

Santa Francesca Romana

Santa Maria Nova al Palatino



Santa Francesca Romana or **Santa Maria Nova** is a 10th century titular church and minor basilica, formerly monastic, in the rione Campitelli (X). The basilica is on the north side of the Via Sacra of the Roman Forum, on top of the ruins of Hadrian's [Temple of Venus and Roma](#) and on the summit of a little hill anciently known as the Velian. The dedication is actually to the Blessed Virgin Mary, with a secondary dedication to [St Frances of Rome](#). [1] [8]

History

Temple

The church occupies part of the site of the great ancient temple dedicated to Venus Felix and Roma Aeterna, founded by the emperor Hadrian in the year 135. He built it on the atrium of the Domus Aurea of Nero, providing a large podium measuring 145 meters long and 100 meters wide and surrounding it with a colonnaded porticus or sacred enclosure which has left surviving columns in grey granite. These were re-erected in 1935. [1] [a]

Most of the building has gone completely, except for the apses of the cellae which were provided by the emperor Maxentius in 307 after a fire had burnt the temple out. What remains are these two apses, Venus's facing the Colosseum and Roma's facing the church. The temple must have survived substantially intact until 630 when the emperor Heraclius allowed Pope Honorius I to loot its gilded bronze roof tiles for use at St Peter's. It is now thought that complete ruination only came with a massive earthquake in the early 9th century. [1]

Legend of St Peter and Simon Magus

The origin of the church was an oratory dedicated to Sts Peter and Paul, founded by Pope Paul I (757-767) in the mid 8th century. This was erected in or by the putative western entrance to the temple's sacred enclosure, about where the nave of the present church is now. [1] [a]

The motivation for it was a strange legend, attested to by several patristic authors, featuring St Peter and Simon Magus. It derives from the 2nd century Acts of Peter. According to it, the latter was a Jewish magician who had won over the emperor Nero by his magical tricks, and entered into a miracle contest with St Peter during which he boasted that he could fly -and did. The saint knelt in prayer, with the result that Simon crashed and died. Two stone slabs with the alleged imprint of the apostle's knees were on display by this oratory, and are still preserved in the church. [1] [2]

Foundation of church

The nearby church of Santa Maria Antiqua fell into disrepair and was abandoned in the mid 9th century, probably as a result of the earthquake in 847 which smashed the remaining structures in the Forum. Pope Leo IV (847-55) transferred the rights and obligations attaching to the old church to the oratory of Sts Peter and Paul, but without changing the name of the latter. [1] [4]

In the reign of Pope Gregory V (996-9) the old title of Santa Maria Antiqua was finally transferred to the oratory of Saints Peter and Paul which was henceforth known as Santa Maria Nova. Also, the pope enshrined the relics of several martyrs brought from the suburban catacombs which were being stripped and abandoned. Their names were Nemesius, Exuperia, Sempronius (or Symphronius), Olympius, Lucilla and Theodulus. [1]

The old oratory was rebuilt as a church between 847 and 996, with its back wall on the line of the stairs of the stylobate of the ruined temple. It is not known when the attached monastery was founded, nor what sort of monks first inhabited it. [1]

Pope Alexander III (1159-1181) ordered a restoration, which involved the provision of the surviving apse mosaic, the building of the fine Romanesque campanile and the rebuilding of the convent. The church was re-consecrated in 1161. It was damaged by fire at some time before or during the pontificate of Honorius III (1216-1227), and was restored by that pope who provided a new roof. [1] [2] [4]

In 1352, at the request of Cardinal Peter Roger (Gregory XI) Clement VI entrusted the church and attached building to the Benedictine monks of Monte Oliveto. The Olivetans, named after Monte Oliveto near Florence, was a late reform of the Benedictine monastic life, started by St Bernard Tolomei. [1] [a]

St Frances of Rome or Santa Francesca Romana, full name Francesca Bussa de' Leoni (1384-1440). She was born in Rome as the daughter of the nobleman Paolo Bussa and his wife Iacobella dei Roffredeschi. She was a married noblewoman of the city, who, in 1425, founded an enclosed house of Benedictine oblate nuns at Santa Maria Annunziata a Tor de' Specchi near the Campodoglio. The convent has never been suppressed, and still survives. When she died in 1440 the monastery claimed her body and entombed it in the church. [1] [2] [4] [7]

