

Santi Domenico e Sisto



Santi Domenico e Sisto is an early 17th century convent, university and titular church in Rome. It is located on Largo Angelicum on the Quirinal Hill, in rione Monti (I). The joint dedication is to St Dominic and Pope St Sixtus II. [1]

History

The church which this one replaced dated from at least the 10th century, although its origins are wholly obscure. It emerges into history in the Register of Subiaco of 938 with the very odd name of Banneo Neapolim. This is the probable origin of the modern name of the locality which is Magnanapoli, although there seems to be some lingering doubt about this. [1]

This church, located at the beginning of Via Panisperna down at Largo Magna Napoli behind the square Largo Angelicum, built beginning in 1569 over the site of a former a little old church called Santa Maria Balneapolis. [2]

The first church at the site was built sometime before 1000. Pope Pius V (1566-1572), a Dominican himself, brought the Dominican nuns of the church of S. Sisto Vecchio on the Via Appia into the city of Rome and assigned them the old monastery of S. Maria della Neve on the site of the older S. Maria Magnanapoli. The old church was renovated between 1569 and 1575 (and a new convent in 1575). San Sisto's location, combined with dangerous delinquents, famine, earthquakes, a lack of water, bad air, and numerous cases of malaria, eventually made life on the Via Appia untenable for the community of Dominican nuns. In 1575 the nuns, along with their treasured icon, could move into their new home and they kept the name from their old church, but also consecrated the renovated church to their Order's founder San Domenico and they called it therefore Santi Domenico e Sisto. [2] [b] [d]

The long construction period (work was only completed in 1663) meant several other architects were

involved. The original plan was by the architect **Domenico di Dario da Mezzana**, would have laid out the foundations and started work on the monastic choir. **Giacomo della Porta** was certainly in charge from 1587 to 1593, and is thought to have finished the sanctuary and campanile and to have started the nave. [1] [b]

In 1602, **della Porta** died and the construction stopped for a number of years until **Nicola Torriani** was in charge from 1603 to 1636. He is known to have designed the lower part of the church nave, and he may also have designed the upper part. He must have overseen the beginning the façade, since **Carlo Maderno** was involved for a year from 1628 and was responsible for the lower pair of the statues on this façade. Nicola's brother **Orazio Torriani** helped from 1633, and took over the oversight from 1636 to 1641 after Nicola died. The monumental entrance staircases, arguably the best part of the church, are attributed to **Orazio**. [1] [b]

Santi Domenico e Sisto was a religious community that included members of some of the most prestigious Roman noble families; in this context, artistic patronage could demonstrate not only a nun's piety but also her family connections and social standing. [d]

Between 1632 and 1652, the side chapels of the church were decorated by various Dominican nuns, whose prominent family connections enabled several of them to commission some of the leading artists in Rome, including Lanfranco, Mola, Romanelli, and Raggi. While only one of these artists (Mola) can be directly linked to other work for the particular family of the chapel's patron, the circle of artists working at SS. Domenico e Sisto was employed for other decorations by the families of nuns residing in the convent, such as the Costaguti and the Altemps. [c] [d]

Then **Giovanni Battista Soria** took over, from 1641 to 1651. His artistic contribution is unclear, although the overall design of the façade is attributed to him. This is again controversial, since **Vincenzo della Greca** certainly worked on the upper part of the façade from 1651 to 1661. In the latter year **Vincenzo** died, and it was left to his son **Felice** finally to finish the work in 1663. The two Grecas are alternatively credited with the entrance staircases. [1]

In 1733 there were some repairs and restorations in the church under the architect **Giovanni Battista Contini**, who built a new sacristy on the right side with a new side entrance to the church. In 1749 nuns' church, "La Chiesa di dentro" was restored, and in 1932 the sacristy was rebuilt and a thorough restoration of the whole complex was completed. [1] [1]

The church was restored in 1850–52 when pilasters were added in the nave and the stucco work was repaired. At the same time a new marble floor was laid. [a]

The Dominican nuns were able to inhabit their new convent for just under three hundred years. In 1860 the interior of the church was restored, and embellished with stucco work and gilding. [1]

However, in 1873 the nuns were dispossessed by the Italian government together with all other communities of consecrated religious in Rome. The ostensible motivation was that the new national capital (the papal government had only been overthrown in Rome in 1870) needed immediate accommodation for civil servants and other government employees. However the sequestration was in reality an anti-clerical act, in that it was applied without discretion and many religious communities were evicted from their homes for no useful reason. This can be discerned from the way in which the government struggled to find uses for some empty convents. This particular convent was used as a secular school for fifty years after 1873. [1]

In 1874 the Via Nazionale had its gradients reduced along its length, and the work entailed the substantial reduction in the ground level of the Largo Magnanapoli. The knock-on effects were the lowering of the Via Panisperna to the left of the church, leaving an impressive revetting wall, and the substantial lengthening of the entrance stairways. Hence the lower part of the latter is late 19th century. [1]

