

Chiesa di Dio Padre Misericordioso

(Chiesa del Terzo Millennio, Chiesa Giubileo)



The **Jubilee Church**, also known as *Church of God the Merciful Father*, is a church and community center in Tor Tre Teste in Rome. According to Richard Meier, its architect, it is "the crown jewel of the Vicariato di Roma's (Archdiocese of Rome) Millennium project". The Church serves eight thousand residents of the Tor Tre Teste area and was meant to socially "revive" Tor Tre Teste.

History

The Church was built to leave a tangible sign in the Jubilee year 2000, It was designed by American architect Richard Meier, and opened in 2003 as one of the Churches of the Jubilee. This was a project announced by the Diocese in 1995, the aim being to build fifty new churches in Rome's suburbs as a celebration of the Holy Year of 2000. This particular church, which includes a community center, has a spectacular post-modernist design which has made it famous, and is the only modern church in the Roman suburbs which has become a tourist attraction in its own right.

Exterior

The plan of the church is an irregular quadrilateral, and the edifice is constructed out of white concrete and glass. The south side of the church features three large curved walls of pre-cast concrete. Meier claims to have designed the church to minimize thermal peak loads inside, and more efficient use of energy. The concrete contains titanium dioxide and is photocatalytic, which means that it reacts with sunlight to bleach itself and so hopefully not turn grey with time. To the right of the entrance there is a tall and narrow vertical wall, on the other side of which is the community center.

The main body of the church is made up of three concrete so-called sails, which are three segments of a cylinder curved along its axis. The radii of the three segments are the same, but their height and length decrease with distance from the vertical wall. The first sail is placed symmetrically facing the wall, but the other two are placed asymmetrically so that their edges step back from the entrance. The spaces between the sails and wall are filled with clear glass screens, which flood the interiors

with light. The void between the first sail and the wall is the main church, between the first and second sails is the ferial chapel (for week-day Masses) and between the second and third sails is the baptistery. Erection of the sails was a triumph of civil engineering, and the whole design is both radical and risky. One danger anticipated is that thermal flexing of the sails may compromise the glass screens with time, leading to leaks. The campanile is part of the community center to the right of the entrance, and presents a huge white rectangle with a slot in the top left quadrant, containing a vertical row of five bells.

Campanile

It is attached to the near end of the parish annexe, and is an L-shaped structure in solid concrete slab twenty metres high. The long arm of the L faces outwards, and has a long vertical slot cut in its top left hand quadrant. The five bells are hung in this slot, one above the other.

Interior

Nave

Just within the glass wall forming the entrance frontage is a small entrance lobby, with access to left and right as well as straight ahead. In front is a screen wall in travertine of a pale brown hue, and on this is placed the organ gallery which is over and to the right of the entrance into the church proper. It is an open box frame assembled from entirely white panels of differing widths and without joins, and incorporates a cantilevered balcony supported by a slab pier reaching up over its front and up to the top part of the frame. This pier stands to the left of the entrance. The organ is a good instrument by Organaria Romana.

The back of the gallery is a solid panel containing a window strip in the shape of an inverted L, which recalls the plan of the campanile and so is being used here as a symbol for sacred sound. You can see this L from outside, through the glass wall above the entrance.

The left hand side of the nave has an aisle, the slightly curving wall of which is revetted in travertine of a slightly deeper hue than that of the entrance wall. The revetting is done in slabs of varying sizes, to give the clever effect of ghost pilaster strips. This wall contains square ventilation grilles which exit to the walkway atrium in between the church and the parish center. Each grille consists of a travertine slab with a grid of round holes drilled through it.

The church floor is also in polished travertine slabs. The type of stone used in the piazza outside continues into the entrance vestibule and to a square just inside the portal through the stone screen wall, but the rest of the nave is paved in a stone of a paler shade.

Sanctuary

The sanctuary is raised on three steps. The altar itself is free-standing, in travertine limestone, and is in the shape of one of the ancient Roman baths to be found re-used as altars in ancient Roman churches. The other sanctuary furniture is a matching set with this. To the left is a lectern or ambo with a president's chair up against the far wall behind, and to the right is a long bench for the other celebrants. Against the wall to the right behind the altar is a credence table. These items of sacred furniture, unlike the altar, are designed in slab mode without curves.

The sanctuary is dominated by a light-funnel over the back wall. This is in the form of a rhomboidal truncated pyramid ending in a little rectangular window, and with two L-shaped slots cut out of the top right hand edge which give a visual echo-effect to the window. The window light is directed onto a hanging crucifix, which is 17th century. The cross is wood, but the painted corpus is papier mâché. This item was a donation from "another Roman parish", and is the only figurative artwork that the architect wanted in his church.

However, the parish has commissioned an altarpiece bas-relief in marble depicting God the Father. It is by Massimo Galleni, and is a copy of a fourteenth-century work originally in Old St Peter's and attributed to Giovanni Dalmata or Mino da Fiesole.

At the entrance to the sacristy, behind the far wall, is a display case containing sacred vessels designed and executed by Bulgari.

Blessed Sacrament Chapel

To the left in the main body of the church, the largest of the three sails has an enormous rectangular void and the second sail behind it likewise. These make space for two side arenas for worship, a Blessed Sacrament Chapel to the top left and a Baptistery to the bottom left near the entrance.

The Blessed Sacrament Chapel is used for weekday Masses, and so is also called the Ferial Chapel. It is screened off by a free-standing wall made up of a linked row of white rectangular forms rather like a pylon. This has a rectangular aperture, and there is also an ingress gap at the far end.

The little chapel can seat twenty-four people. It has a little rectangular altar, and a lectern and president's chair to match those at the main altar. The tabernacle is a gilded bronze cube on top of a travertine pillar, with a circular door in two vertical halves which are deliberately tarnished in brown. This tabernacle replaced Meier's original design, which was judged not to be suitable.

The church's confessionals are small rooms at the back (near end) of the altar. They have wooden doors, and are designed for "face to face" confessions. This removes the opportunity of anonymous confession, which is not the mind of the Church and a "traditional" confessional is apparently to be provided.

Baptistery

The baptistery is at the lower left hand side. The font is a trapezoidal block of polished travertine, small end down and with one diagonal side. The actual basin is cut into the top, rather like a baby's bath.

In contrast to the terrazzo floor elsewhere, which is a pale brown color, around the font the paving is in grey stone. Also, the floor here is sunken, with a step down. Perhaps the architect wished to recall symbolically the days when baptism involved full immersion of adults, but he has created a trip hazard which has had to be roped off.

The baptistery is also the church's shrine to Our Lady. A mediaeval painted wooden statue has been provided of the Madonna and Child, under her title of Our Lady of Divine Mercy. It is described as a product of the so-called Scuola Campione, and is dated between 1310 and 1330.

Icons

The parish has commissioned a series of portable icons in a classic Byzantine style from Claudia Rapetti, and one of these may be on display in the sanctuary.

At present these are of the Mandylion, Pope St John Paul II, the Holy Family and an interesting one labelled Our Lady of Unexpected Joy. The artist has written an article about them, [here](#).

Artists and Architects:

Richard [Meier](#) (b. 1934), American architect

Location:

Address: Largo Terzio Millennio 8-9, 00155 Roma

Coord: [41°52'57"N 12°35'08"E](#)

Phone: 06 2315833

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toalsa62@yahoo.es (Associate pastor),
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Info:

The church is open:

Daily 7:30 to 12:30, 16:00 to 19:30.

Links:

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["Galinsky" architectural article in English with photos](#)

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