St Frances was canonized by Pope Paul V in 1608, and this was a spur to the monks to refit the church. Sponsored by Cardinal Paolo Emilio Sfondrat, protector of the Olivetan order, the interior remodelling and the addition of the spectacular wooden ceiling in 1612 was supervised by **Carlo Lombardi**. The entrance façade to the design of **Lombardi** was added and completed in 1615 by stonemason **Francesco Betania**. The confessio was built, and the saint's body enshrined in it in 1638. As a result, the church gained its secondary dedication and its usual name. [1] [4] [e]

The French occupation from 1798 saw the monastery pillaged. After the monks regained possession of their property, in 1816 they demolished the old mediaeval ranges round the south courtyard and so freed the Arch of Titus and the east part of the Via Sacra. In place of these, they employed **Giuseppe Valadier** to build a new south-west cloister range and a narrow range to the south-east on the line of the old entrance wall of Roma's cella. The work was completed in 1829. [1]

The confessio containing the saint's shrine was re-modelled in 1858. [1]

The monastery was suppressed by the Italian government in 1873, although Olivetan monk-priests continued to serve the church. [1]

The church interior was restored in 1953. [1]

Exterior

The disused side entrance from the Forum used to connect with the mediaeval monastic range running down to the Arch of Titus. It is now accessed by a pair of transverse staircases since archaeological excavation has lowered the ground level. The doorcase is elaborate, and looks 17th century. It has a pair of Ionic columns with exaggerated volutes, in front of a pair of pilasters in the same style, and these support a segmental pediment with a broken cornice. In the tympanum is a tablet supported by a pair of putti. [1]

The entrance façade and loggia, with a choir chamber above, is a separate architectural unit. It is in travertine, while the brick exterior walls of the rest of the nave are rendered in light orange. [1]

Campanile

The tall Romanesque campanile was erected around 1160. It is on the left hand side of the church just by the high altar, and is in brick with five storeys above the roofline. The storeys are separated by projecting cornices with stone modillions. The first two storeys have a double arch on each face, blocked except for a vertical slit. The top three have a pair of double arched soundholes on each face instead, each doublet being separated by a recessed marble column with an impost. The fabric of these storeys is decorated with crosses in a porphyry and roundels in various colours which are actually glazed pottery dishes. [1] [f]

Above the soundholes of two sides of the top storey, those facing either end of the church, are two little aedicules each formed by a gabled arch on imposts and marble columns supported on corbels. These have no statue plinths, so were probably intended for mosaics (a surviving example is at Santa Maria in Trastevere). [1]

Façade

The façade (1) is considered the first derivation in Rome of the style of Andrea Palladio. In travertine limestone, the façade is actually quite a complicated and ingenious design by **Lombardi**, and is best described as a single-storey propylaeum flanked by a pair of kiosks slightly recessed. A pair of gigantic rectangular Composite pilasters on very high plinths is on each side of the arched main entrance to the loggia, and these support a full entablature and triangular pediment. There is a dedicatory inscription on the frieze of the entablature:

Virg[ini] Mariae ac S[anctae] Franciscae

The cornice and pediment are embellished with dentillations, fringed modillions and rosettes. There are three large statues on the pediment, two at the outer corners of the side kiosks and one on the other end of the roof ridge. The statues are, from left to right: unidentified female saint, *St. Frances of Rome and the Angel*, *Virgin Mary and Child*, *St. Cecilia* and *St. Agnes*. [1] [6]

The entrance arch is molded, without imposts. Above is a tablet with tassels and swags, and inscription reads: [1]

Paulo V Burghesio Romano P[ontifice] M[aximo] sedente, Olivetana Congregatio suis et
monasterii sumptibus, templum hoc in hanc formam construxit et ornavit, anno Domini
MDCXV.