The dispossessed community eventually found a new home in 1931 at Santa Maria del Rosario a Monte Mario. They took with them the original icon, where it remains. [1] [c]

What is now the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas, nicknamed the Angelicum after the title of Doctor Angelicus given to Aquinas, began its long life in 1222 as a house of studies attached to the Dominican friary of Santa Sabina. This was supplanted as the Studium Generale of the Roman province of the Dominican order in 1426 by the friary at Santa Maria sopra Minerva, which remained the headquarters of Dominican studies in the city until 1873. [1]

The Minerva friary was also suppressed by the Italian government in 1873, and the studium spent fifty years functioning in several separate buildings. Paradoxically, in this time its status and importance improved substantially as a result of the publication of the encyclical Aeterni Patris by Pope Leo XIII in 1879. This gave massive encouragement to the revival of interest in the theology and philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas within the Church (the so-called neo-Thomist movement), and the studium as a Roman Dominican house of studies was well placed to exploit this. As a result, it became the Pontificium Collegium Divi Thomae de Urbe in 1906, and the Pontificium Institutum Internationale Angelicum in 1926. [1]

In 1928, the Angelicum negotiated a purchase of the old convent of Santi Domenico e Sisto, with its church, from the Fascist government for the sum of nine million lire. This gave it the long-needed central location for its operations. Conversion of the convent buildings to function as a house of studies was a major project, and classes only started at the new complex in 1932. [1]

The Angelicum was raised to its present status of a university (Pontificia Studiorum Universitas a Sancto Thoma Aquinate in Urbe) by Pope John XXIII in 1963. It has boasted a number of distinguished alumni in recent times, perhaps the most notable being Archbishop Fulton Sheen and Pope St John Paul II. [1]

The university website asserts that the faculty has 150 teachers from thirty countries, and an enrollment of between 1200 and 1400 students from almost 100 nationalities. [1]

Cardinalate

The church was made a titular diaconate on 21 October 2003. The first titular was Georges Marie Martin Cottier O.P., created cardinal on the same day. He was promoted to cardinal priest pro hac vice in 2014, but died in 2016 to be replaced by José Tolentino Calaça de Mendonça. [1]

Exterior

The brick exterior north wall (1) facing Via Panisperna is very long wall, because behind it is not one but two churches, the rear portion is the church for the cloistered nuns, while the front part functioned as a church for parishioners.

On the left side of the church, facing Via Panisperna, is an interesting aedicule consisting of a rectangular marble frame surmounted by an arch with a very damaged icon of the *Virgin Mary with the Christ child and the Saints Domenico and Sisto*, (2) corresponding to the Cappella della Madonna in the Church. Today the aedicule is too high with respect to the street level: this is due to the lowering of Via Panisperna. [3]

The wall is very high because of the tall, double level church, and because the level of Via Panisperna was lowered significantly when the leveling of Via Nazionale and the modern Piazza Magnanapoli was created in the late 19th century.

Therefore, it became necessary to expand the lower part of the monumental staircase up to the church from the original five to now 17 step (3). The church has thus been a very isolated and unapproachable appearance and the main entrance is also rarely open. Instead, one can inquire at the concierge lodge and then access the church by the side entrance.

The first flight of stairs leads to a small landing (4), at which is a small semi-circular building with an entrance to the crypt. The door here is flanked by two concave pilasters with nun faces, and crowned by an angel's head. The crypt, once a burial place for nuns, extends under the entire surface below the church. [3]

From the small landing a monumental double staircase (5) winds its way up to the landing in front of the church's main entrance (6). On both sides of the staircase is a beautiful stone balustrade. The landing in front of the entrance (which forms the ceiling of the semicircular entrance to the crypt) is provided with a balustrade of the same type. It is all made of travertine and brick. The same applies to the straight staircase

(7), to the right of the entrance into the monastery courtyard. The double staircase from 1654 is the work of **Orazio Torriani**. [a]

Façade

The Baroque travertine and stucco façade (8) was constructed in 1646 by **Felice and Vincenzo della Greca** and consists of two storeys crowned by a triangular tympanum.

The first storey has four pairs of Corinthian pilasters in shallow relief. These support an entablature with a cornice which has both modillions (little corbels) and dentillation. The frieze of this has an inscription dedicating the church to St Dominic as founder of his order and the nunnery:

B[eato] P[at]ri Domin[ico] Ord[inis] Praed[icatorum] Fu[n]dat[ori] et monialium parenti, d[ed]icata].

In between the two pairs of pilasters on each side are two blank tablets in Baroque frames, the lower plain but the upper embellished with swags, ribbons and a winged putto's head in a little segmental pediment.

