of the portico before the gallery was added. [1]

The wrought iron railings in the three central portals were installed in 1704 and bear a cardinal's coat-of-arms in bronze. The rest of the railings are 20th century, made to match. [1]

To the left of the portico is attached a fragment of ruin with the ends of two arch archivolts, one above the other and with double curves in brick. These must have spanned the street at one time, and seem to match the 5th century arch further down the hill (see below). [1]

The rather bare interior of the portico has a single entrance. At either end is an ancient column in the inner wall, survivors of the 5th century entrance arcade. This wall also has three niches with scanty traces of frescoes, dating from the middle of the 13th century. The single entrance has a large 13th century molded marble doorcase, on the lintel of which is carved an eagle holding a rabbit. The molding includes a strip of Cosmatesque inlay. Flanking the door is a pair of marble stops in the form of lions with their lunches, which look as if they were ancient but were badly re-carved in the Middle Ages. [1]

Façade

The portico occupies the entire width of the church's façade, with only the upper frontage of the central nave peeping over. When the church was first built in the 5th century, the façade had five arched portals separated by Corinthian columns. The central one was slightly larger. This arcade was duplicated by a further one above, which also used to be open to the outside. The upper arcade was damaged in an earthquake perhaps in the mid 5th century, and was walled up. The lower arcade was also walled up when the loggia was provided, leaving a single entrance.

By the early 20th century, the upper arches were invisible beneath a coat of render. The 20th century restoration removed this, leaving naked brick which was "renewed", and the blocking was cut back to reveal the four ancient Corinthian columns which support brick archivolts. Traces of original fresco decoration were found on the intradoses of the arches.

The coat-of-arms affixed just under the gable is that of [Cardinal Spellman](#), who financed the restoration of the facade.

Relieving arches

The Clivus Scauri running down the left hand side of the church is spanned by a famous series of seven relieving arches holding up the left hand side wall. The furthest one is thought to be mid 5th century, and has a double brick archivolt. The other six form a set, with single brick archivolts, and were installed in the 13th century. The entrance to the case or ancient remains under the church is on the right just before the last arch. [1]

The side wall of the church here is actually itself ancient, and used to be the street frontage of an

insula or apartment block converted into a house. The ground floor arches used to lead into tavernae or little shops, while above you can see blocked windows for two more storeys. This is a very unusual survival of the fabric of an ancient multi-occupancy residential edifice in the city. [1]

Apse

The exterior of the church's apse is very impressive. The fabric is original, 5th century, but the present appearance is owing to the 13th century restoration. Below the roofline is an arcade of arches with brick archivolt, springing from rectangular stone impost supported by free-standing columns. These stand on bases matching the impost, both of which protrude beyond the apse wall. The bases stand on a thin stone platform with double roll-molding. The arcaded arrangement is known as a Lombard band. [1]

The roofline has a decorative cornice, with dentillation between two lines of barley-sugar molding. The red brick wall of the apse is now naked, but would have been plastered or covered with render in the Middle Ages. The holes in the wall are so-called putlog holes, which are for the insertion of scaffolding poles. Formerly, each hole would have had a loose brick or stone put in it and covered with render, which would have been easy to remove if scaffolding needed to be erected again. [1]

This decorative apse is unique in Rome. Its purpose was to impress those ascending the Clivus Scauri, which in the Middle Ages was part of an important arterial route connecting the Tiber quays and the west of the city with the Lateran. This ran along the side of the Circus Maximus, and was the quickest way to the Lateran from Trastevere and anywhere near the river, as well as those pilgrims and merchants arriving by boat. [1]

Dome

The dome of the Chapel of St Paul of the Cross is prominent in views from the Palatine Hill, as it was meant to be. There seems to be some imitation of the Cappella Bandini at San Silvestro al Quirinale. The architect was **Filippo Martinucci**. The dignified design features a tall cylindrical drum with eight large rectangular windows having floating horizontal cornices. Each window is in a shallow rectangular recess, and a thin rectangular recessed panel is between each pair of these giving the impression of double pilasters. [1]