("The Olivetan congregation, with its own and the monastery's resources, built and
decorated this temple in this form, during the reign of Paul V Borghese the Roman Pontiff,
1615")

Above this epigraph is a large rectangular window framed by a pair of Ionic columns supporting an entablature and segmental pediment. There is a balustrade in front of the window. [1]

The flanking kiosks each has a slightly smaller archway opening into the loggia, and doubletted Doric pilasters at the corners (the inner one partly hidden). The arch is crowned with an inscription tablet as well; the left hand one reads **Ego flos campi et lilium convalli** ("I am a flower of the field and a lily of the valley"), while the right hand one reads **Quasi oliva speciosa in campis** ("Like a beautiful olive tree in the fields"). The references are to Our Lady, St Frances and Monte Oliveto. Above the tablet is an entablature bearing with a decorated frieze, then an attic plinth and finally a large double volute sweep framing the upper part of the central propylaeum. To unite the façade design, the

cornices of the entablature and attic are continued across the propylaeum, behind the gigantic pilasters and framing the window balustrade. [1]

The side entablature friezes bear triglyphs, interspersed with relief panels either showing a mitre crossed with a crozier and cross, or a stylized mountain with olive fronds. These refer to Monte Oliveto abbey. The cornices of the side entablatures are richly decorated on their undersides, including with waffle modillions. [1]

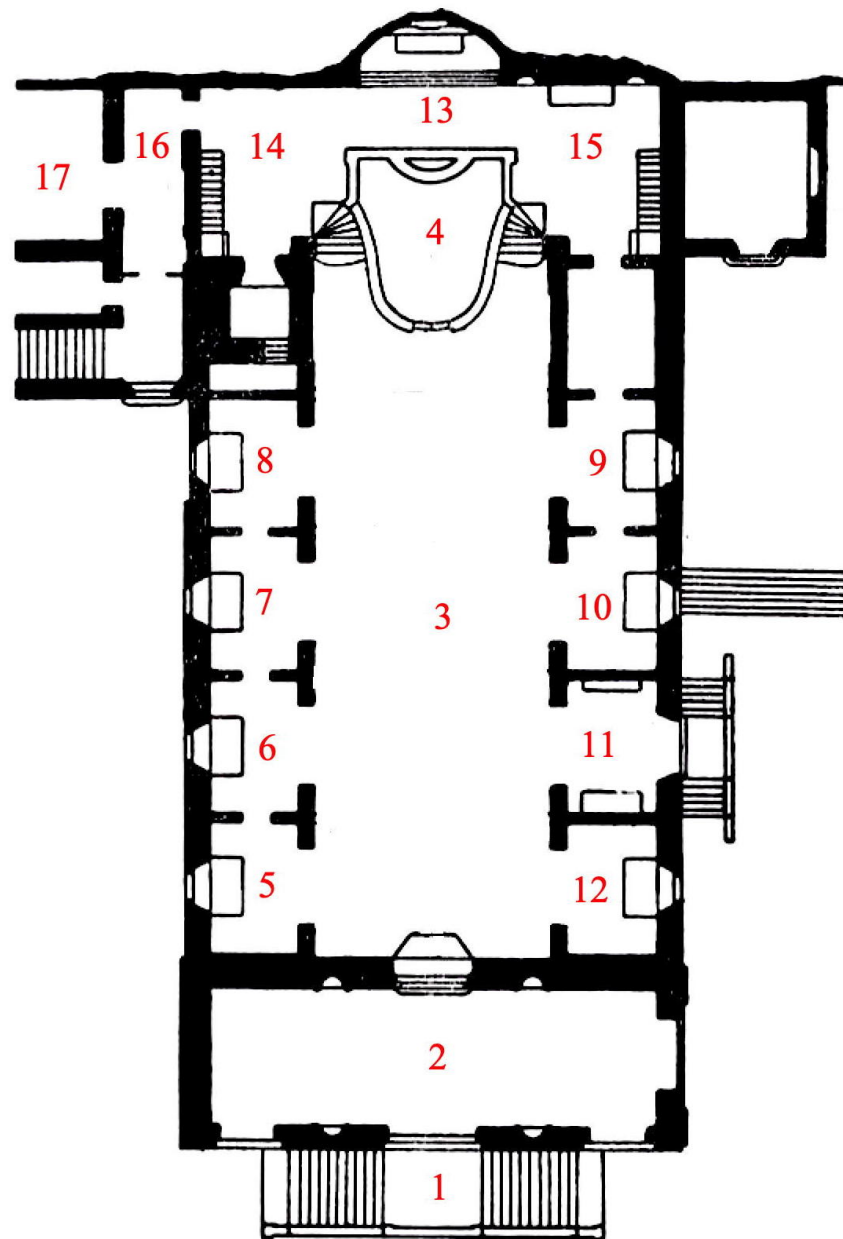
The left hand side wall of the loggia (2) is blank, but the right hand one has an archway the same size as the central one. Over the entrance portal of the church is the coat of arms of Cardinal Paolo Emilio Sfondrat, who sponsored the reconstruction of the façade in 1615. The chamber over the loggia is the monastic choir. Some olive trees are outside the entrance, a nice piece of symbolism. [1]