These tablets are above and below two statues by **Marcantonio Canini, 1654** of *Pope St Sixtus* (left) and *St Dominic*. [1] [a]

The single entrance portal (9) is high and wide. It has an elaborate prothyrium (entrance gateway) which has a pair of Ionic columns with swagged capitals, supporting two posts which in turn supports a broken segmental pediment. Into the break is inserted an oval tondo containing a statue of *Our Lady of the Rosary* by **Marcantonio Canini** which is surrounded by elaborate flower sprays. In between the door case and the pediment is a tablet bearing a relief of a dog. This is a pun on the Latin name of the Dominicans -Domini Canes or "dogs of the Lord". The lintel itself has another winged putto's head, the door case has rolled molding in high relief and there is a pair of pilasters to either side of the columns in shallow relief and in the same style.

The upper level has the same structure as the lower level, but the high base upon which the pilasters rests bears a bas-relief with the symbols of the four saints: the palm trees of San Pietro, tiara of San Sisto, the dog of San Domenico and the sun of San Tommaso d'Aquino. The high center window has a small balcony railing in the style of balustrade below and it is crowned by a triangular tympanum on consoles.

There are two niches with curved pediments on the upper level with statues by **Stefano Maderno** from about 1636, of *St Thomas Aquinas* (right) and *St Peter of Verona* (1205-1252, Dominican priest and martyr, patron of the Dominicans). These are in rectangular niches with moulded frames, topped by winged putto's heads and raised segmental pediments. In between the pilaster capitals above them are two swags of roses [1] [a]

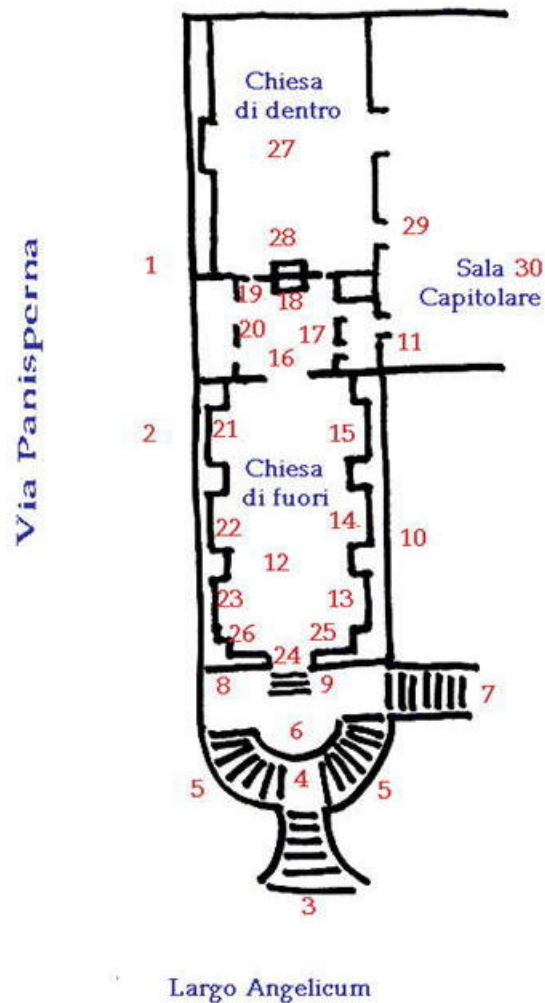
The gable of the pediment has six flaming urn finials, which are prominent in skyline views of the city. The central finial is the metal cross traditional on Roman churches, but this example is unusually elaborate. [1]

Church right side wall (10) equals the left, but here interrupted the long wall of the cross buildings, linking the Church with the large, Monastery building, which today houses the University Angelicum. It was on this site that it later demolished sacristy was built in 1733 and it is in the cross building's first floor to the nuns' former choir "upper church", now converted into Chapter Room.

Campanile

The square bell tower (11), which rises above the place where the two churches meet, was built in the years 1577 to 1593 and is attributed to **Giacomo della Porta**. The upper storey is just above the roofline, and has a tall and proportionally narrow arched and molded sound hole on each face. The top has a triangular pediment with modillions on each side, then comes a low square plinth followed by an octagonal one with an oculus (round opening) on each face. Finally there is the cupola, which is ogee-curved in lead with a ball and cross finial. [1]

Plan



Interior

The church (12) has a single nave with three altars on each side, standing in shallow niches with an arch over each altar. Each niche is flanked by marble-clad pilasters with gilded Corinthian capitals. Stucco angels in pairs above each arch were executed before 1636 by **Battista and Francesco Petraglia**. [2] [a]

Over side altar arches runs a gilded frieze here and there interrupted by barred openings which the nuns could follow in the life of the church from a corridor that runs all the way around the church wall of niches. For the cloistered Dominican Nuns it was important that they had a perfectly defined and shielded part of the church from which they could participate in the services but not be seen. However, they had to be able to participate with their singing from the secluded choir. [2]