The actual dome is hemispherical on a projecting molded cornice, and is covered in fish-scale tiles. The lantern has eight narrow round-headed windows, a hemispherical metal cupola and a cross-and-ball finial in bronze. [1]

Campanile

The tall Romanesque red brick campanile or bell tower, forty-five meters in height, was completed about 1150. It is in an odd position, but this is because it re-used the ancient masonry of the southernmost corner of the porticoed temenos enclosure of the Temple of the Divine Claudius. Hence, the first storey consists of large, weathered ashlar blocks of travertine of monumental appearance. [1] [a]

There are seven further storeys, separated by decorative cornices featuring two rows of dentillations sandwiching a row of stone modillions or little corbels. The second storey is tall and blank, except for one small window (and putlog holes). The third storey has two blocked arches with narrow window-slits, the ends of the archivolt being connected by a string-course. The fourth storey has two open arches in the same style, and in between this is a very interesting little gabled aedicule or shrine on a pair of small stone columns, which must have contained a statue long ago. The upper storeys are identical, each having two double arches with stone colonnettes. [1]

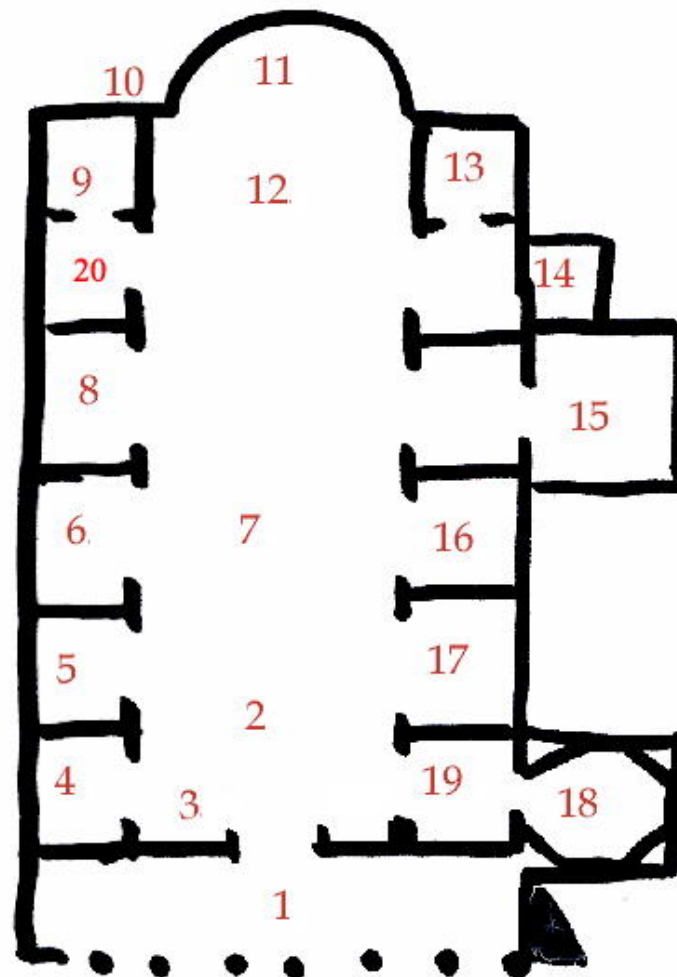
The brickwork is decorated with inset roundels and crosses in porphyry and serpentine (purple and green stones), and also with ceramic dishes. The ones there now are copies, the originals having been removed in 1951, and moved to the excavation museum in the church. These were apparently sourced from Málaga in Spain in the 11th century, when that was a Muslim city; the fact that they survived the weather for eight hundred years, stuck into the outside of the campanile, is a tribute to the skill of the Muslim potters. Bizarrely, certain of the dishes have Arabic lettering extolling Allah. [1]