Monastery

The cloister is behind the back end of the church, and has arcades in three storeys. The north range is mediaeval, but the south range is 19th century. [1]

If you manage to visit the antica, have a look at the vaulted former refectory (dining-hall), with 15th century frescoes attributed to Antonio da Viterbo. [1]

Plan



Interior

Structurally the church has a basilical plan, having a nave and aisles of five bays. However, the side aisles have been converted into chapels by the insertion of blocking walls. The fifth bay has the Romanesque campanile inserted into what would be the top end of the left hand aisle. [1]

The richly decorated but restrained Baroque interior features a nave with side chapels, a flat wooden coffered ceiling and a small shallow apse with conch. There are no nave arcades, but the side chapels are entered through large arches with rectangular windows above and which are separated by double Ionic pilasters. There are seven chapels, four on the left side, and three chapels and the side entrance vestibule on the right side. [1]

The sanctuary is raised, and has staircases either side of it to access an ambulatory just in front of the apse. Another pair of staircases lead to the little crypt below where St Frances is enshrined. In front of the sanctuary is a confessio or enclosed area adjoining the crypt, but not connecting with it. [1]

Nave (3)

The double nave pilasters support dentillated entablatures, and are themselves skeletal in that they are frames containing sunken alabaster panels. Within each panel is a window. [1]

The carved and coffered wooded ceiling is in red, blue and gold, was built by the carpenters **Francesco Nicolini** and **Alessandro Castaldi**, with gilding and relief panels painted by **Simone Lagi**. The ceiling has figurative panels on its major axis. These show:

- *St Benedict* (in the white habit of the Olivetans),
- the coat-of-arms of Cardinal Paolo Sfondrati,
- the *Madonna and Child accompanied by SS Agnes and Cecilia*,
- the coat-of-arms of Monte Oliveto Abbey, and finally
- *St Frances of Rome with her guardian angel* over the confessio.

The ceiling is dated 1612 in an epigraph, and also stated is 1867 which was when it was restored. [1]
[e]

The curve of the confessio juts out into the last bay of the nave. To either side, the arcade arch has a blank wall instead of a side chapel. The left hand one conceals the first storey of the campanile, while the right hand one has behind it the janitor's chamber. Each of these walls has a painting and a memorial plaque. On the left-hand side is *The Flagellation of St Andrew*, a copy of a work by **Domenichino**. Below the painting is a memorial for Cardinal Schiaffino, who was vicar general of the Olivetan Congregation. In 1936, his remains were transferred here. On the right wall the painting is *St Andrew Adores His Cross* which is a copy of one by **Guido Reni**. Both original paintings are in the church of San Gregorio al Celio. The memorial below is for Placido Lugano, abbot of the monastery. He died in 1947. [1] [3]

The floor of the nave preserves some Cosmatesque pavement from 1216, but was mostly re-laid in different shades of grey marble with some red in the restoration in 1952. In the floor in the middle of the nave is a large epigraph in Latin giving the history of the church. The epigraph dates from the 1952 floor restoration. [1]

The church's organ, newly built in the 1970's within the original Baroque case, is over the entrance and has the present monastic choir behind it. [1]

Between the organ balcony and the entrance is a round window with translucent amber glass in back of a sculpture of *St. Francesca and her guardian angel*.