Therefore of the Church Santi Domenico e Sisto, "La Chiesa di Dentro", "church within", or the choir, which is located along Via Panisperna up to Via di Sant'Agata dei Goti. It is this space that was reserved the cloistered nuns from here they could follow the services in the "La Chiesa di Fuori", "Church outside", that part open to the public. [2]

Finally, there is "La Chiesa di Sopra" or "Coro di Sopra", "church / choir upstairs", located on the floor above the church rooms and today is used as a meeting hall. [2]

High on the walls above the frieze is a projecting cornice and the top piece of wall between the three large windows above the arches supporting the barrel-vaulted ceiling is decorated with frescoes by **Domenico Maria Canuti** in 1674, depicting the *Apotheosis of St Dominic*, where San Domenico rises to heaven through sunlit clouds. The *trompe l'oil* framing is by **Enrico Haffner**. Canuti and Haffner's brilliant quadratura vault fresco was paid for by the Dominican convent as a whole. [1] [3] [c]

On each side of this is seen the Cardinal virtues:

- *Righteousness and Fortitude*, closest to the entrance and
- *Temperance and Prudence*, at the rear of the church.

In the vault pendentives are frescoes painted in shades of gray scenes from San Domenico's life:

- *San Domenico and San Francesco meet at the well in Cremona*,
- *The devil in the form of a monkey turns out San Domenico*,
- *San Domenico heals a woman for the fourth day fever*, and
- *Dominican-Order triumphs over heresy by the Holy Sacrament*.

The allegorical figures between the windows:

- *Religion and Obedience* (right) and
- *Church and Heresy* (left).

Church floor of the nave has been converted into checkerboard in the years 1849-52 except for the area in the middle of the church which has Dominican crests in different colored marble. In the floor are various memorial inscriptions: [2]

- near the entrance one for Bl. Hyacinthe-Marie Cormier, O.P. (d. 1916)
- near the sanctuary commemorates Margherita Rota

On the counterfaçade:

- on the wall to the left (25) is a long inscription that tells about the icon of San Sisto, [d]
- to the right (26) sits a memorial to Sister Giacinta Domenica di Borbone (d. 1813). [a]

Above the entrance (24) is a beautifully carved and painted wooden balcony, carried by two granite columns, the church choir. It was built in 1671-72 of **Girolamo Morati**. On the wall behind balcony are three arches, the middle one is crowned by the Dominican-Order coat-of-arms supported by two stucco angels. The arches on either side are crowned by inscriptions with the Principles of "Lodare, benedire e pregare" ("Praise, bless and pray"). [3]

Over the arches is the continuation of the frieze with the grated window openings from the corridor behind from which the nuns could follow what was happening in the Church. At the top there is a mural on each side of the high window that is covered with a curtain:

- *San Domenico in Ecstasy* (on the left) and
- *Virgin Mary appears to San Domenico* (on the right).

They are made of painters **Canuti** and **Haffner**.

Presbyterium

The sanctuary (16) is a reasonably large, square area from which the right is access to the sacristy through a door with a transom that - like the other three in the room - was carried out in 1637 by stonemason Alessandro Montonese from a drawing by **Giovanni Battista Soria**. [2]

All the walls in the room were covered in the years 1637-40 with exquisite polychrome marble, by Montonese and paid for by various noble nuns. Over marble panels, the walls are plastered and fitted with stucco decorations of angels and "uncut" frames around the frescoes. Stucco work is done by the plasterer Francesco Petraglia, who also worked with stucco decoration of the church itself. [2]

The high altar (18) was built in the years 1636-1640, according to tradition, from a drawing by **Gian Lorenzo Bernini**, and funded by the sisters Lucrezia and Antonia Leni, whose coat-of-arms can be seen on the altar. The present altarpiece consists of a marble slab with two little angels in relief, holding a gilded and beautifully decorated frame which surrounds a 15th century terracotta plaque with a low relief of the *Madonna with Child*, installed in 1640. Over the frame there is a relief the Holy Spirit appearing on golden rays with a relief of God the Father inserted in the arched pediment further above. [2] [d]

This is not the original altarpiece. Previously the icon surround was fitted with two silver angels that were removed and melted to pay the tax on the Papal States by the French occupation as instructed by the Treaty of Tolentino. [2] [e]

Nor is the icon in the frame the original altarpiece, but a newer terracotta relief from the 15th century, replacing a very old picture that had been in the nuns' possession dating back to when they lived in Monastero di San'Aurea in Via Giulia. It was an old Byzantine that has been dated variably from the 6th through the 9th century, thought to be the image that St. Luke painted of Madonna, known as the icon of San Sisto or the *Madonna Advocata*. The image had given to St. Dominic by Pope Honorius III. Today this icon is in Monastero del Rosario on Monte Mario, while a copy can be seen on the altar of the nuns choir. You can read about the image's history on an inscription to the left of the main entrance. [2] [d] [e]