Monastery

The original monks here in the late 7th century squatted in the southern corner of the enormous ruinous colonnaded temenos enclosure of the Temple of Claudius. As a result, much ancient fabric survives in the present complex. [1]

The mediaeval monastery survives as a terrace of three structurally distinct edifices attached to the right hand side of the church's portico. It is thought that the original entrance to the church's presbytery was in the very narrow one on the left, now blocked up. The middle edifice contains a wide portal which was the original entrance of the monastery, and has 20th century arcaded windows, allegedly replicating old ones for which evidence was found in the fabric. The fourth storey here has a single window of two round-headed lights separated by a colonnette, and this lights the room of St Paul of the Cross, the 18th century founder of the Passionists. [1]

Plan



Interior

The church has a central nave of six bays with side aisles, and then the sanctuary apse. Attached to the left of the latter is a little room containing an important mediaeval fresco. The last two bays of both aisles are side chapels. The left hand aisle has a side altar in each remaining bay, four in total. The first bay of the right hand aisle is the sacristy vestibule, then comes two side altars. The fourth bay of this aisle is the vestibule to the external Chapel of St Paul of the Cross. Next to this is the original staircase leading down to the scavi or excavations when these were under the authority of the Passionists, but this entrance is now disused. The interior was transformed to the late Baroque style by the 1718 renovation. [1]

Nave

The nave is separated from the side aisles by 8 ancient grey granite columns on each side. During the 18th century remodeling, piers were installed, two very wide ones on each side and a narrower

central one. The wide ones have a pair of Composite pilasters at the corners, while the narrower ones have one tripletted pilaster in the same style. These pilasters support an interior entablature which runs round the church. The four arches on each side have their archivolt supported by the ancient granite columns with mediaeval Composite capitals. Above each arch is a large rectangular window with a triangular pediment, and above these in turn is the ceiling cornice. The wall surfaces look as if they are clad in polychrome marbles, but they were actually painted this way in 1911. [1]

The 13th century Cosmatesque pavement was restored in the 18th century. Much of the original floor was replaced with marble tiles in grey and red. The area near the entrance is the most extensive survival, with a large grey granite roundel sawn from an ancient column and another one of porphyry. [1]

In the floor at the right side of the central nave is a slab enclosed within an iron balustrade, marking the spot where SS. John and Paul are said to have been decapitated. The inscription on the slab reads - Locus martyrii SS Ioannis et Pauli in aedibus propriis. This was installed in 1677. On the far side of the enclosure is a glass disc in the floor, through which you can look down into the so-called confessio in the Case beneath, claimed by the original excavators as the place where the martyrs were buried. [1]

The deeply coffered flat wooden ceiling is in three sections, separated by two floating arches which spring from strapwork corbels in the side walls. These are structural features, as they are transmitting the load of the roof to external buttresses of the side walls. The ceiling was installed in 1589 by Cardinal Agostino Cusani, and has elaborate gilded rosettes in the coffers. There is a central octagonal panel containing gilded wooden relief sculptures of Sts John and Paul, with a text saying vere germani, "truly twins". The corresponding octagonal panels in the near and far sections contain the coat-of-arms of Cardinal Cusani. There was a restoration in 1904. [1] [5]

The nave has an impressive set of hanging crystal chandeliers. [1]

The aisles are covered by cross-vaults in front of the altars, and barrel-vaults behind the wide pilasters. The fresco decoration of these is 18th century. [1]

Hereabouts are (or were) memorials to Olimpiade Pesenzini (1836), Cardinal Vincenzo Macchi (1860), Giovanni Fajella (1830), Teresa Saracinelli (1855), Anna Pieri (1862) and Giovanni Battista Bonti (1862). [1]

The organ, built by the company Morettini in 1856, modified in 1902 by the same company and finally expanded in 1964 by the company Tamburini (opus 469). The instrument is electric drive and has 50 registers on three manuals and pedals. [4]