Choir

The monastic choir now occupies the chamber over the entrance loggia. It was decorated in 1693. The central window now has modern stained glass featuring the founders of the Olivetan congregation praying at a crucifix, by **János Hajnal**. On either side of the back of the choir, behind

the organ are modern paintings of scenes in the life of S. Francesca, by **Ambrogio Fumigalli**, an Olivetan monk himself. He also supervised the installation of the new organ. [1] [4] [5]

Confessio (4)

The confessio was originally designed by **Bernini** and completed in 1649, but was altered in the 19th century. The area is enclosed by a balustrade, which has an attractive ogee curved sweep on either side as it runs up the staircases. In the confessio itself, four fluted columns of red and white Sicilian jasper with bronze Corinthian capitals make up a semi-circular aedicule for a marble sculpture of *St Frances and her angel*. This work was executed by **Giosuè Meli** in 1866, to replace the gilded bronze statue by **Bernini** that the French occupation government had looted and melted down at the start of the 19th century. [1] [6]

The coat-of-arms in the floor is of the Bussa de' Leoni family, to which the saint belonged. [1]

Sanctuary

The sanctuary area is up either staircase at the sides of the confessio. It preserves much of its original cosmatesque floor, which has been restored. This shows that the crypt was already in place by the 13th century, except then it was presumably for the catacomb martyrs. [1]

The spandrels of the triumphal arch have two frescoes by **Cesare Maccari** of 1870. Above is an epigraph recording the 1953 restoration on the instructions of Pope Pius XII.

[1] [4] [b]

Apse (13)

In the conch of the apse there is a important mosaic of the *Madonna and Child between the apostles James, John, Peter and Andrew*. This probably dates from Pope Alexander's restoration to 1161. The *Hand of God* holding a wreath is above Our Lady, and the figures are within an arcade of arches which is a figurative representation of a palace. The archivolt of the triumphal arch has flowers and fruit with the *Chi-Rho* monogram at the top. The inscription at the bottom, not easy to make out, reads: [1] [2] [6]

Continent in gremio coelum, te in domo, Sancta Dei Genitrix
proceres comitantur erilem

("The leaders follow the mistress, Holy Mother of God, and
enclose you in a house, [you who enclose] heaven in [your]
abdomen".)

Main Altar

The high altar is against the wall of the apse, above which is the famous icon of the church (actually there are two -see below). This is flanked by four Ionic pilasters in red jasper, which frame two frescoes by **Domenico Maria Canuti**, 1684. The frescoes depict the *Martyrdom of Nemesius, Exuperia, Sempronius, Olympius, Lucilla and Theodulus*. Their relics were brought here in the year 996 by Pope Gregory V and placed under the altar in 1580 by Gregory XIII. [1] [4] [6] [b]

Icon

The icon of the *Madonna and Child* which can be seen in the apse above the altar dates to the 12th century and is of the Tuscan school. According to tradition, it was brought from Troas on the Hellespont by a crusader from Rome named Angelo Frangipani in 1100. The icon is in a tabernacle of the 15th century, restored in 1949. [1] [6]

In 1950, it was being cleaned of an 1805 overpainting. Examination during this restoration revealed that the 12th century work had in turn been painted over an earlier version, which is probably from the 6th century, and might have come from Santa Maria Antiqua rather than from Troas. It is one of the most ancient icons of Our Lady in existence. The two paintings were detached from one another, and the older one is now kept in the sacristy. [1]

Either side of the altar are two angels of the school of Bernini. [1]

Left side of Sanctuary (14)

To the left of the high altar can be seen a finely carved 15th century holy oil aumbry in Renaissance style, attributed to **Mino del Reame**. [1]