The altar itself has a tabernacle with a monstrance throne above it for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Behind is a grille, which conceals a sarcophagus containing the relics of Blessed Hyacinth Mary Cormier OP, who was beatified in 1994. [1]

On sanctuary end wall (19) forming the wall between the two churches, "La Chiesa di fuori" (Inside church), and "La Chiesa di dentro" (Outside church), there are six frescoes surrounding the altarpiece from around 1642. They depict scenes from the life of Our Lady. These are by Louis Cousin, a Flemish painter who used the name Luigi Gentili when working in Rome: [2]

- *Annunciation*,
- *Birth of Jesus*,
- *Wedding*, and
- *Visitation with Elisabeth*

and, in oval stucco frames:

- *Mary is presented in the Temple* and
- *Mary's birth*

On the left wall (20), like on the opposite wall, there are two doors which are made from a drawing by Giovanni Battista Soria in the 1637. The wall is adorned with a framed mural depicting *San Domenico burn books of heresy*, also called *San Domenico and the fire miracle*, painted by Luigi Gentile in 1638. The painting tells about how St Dominic during the crusade against the Albigenses threw his writings on the fire that refused to burn them because they were filled with the true words of faith. Above the fresco there is a barred window opening between two little angels for the cloistered nuns. In front of the sanctuary is a marble balustrade from the 1636. The sponsor was by Suor Maria Maddalena (Fonseca), whose coat-of-arms adorns the columns. [2]

The right wall (17) is decorated with a stucco framed fresco depicting *San Domenico in the battle against the Albigenses at Muret in 1213*, painted by Pietro Paolo Baldini in the 1639. The figure in the foreground is Count Simon de Montfort, who in 1208 was head of the French army in the crusade against the Albigenses. Above the fresco is a barred window opening between two little angels for the nuns. [2]

The barrel-vaulted ceiling is, like the ceiling of the nave, decorated with frescoes by Domenico Maria Canuti and Enrico Haffner in 1674-75. They represent:

- *Virgin Mary protects Dominican-Order* (vault)
- *Christ reveals himself to San Domenico and the Dominican Nuns* (back wall)

and, in oval stucco frames on the sides:

- *Pope Honorius III surrenders Order approval for San Domenico*
- *Virgin Mary appears to San Domenico*.

The floor with geometric shapes in different marble varieties is from 1637 to 1640. It is made by Alessandro Loreto, commissioned by the nuns Maria Grazia and Flavia (or Flaminia) Domitilla Capizucchi whose coat-of-arms can be seen in the medallion in the center. [2]

Left side altars

Cappella del Rosario (23)

The first altar on the left side houses the painting *Madonna del Rosario*, with St. Dominic and St. Catharine of Sienna kneeling before the Virgin and Child from 1652 by Giovanni Francesco Romanelli as the altarpiece and some paintings and frescoes on the theme *Mysteries of the Rosary*, possibly made by Clemente Maioli or Pietro Paolo Baldini and his school. Altar was sponsored by the sisters Ortensia and Maria Caterina Čelsi, and the family coat-of-arms sits above the entrance, supported by two stucco angels. [2]

The altar space is richly decorated with stucco work, with framing ceiling frescoes: [2]

- *Virgin Mary's Coronation* in the middle and
- *Assumption* and
- *Pentecost* on each side.

On the walls hang paintings:

- *Resurrection* and
- *Ascension*.

Over the altarpiece is small cherubs with rosary.

Cappella di Santa Caterina (22)

The second chapel on the left is dedicated to St Catherine of Siena. The altarpiece depicts *The Mystical Wedding of St Catherine*, was painted by **Francesco Allegrini da Cantiano** in 1532, who also did the other paintings here with scenes from the saint's life: [2]

- *Santa in Gloria*, in the ceiling with
- the *Miraculous Communion* on the right side and
- the *Reception of the Stigmata*, on the left,

while on the sidewalls are

- on the right *Saint Share her Heart with Christ*, and
- *San Domenico gives the order habit to Santa Caterina*.

Near the altar is an inscription that says it was built in 1632 sponsored by Sr. Innocenza, with her family's crest on the base. Also above the entrance arch is an inscription held up by two stucco angels, which reads: "You must be betrothed to me", which alludes to the nuns "spiritual wedding" with Christ and the theme of the altarpiece. [2]

Cappella della Madonna (formerly called "Cappella del Crocifisso") (21)

The third altar on the left side contains a very interesting fresco from 1460 of the *Madonna with Child*, which is attributed to **Benozzo Gozzoli**, a pupil of Fra Angelico, and may originate from the old Church of Santa Maria a Magna Naples, which was built before the current Santi Domenico e Sisto. It is the only remnant of the former church and it is not in very good condition. For a long time it was hidden behind a painting by **Giovanni Lanfranco**, as the nuns had suspended when they moved into the new church. The Lanfranco painting was done in 1646, depicted the *Crucifixion*, and now hangs in the old convent building, today's University "Angelicum". The old paintings were randomly discovered in 1771 and then again covered until it was restored in 1890. [2] [3]