Sanctuary

Because of the lack of a transept, the last bay of the nave is included in the sanctuary which is delineated by a low marble balustrade. The polychrome marble high altar is free-standing and was designed by Francesco Ferrari. It incorporates a porphyry urn containing the relics of Sts. John and Paul, solemnly placed there by Pope Benedict XIII in 1726. Before the 18th century there used to be a baldacchino, and in front an open devotional crypt or confessio which was to be filled in. [1] [4]

Behind it in the apse are the choir stalls of the Passionist brethren fitted into the curve of the wall. The far end of the apse contains an enormous round-headed altarpiece of *The Martyrdom of SS John and Paul*, by Giacomo Triga (1726). One of the brothers is shown rebuking the judge while the other is about to be beheaded. The ornate frame of this intrudes into the entablature, and on top are two stucco angels by Pietro Bracci. [1] [6] [c]

The altarpiece is flanked by two more enormous paintings from 1726 occupying the apse wall. To the left, *SS John and Paul Give Their Goods to the Poor* by Giovanni Domenico Piastri, and to the right *The Conversion of Terentian* by Pietro Antonio Barbieri. He was the executor of the brothers, and is depicted having a supernatural revelation at their porphyry sarcophagus after his son had been healed at their intercession. [1] [4]

The conch of the apse is occupied by a fresco of *Christ the Redeemer in Glory with the Heavenly Host*, by Niccolò Circignani, known as *Il Pomarancio* (1588). The artist tried to portray the denizens of heaven stretching away to infinity behind Christ. The angels playing instruments in the forefront on either side are interesting musicologically as typical of the period. [1] [6]

There is a canopy hanging from the ceiling over the altar. Unfortunately, the canopy and the chandeliers hanging from the triumphal arch tend to obscure the conch fresco.

13th century fresco (10)

In a little room to the left of the high altar is a fresco of *Christ with Apostles* in a Byzantine style, which has been dated to 1255. It shows Christ with six apostles, standing in a portico. This work is especially interesting to art scholars, since it is a rare example of a fresco surviving from this period in Rome. The room is inaccessible to visitors, and those wishing to view the fresco are advised to make prior arrangements with the administrators of the church. [1]

Side Aisles

The bays of the aisles not in use for access to somewhere else were fitted out as side altars in the 18th century. There are a total of six of these, two on the right and four on the left. They have very similar layouts, each having a round-headed altarpiece without an aedicule and with an arc fanlight above.

The side altars are described clockwise, beginning to the left of the entrance.

Altar of St Gemma Galgani (4)

The first altar on the left is dedicated to St [Gemma Galgani](#). This young woman (she died in 1905, aged twenty-seven) lived at Lucca as a devotee of the Passionist retreat there, since her physical and mental illnesses prevented her from becoming a Passionist nun. She was a stigmatic and underwent extraordinary spiritual experiences, of a kind that persuaded many at the time that she was a malignant fraud or in the grip of demons. Her canonization took place under the patronage of the Passionists in 1940, in the face of much opposition. [1]

The brethren immediately erected an altar here to her honor, and unusually provided a stained glass window in place of an altarpiece. This shows *St Gemma Receiving the Stigmata from the Crucified Christ*, and is by [Giulio Cesare Giuliani](#) (1942). Beneath it on the altar is a picture showing *the saint writing down her experiences, under the direction of her guardian angel*. [1] [5]

Altar of the Scillitan Martyrs (5)

The second altar on the left hand side enshrines the relics of the twelve Scillitan martyrs from Scillium in Roman Africa, which place is now thought to be Kasserine south-west of Tunis in Tunisia. They were martyred at Carthage in the year 180, after refusing to worship the tutelary spirit of the Emperor. The record of the martyrdom is a precious early witness to the Christian church in Roman Africa, the origins of which we know absolutely nothing. The names of the martyrs, whose relics are enshrined here, are known: Speratus, Nartzales, Cittinus, Veturius, Felix, Aquilinus, Laetantius, Januarius, Generosa, Vestia, Donata and Secunda, eight men and four women. The altarpiece is by [Aureliano Milani](#) (1722). Within the altar is a marble sarcophagus which holds their preserved relics. [1] [4] [6]