The wall here has a painting of the school of **Pierre Subleyras**, depicting *St Bernard Tolomei Comforting the Plague-Stricken* (1740). He had gone to Siena with some of his monks to nurse sufferers during the Black Death of 1348, caught it himself and died. [1] [b]

The return wall here has a painting of the *Ascension*, which is 17th century and is thought to be by **Jacopo Zucchi**. It is actually quite good, although the swarm of putti surrounding the ascending Christ might put some people off. [1]

Right side of Sanctuary (15)

To the right of the altar is the tomb of Pope Gregory XI, who returned the papal seat to Rome after the exile in Avignon. It was executed by **Pietro Paolo Olivieri**, and set up here in 1585 at the expense of the Senate of Rome in gratitude. The central bas-relief of the monument depicts *St Catherine of Siena accompanying the returning pope*. She was instrumental in persuading him to return. The statues flanking this relief are of *Faith* and *Hope*. There are four Ionic columns in yellow Siense marble, which were used to replace the original ones in giallo antico in 1900. The originals are outside the sacristy. [1]

In the floor is the tomb-slab of Francesco Ugucioni, Archbishop of Bordeaux, died in 1412, with his effigy. Also in the sanctuary floor is that of Cardinal Alamanno Adimari, (d. 1422). [1]

The right hand side wall of the sanctuary has the pair of flagstones behind a grate with the alleged imprint of the knees of St Peter. According to the legend, the magician Simon Magus wanted to prove that his powers were superior to those of the Apostles. To do this, he levitated himself above the Forum. St Peter fell to his knees in the crowd and prayed that God would humble Simon Magus, which He did with a vengeance - Simon immediately fell to his death. These stones were originally venerated in situ by the Via Sacra, and later brought into the church for safe-keeping. [1]

The return wall here has a depiction of *St Michael the Archangel*, of the Roman school about the end of the 17th century. [1]

Sacristy

The sacristy is accessed via a short corridor (16), the doorway to which is in the top left hand corner of the sanctuary. In the corridor is a monument to Pope Clement XII, who is buried in the Basilica of Saint John Lateran. [1] [6]

The sacristy (17) is a large, square room decorated in the 18th century. Below the ceiling are preserved fragments of the mediaeval mosaic that dropped off. Embedded in the middle of the ceiling is a framed painting on board of St. Benedict. [1]

There is a large collection of oil paintings in here. Unusual is an early 16th century painting of *Pope Paul III with Cardinal Reginald Pole of England* (the last pre-Reformation English cardinal), attributed to **Perino del Vaga**. Other notable works are: [1] [4] [6] [b] [d]

- *Madonna with Child Jesus* known as *Madonna del Conforto* or *Madonna Glycophilousa* (end of the 6th century), encaustic on canvas pasted on a Roman table: the icon, the oldest extant of the Christianitk, was in the Church of Santa Maria Antiqua until the earthquake of 847, when it was transferred to the Basilica of Santa Maria Nova,
- *Jesus Christ blessing among angels* (mid-13th century), detached fresco from Roman ambit,
- *Madonna with the Child Jesus enthroned and saints* (mid-13th century), detached fresco from the Roman area,
- *Madonna with the Infant Jesus enthroned between Saint Benedict of Norcia and Saint Francesca Romana* (1474 -1475 ca.), panel by **Liberale da Verona**,
- *Trinita and San Bernardo Tolomei* (1680), oil on canvas by **Giacinto Brandi**,
- a painting of the *Miracle of St Benedict* by **Pierre Subleyras** (1744), the saint is reviving a little boy crushed to death by a falling rock,

- a *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints* by Sinibaldo Ibi (1545),
- *Tobias and the Angel* by Giovanni Domenico Cerrini,
- two sketches from the school of Francia,
- an anonymous depiction of the *Deposition*,
- another of *St Peter Walking on the Water*

Shrine

The relics of St Frances of Rome in the crypt can be visited by going down either staircase at the sides of the sanctuary after ascending the steps from the nave. The present crypt was fitted out by **Andrea Busiri Vici**, who provided a glass-fronted loculus with a mosaic in the tympanum above. The latter features *Sts Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalen* and is a rather poor work by one Guido Guidi.