On the left side of the painting is an arm and a book from a saintly figure, indicating that the fresco was originally larger and that only that part of it has been taken down from a wall in the old church. Angela Catalano does mention that the fresco could also come from Tor de 'Conti, where, according to Vasari was a fresco of the same subject. [2]

Chapel's decoration was commissioned by Sister Anna Margherita Altemps in the 1646 who wanted it dedicated to "The Crucified". It is also Altemps-family crest that sits between two angels on the arch above the altar. [2]

The walls are decorated with frescoes by **Pietro Paolo Baldini** and envision "*Scenes from Christ's Passion*".

The arch is decorated with of: [2]

- four small stucco angels framing a fresco of *God the Father*,
- flanked by *The Crowning of Thorns* and *The Way to Calvary*.

On the sides are stucco angels with symbols of the Passion framing

- *The Speech in the Garden of Gethsemane* and
- *Scourging*

Right side altars

Cappella di San Domenico (15)

The altar on the right side next to the sanctuary is decorated with frescoes by an anonymous artist from

around the middle of the 17th century, while the altarpiece was painted by **Pier Francesco Mola** in the 1648. It depicts *The Vision of St. Dominic at Soriano*, and refers to the legend of how the lay brother Lorenzo da Grotteria on 1530 in a vision received a portrait of San Domenico from Santa Caterina d'Alessandria, Santa Maria Maddalena and the Virgin Mary, who asked him to place it on the altar. [2]

The altar was paid by the four sisters Paola Maria, Maria Candida, Maria Agnese and Prospera Vincenza Costaguti, who ordered it in the 1624. Family crest sits between two stucco angels over the arch of the church wall. The walls of the room are lined with marble and the ceiling is painted with frescoes *San Domenico in Glory* in a frame in the middle, and *Miracles of the Saint* on each side. Also, these frescoes are believed carried out by **Mola**, as in this period (1648) he worked for the Costaguti family in Palazzo Costaguti. [2]

Cappella di San Pietro Martire (14)

The second chapel on the right is dedicated to the Dominican saint Peter of Verona (1203-1252), better known as Saint Peter Martyr. The altarpiece depicting *The Martyrdom of San Pietro da Verona*, probably a copy, made around 1525 by an anonymous artist from Siena, of a work of Titian, which formerly hung in the Church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice, where it was destroyed in a fire. On the edge of the arch sits two stucco angels with the inscription "Fidei Column" (Pillar of Faith). [2]

The room is decorated with the saint's attributes in painted or gilded stucco reliefs, frescoes and paintings: [3]

- *San Tommaso d'Aquino receives the divine inspiration*, and
- *A miracle of San Pietro Martire*, at the top and
- *San Pietro Martire preach*, and
- *Miracle of San Tommaso*, at the bottom, while a
- *Glory of Angels* decorate the ceiling.

The paintings are attributed to **Pietro Paolo Baldini** and believed carried out around the middle of the 17th century. The whole thing was heavily restored in the years 1819 and 1849-52. [2]

Cappella di Santa Maria Maddalena or Cappella Alaleona (13)

The first altar on the right side was commission by Maria Eleanora Alaleona who was superior of the convent, in 1649-52. The decoration was designed by **Gian Lorenzo Bernini**, who also designed the model for the sculpture group over the altar, which then was carved in marble by one of his pupils, **Antonio Raggi**, in 1649. Group title is *Noli me tangere* and depicts the moment when Jesus after the resurrection says to Mary Magdalene, "Do not touch me" (John's Gospel 20,17). The sculpture was commissioned by the family Alaleona in memory of their relative, the young nun Maria Alaleona. The backdrop has a fresco of the empty tomb in its garden. [1] [3]

Bernini also designed the altar in the chapel. The design of the altar is based on two curves. Overall, it is bowed (convex), but the backdrop to the sculptural group (which is the altarpiece) is coved (concave). [1] [4]

The altar is fabricated from polychrome marbles. The bowed frontal is in a purplish-red marble, and incorporates a design feature like an ancient bath-tub. Yellow Siena and green verde antico marbles are used in bands above and below this, as well as to the sides of the aedicule above, and below the altarpiece is a band of alabaster. All this polychromy, especially the deep red, focuses attention on the sculptures which are in white marble and so stand out. [3]

A pair of red marble Corinthian columns flank the sculptures to create the aedicule, and these support two halves of a split and separated segmental pediment. These halves are twisted outward, again focusing attention on the sculptures. [3]

Stucco angels with *Symbols of the Passion* (cross, crown of thorns and Veronica's Veil) above the altar and the two figures over the arch *Religion* and *Chastity* may also have be made by **Raggi**. [2]

The walls are particularly rich in exquisite marble varieties: red jasper is used for the Corinthian columns, while other elements are made of alabaster, marmo di porta santa and giallo antico. The ceiling and arch above the altar is decorated with gilded and painted stucco. [2]

Chiesa di Dentro

From the sanctuary (16) through the two small doors on either side of the high altar (18) is the old "Church Within" (27), which now serves as the Nuns' Choir. It is a large square room lined with two rows of choir stalls in walnut from the 17th century.