In the aisle is a monument to Cardinal Giuseppe Garampi (1829) with a portrait medallion by [Cristoforo Prospero](#). [1] [6]

Altar of St Joseph (6)

The third altar on the left. The altarpiece showing *St Joseph with the Christ-child* is by [Aureliano Milani](#) (1720). [1] [4] [5]

Altar of the Crucifixion (8)

The fourth on the left hand side. The altarpiece is an oil on canvas painting depicting *The Crucifixion* is by [Tommaso Conca](#). [1] [4] [6]

In the next bay (20) is the funeral monument for Monsignor Francesco Vici of Melignano (d. 1868). It was designed by Raffaele Francisi with sculptures by Giuseppe Palombini. [6]

Chapel of the Assumption (9)

The gated chapel at the end of the left hand aisle is now the church's Blessed Sacrament Chapel, and is dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady. The altarpiece is by Giovanni Torelli (1716). [1] [4] [6]

On the left wall is a display case full of medallions. On the right wall is a painting of *St. John Bosco pointing to a picture of Our Lady of Pompeii*.

Behind the high altar, which must have been done by Francesco Ferrari in 1730, there is a narrow passage where you can see a fresco of *The Blessing Christ with 6 Apostles* from 1255. [5]

Chapel of St Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows (13)

The chapel at the far end of the right aisle is dedicated to St Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows, a holy young Passionist who died at Isola, aged only twenty-four. He was especially remembered for "heroic self-denial in small things", and was canonized in 1920 by Pope Benedict XV. His portrait here, painted for the occasion, is by Giovanni Battista Conti. [1] [4] [6]

The fourth bay of the right hand aisle (14) used to have an altar dedicated to the Scillitan Martyrs (see below), and a memorial to Cardinal Lorenzo Litta, by Giuseppe De Fabris (1820). However, the altar was removed to make way for the stairs down to the scavi in the late 19th century. These are now closed off. [1] [6]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorenzo_Litta

Chapel of St Paul of the Cross (15)

The third bay of the right hand aisle is the vestibule of a large external chapel, built to house the relics of St Paul of the Cross who had originally been buried in the chapel at the end of this aisle. He was beatified in 1852, and in anticipation of his canonization in 1867 the brethren began raising funds for an enormous new domed shrine-chapel for him in 1857. The architect chosen was Filippo Martinucci, who drew up plans but died in 1862 before much work had been accomplished. It was left to his son, Vincenzo Martinucci, to complete it by 1880 with decorative elements continuing for another two years. [1]

The saint's relics are enshrined in a glass box under the altar, enclosed within a recumbent mannequin. The altarpiece above is by Francesco Coghetti, and shows *St Paul of the Cross Embracing the Crucified* (a depiction of a vision experienced by the saint). The two Corinthian columns of the aedicule are in Egyptian alabaster, part of a set of such columns given by Muhammad Ali, ruler of Egypt, to Pope Pius IX. Several others are to be found in San Paolo fuori le Mura. The altar was designed by Raffaele Ingami in 1877, and has above it a window with stained glass depicting the emblem of the Passionists. This is being venerated by stucco angels. [1] [3] [6]

The layout of the chapel is on the plan of a Greek cross with very short arms. These arms are covered by semi-circular vaults, on which are frescoes also by Coghetti depicting scenes from the life of the saint. Above the altar he is shown on his deathbed, which occurred in the adjacent convent. The side walls have frescoes of *Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane* and a *Pietà* by Francesco Grandi 1879. These are flanked by depictions of female allegorical Virtues by Coghetti. [1] [6]