Altar (28) carried out in 1671 by **Vincenzo della Greca**, located at the front of the space as a reflection of the altar of the "Church outside". It is completely renovated in a major restoration of the space in 1749 and consists of a high base with a pillar in the pavonazzetto marble on each side, bearing a broken gable field that surrounds a frame with a crucifix between stucco angels. The altarpiece is a copy from 1893 of the *Madonna di San Luca* which was previously above the high altar, surrounded by a relief of flying angels. [9]

On the walls there are paintings by the same unknown artist in the Mannerist style and restored in 1749, depicting :

- the *Nativity* (1605),
- *The Last Judgement* (1605),
- the *Resurrection* (1606) and
- *Calvary* (1606),

On the wall to the right of the altar is a painting of *San Pietro surrender the keys to San Pio V*, by **Mattia Tome** in 1749, and below he has painted the church with the old staircase. On the wall hangs also the *Assumption* and a *Madonna of the Rosary*, both from the late 17th century.

In the south wall (29) there is a door for access to the great monastery, the outer portal is made of beautifully decorated marble and attributed GB Soria or Vincenzo della Greca. Above the door hangs a painting of the *Death of San Domenico*, from the beginning of the 17th century. In space, which now connects the church with the Pontificia Università San Tommaso d'Aquino, facing two marble statues of *San Domenico* and *San Sisto*, by **Domenico Lori** (1610).

To the right of the door is a staircase up to the "Sala Capitolare" (30) on the floor above. Hall is a former choir and was called "Chiesa di Sopra" ("Church on top"), it lies on the right side of presbyteriet. Up here began the corridor which goes all the way around the church walls behind the frieze, in which the numerous grated windows gave the nuns to follow the fair. "Sala Capitolare", there is a single rectangular room with a flat wooden ceiling, built in 1668. A marble altar with small stucco cherubs on the top frame a fresco of the *Madonna and Child*, called "Madonna delle Grotte," which in 1677 was dismantled in the nuns' old monastery, Monastero di San Sisto on the Via Appia, and brought to their new church, according to tradition in 1527.

In "Sala Capitolare" are also two other memories that nuns have brought with them from their former churches:

- a large wooden cross from San Sisto Vecchio. At this, the crucified Christ painted as the "suffering" ("Christus patiens") and by his side is seen the Virgin Mary and John ("San Giovanni"). On cross cross ends are painted angels on the base Dominican monks and nuns at the top there is an inscription "IHS NAZA - REX REX - IUDERORUM" ("Jesus Christ of Nazareth King of the Jews") under an additional small cross arm with two angels on each side an almond-shaped frame around the Christ depicted as the *Redeemer*. It is believed done - by two different artists - in the first half of the 13th century.
- A triptych (called "Trittico di Santa Aurea" or "Tabernacolo di Santa Aurea") in 1358 by **Filippo Vanni**, the nuns brought from the church of Santa Aurea in Via Giulia, when they sold it in 1514. The center piece shows the Virgin Mary with the Christ child between two angels and San Domenico and Santa Aurea with Eve and the serpent as small figures in the foreground. In the background glimpsed San Tommaso and San Bartolomeo. Side wings are painted with 4 scenes from Santa Aurea's life.

Also here is the painting by **Giovanni Lanfranco**, as the nuns left hanging on the upper altar in the Church left side, as this altar was decorated in the 1646. This painting, which depicts *The Crucifixion* had covered up an old fresco, which until then had adorned the altar and which today has been brought to light in honor and dignity, while Lanfranco's painting can either be seen here or in the old convent building, today's University "Angelicum".

Special Note

The Angelicum boasts a number of distinguished alumni. Perhaps the most notable: Archbishop Fulton Sheen, Pope John Paul II

Access

According to the Angelicum website, the church is open:

Fridays 14:30 to 18:30;
Saturdays 9:00 to 12:30, 14:30 to 18:30;
Sundays 10:00 to 12:30, 14:30 to 18:30.
Closed August.

The church has become one of the more popular venues on the Centro Storico wedding circuit.

It is also apparently possible, on asking at the porter's lodge (portineria) at the top of the stairs to the right of the church, to visit the cloister of the old convent and the choir chapel where the Dominican friars pray the Divine Office. This is located on the other side of the wall behind the high altar in the church. Access is through the cloister - ask at the portineria for directions.