The dome drum has eight large windows separated by pairs of ribbed Corinthian pilasters, and the dome itself has one large fresco by Coghetti, *The Apotheosis of St Paul of the Cross*. The lantern oculus contains the *Dove of the Holy Spirit*, and the dome pendentives have angels bearing *Instruments of the Passion*. [1] [6]

Altar of St Pammachius (16)

The second altar on the right is dedicated to St Pammachius, a Roman senator and one of the alleged founders of the church. The altarpiece is an oil on canvas by Aureliano Milani (1716), who depicted the saint with a plan of the basilica as originally built. [1] [4] [6]

Altar of St Saturninus (17)

The first altar on the right is dedicated to St Saturninus, an obscure mid 3rd century martyr originally enshrined at the Catacomba di Trasona on the Via Salaria. His relics are enshrined here. The altarpiece is *San Saturnino of Carthage destroys the idol*, oil on canvas by **Marco Benefial** (1716). [1] [4] [6]

Sacristy

The church's sacristy occupies an unusual position, off the bottom end of the right hand aisle. Its shape is also unusual, as it is octagonal. These two facts hint that it replaced an ancient baptistry. [1]

At its entrance (19) are memorials to Cardinal Roberto Giovanni Roberti (1867) (a fine neo-Classical work with a bust and a bas-relief showing four weepers), and to Francesco Sturbinetti (1865), Gustaf von Stackelberg from Vienna 1847 (another good neo-Classical composition with a free-standing bust) and Aleksander von Stackelberg (1856). [1]

Also in the vestibule is a picture of *Sts Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal and Vincent de Paul* by **Aureliano Milani** (1716). This was part of a commission for several pictures given to this artist by the Lazarists, who were a French order. St Vincent de Paul was their founder. [1]

The sacristy (18) itself has an altarpiece of *The Madonna and Child with SS John the Baptist, Jerome, John and Paul*. According to a notice in the sacristy this work was traditionally attributed to **Antoniazio Romano** or to his workshop, but that recent scholarship prefers an attribution to an unknown Umbrian master and suggests that the painting was commissioned for the church in the late 15th or early 16th century. The sacristy altar is set into a niche with paintings of *The Conversion of St Paul* on the left and *St Charles Borromeo* on the right, both by **Aureliano Milani**. The ceiling of the sacristy depicts the *Apotheosis of St Paul of the Cross*. [1] [6]

Access

Church

The church is open (unofficial source) daily, 8:30 to 12:00 (or after Mass) and 15:30 to 18:00.

You may find a wedding going on. As in other Roman churches, discreet and well-dressed individual visitors are tolerated while preparations for, and celebrations after, a wedding are underway. Here, there seems to be no objection to individual pilgrims entering to venerate the shrine of St Paul of the Cross during a wedding.

Organized groups wishing to visit are advised to contact the church's administrators beforehand to avoid a clash.

Liturgy

Mass is celebrated on Sundays and Solemnities at 10:45 and 11:45, according to the Diocese (the church has no website).

The feast day of SS John and Paul is on 26 June, and that of St Paul of the Cross on October 19. Both of these are Solemnities here.

This is the Station Church for the Friday after Ash Wednesday in Lent.

Burials:

Nicola Cardinal [PERELLI](#), (1696-1772)

Lorenzo Cardinal [LITTA](#), (1756-1820) [also see [here](#)]

Vincenzo Cardinal [MACCHI](#), (1770-1860)

Roberto Giovanni F. Cardinal [ROBERTI](#), (1788-1867)

Giuseppe [GARAMPI](#), (1725-1792) [also see [here](#)]

Francesco [Sturbinetti](#) (1807-1865), Italian patriot and politician

Artists and Architects:

Andrea [Busiri Vici](#) (1817-1911), Italian architect
Andrea Garagni (18th cent), Italian architect
Antoniazio [Romano](#) (1430-1510), Italian Early Renaissance painter
Antonio [Canevari](#) (1681-1764), Italian architect of the Rococo and Neoclassical periods
Aureliano [Milani](#) (1675-1749), Italian painter of the late-Baroque period
Cristoforo Prosperi (19th cent.), Italian sculptor
Filippo [Martinucci](#) (19th cent), Italian architect
Francesco [Coghetti](#) (1804-1875), Italian painter
Francesco [Ferrari](#) (1634-1708), Italian painter and architect of the Baroque period
Francesco [Grandi](#) (1831-1891), Italian painter
Gaetano Bonoli (17th cent.), Italian architectural engineer
Giacomo [Triga](#) (1674-1746), Italian painter of the Late Baroque period
Giovanni Battista Conti (1878-1970), Italian painter
Giovanni Domenico [Piastrini](#) (1680-1740), Italian painter
Giovanni Torelli, Italian painter
Giulio Cesare [Giuliani](#) (1882-1954), Italian stained-glass window designer (also see [here](#))
Giuseppe [de Fabris](#) (1790-1860), Italian sculptor
Giuseppe [Palombini](#) (19th cent), Italian sculptor
Jacopo di Lorenzo (early 13th cent), [Cosmati](#) family
Jean [Barbault](#) (c.1705-c.1766), a French painter and engraver
Marco [Benefial](#) (1684-1764), Italian proto-Neoclassical painter
Niccolò [Circignani](#) [aka *Il Pomarancio*] (c.1520-c.1597), Italian late-Renaissance / Mannerist painter
Pietro Andrea [Barbieri](#) (1684-1730), Italian painter in the Baroque period
Pietro [Bracci](#) (1700-1773), Italian sculptor of the Late Baroque period
Raffaele [Francisi](#) (1821-1901) Italian architect
Raffaele Ingami (1836-1908), Italian architect
Tommaso [Conca](#) (1734-1822), Italian painter
Vincenzo Martinucci (19th cent.), Italian architect

Location:

Addr: Piazza dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo 13, 00184 Roma.

Coord: [41° 53' 11.5"N, 12° 29' 33.5"E](#)

Info:

Telephone: 06-351-81-61-314

Open times: 08:30am-12:00pm 03:30pm-06:00pm

Masses: Weekdays:10:45am-11:45am

email: basilica.gioepaolo@passiochristi.org

Links and References:

1. [Roman Churches Wiki](#)
2. [Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church](#)
3. "Ingami, Raffaele" in [Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani - Volume 62 \(2004\)](#)
4. [Cathopedia.org](#)
5. [Annas Rom Guide](#)

(Excellent, in Danish.)

6. [Info.roma web-page](#)

- a. Priester, Ann; "Bell Towers and Building Workshops in Medieval Rome"; *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Jun., 1993), pp.199-220 (jstor 990786)
- b. Maskarinec, Maya; "Invoking Gregory on the Caelian in Medieval Rome: A Study of an Inscription at SS. Giovanni e Paolo"; *Visions of Medieval History in North America and Europe: Studies on Cultural Identity and Power*, 2022; Pp 335-356
- c. Goodson, Caroline; "Archaeology and the Cult of Saints in the Early Middle Ages: Accessing the Sacred"; *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Moyen Âge*, 2014
- d. Information plaques within the church

Other sources

[English Wikipedia page](#)

[Official diocesan web-page](#)

[Italian Wikipedia page](#)

[Interactive Noll Map Website](#)

["De Alvariis" gallery on Flickr -exterior](#)

["De Alvariis" gallery on Flickr -apse](#)

["De Alvariis" gallery on Flickr -campanile](#)

["De Alvariis" gallery on Flickr -interior](#)

["Romeartlover" web-page](#)

["Byzantium" blog-page on the underground area](#)

["Romasotterranea" web-page](#)

[Youtube video by "Passiochristi"](#)

[Youtube video of a RAI television programme](#) -no sound!

[Church web site](#)

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