Artists and Architects:

Alessandro Loreto (17th cent), Italian mosaic floor artist
Antonio [Raggi](#) [aka *Il Lombardo*] (1624-1686), Italian sculptor of the Baroque
Battista Petraglia (17th cent), Italian stucco artist
Benozzo [Gozzoli](#) di Lese (1421-1497), Italian painter of the Renaissance period
Carlo [Maderno](#) (1556-1629), Swiss-Italian architect (and also [here](#))
Domenico di Dario da Mezzana (16th cent), Italian architect
Domenico Lori (17th cent), Italian sculptor
Domenico Maria [Canuti](#) (1625-1684), Italian Baroque painter
Enrico [Haffner](#) (1640-1702), Italian Baroque painter
Felice [della Greca](#) (1625-1677), Italian architect and writer
Francesco Allegrini da Cantiano (16th cent.), Italian painter
Francesco Petraglia (17th cent.), Italian stucco artist
Giacomo [della Porta](#) (c.1533-1602), Italian sculptor and architect
Girolamo Morati (17th cent), Italian architect
Gian Lorenzo [Bernini](#) (1598-1680), Italian Baroque sculptor and architect (also see [here](#))
Giovanni Battista [Contini](#) (1641-1723), Italian architect of the Late Baroque period
Giovanni Battista [Soria](#) (1581-1651), Italian architect
Giovanni Francesco [Romanelli](#) (1610-1662), Italian Baroque painter from Viterbo
Giovanni [Lanfranco](#) (1582-1647), Italian Baroque painter [also see Palazzi]
Louis [Cousin](#) [aka *Luigi Gentile da Bruxelles*] (1605-1667), Flemish painter of the Baroque period
Marcantonio [Canini](#) (1622-1669), Italian painter and sculptor
Mattia Tome (18th cent), Italian painter
Nicola [Torriani](#) (17th cent), Italian architect
Orazio [Torriani](#) (1602-1657), Italian architect and sculptor
Pier Francesco [Mola](#) [aka *Il Ticinese*] (1612-1666), Italian painter of the High Baroque
Pietro Paolo [Baldini](#) (17th cent), Italian artist of the late Baroque period
Stefano [Maderno](#) (1576-1636), Italian late-Renaissance sculptor and stuccoist (also see [here](#))
Vincenzo [della Greca](#) (1592-1661), Italian architect.

Burials:

Bl. Hyacinthe-Marie [Cormier](#) (1832-1916)
<76th Master General of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans)>
< beatified by Pope John Paul II on 20 November 1994

Location:

1 Largo Angelicum, 00184 Roma
Coordinates: [41° 53' 45.37" N, 12° 29' 16.91" E](#)

Info:

Telephone: 0039 06 6702201
Open times: Open Saturday 03.00pm-06.00pm
Visits upon booking: tel. 06 6702201

Masses:

Weekdays: 07:15am-12:15pm

Holidays: 08:00am

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Monastery

When a group of nuns from the Dominican-monastery at the Church of San Sisto Vecchio in Via Appia in the 1560s had to leave this because of the unhealthy climate, ordered Pope Pius V to be built a new monastery and a new church for the displaced nuns. This pope, who himself came from Dominican-Order, had in 1568 to 4000 scudi bought all the old complex at the dilapidated church of Santa Maria a Magna Naples consisting of church and klosterbyggninger and various other buildings, stables and barns, and in 1575 to the nuns move into their new home.

Work on the new Monastery and Church complex began in 1569 under the leadership of architect Giacomo della Porta and it continued in the following years. Klostergården was completed in 1625, but not until the end of the same century, the rest of the monastery finished.

A large fire broke out in 1737 in the monastery and led to some repair work. In addition, it is believed that part manuscripts and documents relating to Church and Monastery building hereby lost.

During the French occupation in 1798, the nuns were forced to leave their monastery and moving in with the nuns in the nearby Convento di Santa Caterina da Siena, while Monastero dei Santi Domenico e Sisto was adapted for military hospital. Moreover, it was the nuns sell off their "family silver" to pay tax to the French Government. When the French troops left Rome, had to be re-done several repairs before the nuns back in 1800 could move back home.

Other accidents involved monastery: in 1811 caused and a hurricane and the following year an earthquake havoc.

In 1870, after the creation of the new total Kingdom of Italy, took over the new government much of the monastery, where they installed the newly created "board" Il Fondo per il Culto, while the nuns had to move together in the remainder of the building. On this occasion tilbyggedes a low-rise building in the front yard.

In 1928, surpassing both the Church and Convent of "Ordine dei Predicatori" and Dominican Nuns had to move out in 1931, when they moved to the Convento del Santissimo Rosario on Monte Mario, where they still live.

Finally moved in 1932 that later Pontifical University, which today is called Pontificia Università San Tommaso d'Aquino, into the old monastery buildings.

In the monastery should hang a painting by Lazzaro Baldi with the subject Pope Pius V, who served the victory at Lepanto by an angel.