[1] [4]

Her skeleton vested in the habit of her Oblate Sisters, is on display and it is edifying that the Olivetans have never made up her relics with wax to look like a living person, as is the case with several other saints enshrined in Rome. A breviary lies open in her hands, at Psalm 72, because legend has it that she was saying the Office of Our Lady one day, but as her husband called for her four times she never managed to complete this psalm. When she finally got back to her prayers, she found the verse miraculously inscribed in letters of gold. [1]

The oval bas-relief of *St Frances with her guardian angel*, whom she had the privilege of being able to see, (1648) is by **Ercole Ferrata**. The book that the angel holds displays the psalm verse quoted above. [1] [6]

There is an alcove here with an inscription that states that this was the spot there the body of S. Francesca was discovered on Good Friday, 1638.

She remains very popular in the city, and you will notice the written prayer requests and photos left near her. [1]

The following description of the side chapels starts from the back left near the entrance, and proceeds clockwise.

Chapel of the Nativity (5)

The first chapel on the left is dedicated to the Nativity, with an altarpiece which is a copy of a work by **Carlo Maratta**. The two paintings on the side walls are attributed to **Domenico Maria Canuti** and depict *St Bernard Tolomei*; the one showing the saint praying, while St Michael drives away the Devil, is very lively. [1] [b]

Chapel of St Gregory the Great (6)

The second chapel on the left is dedicated to Pope St Gregory the Great. The oil on canvas altarpiece of *The Mass of Pope St. Gregory I* (1631) is by **Angelo Caroselli**. This altar enjoys a special Gregorian Privilege granted to this church from 23 August 1579 by Pope Gregory XIII, as noted on the epigral at the top right. [1] [4] [b]

Chapel of St. Emidio Vescovo (7)

The third chapel on the left used to have a marble Pietà which was sold and is now in Germany. The chapel is often referred to as the Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows. The present altarpiece shows *St Emidio Vescovo* from the Olivetan monastery of Sant'Angelo Magno in Ascoli (which is represented). The artist is **Piero Tedeschi**. [1] [a] [b]

Chapel of St Bernard Tolomei (8)

The fourth chapel on the left hand side is dedicated to St Bernard Tolomei, founder of the Congregation of S. Maria di Monte Oliveto. The chapel has rich polychrome marble decoration from 1660. The altarpiece by **Giuseppe Pirovani** depicts *St Bernard Tolomei at a Deathbed During the Siena Plague of 1348*. The noteworthy inscription and family crest inlaid in the floor is for Maria Victoria Segnara Nunez, buried by her parents Giovanni Segnaro and Magdalena Inghiramia, in the year 1700. Note the interesting “False dome” in trompe l'oeil (optical illusion) . [1] [4] [6] [b]

Chapel of St Frances of Rome (9)

The fourth chapel on the right is dedicated to Santa Francesca Romana. It was erected in her honor by Mobilia Papazzurri, wife of Battista de Ponziani, son of the Saint, in 1450. In 1729, by the will of the Oblata M. Vittoria Coccini it was also covered with marble, precious stuccoes and columns, (the works were directed by the architect **Francesco Ferrari**) as it appears today. On the altar, a canvas depicts *Santa Francesca with the Child Jesus in her arms in front of the Holy Virgin*, (18th century, anonymous). [1] [4] [b]

On the right an Angel carries a holy water font by the school of **Bernini**. [1]

Under this chapel, two Roman period rooms were used as a burial ground for the Oblates of Tor de Specchi, founded by the Saint. [b]

Chapel of St Benedict (10)

The second chapel on the right is dedicated to San Benedetto da Norcia. The altarpiece shows *St Benedict with Sts Henry the Emperor and Francesca Romana*; the two latter are patrons of Benedictine oblates (which is what the Benedictines call tertiaries). It is the work and gift of the Roman painter **Augusto Orlandi**, 1937. From the same period is the marble floor with an artistic inlaid coat of arms, with the Benedictine greeting PAX, noteworthy and the Ligno symbol of San Bernardo Tolomei, Founder of the Olivetan Monks, by Arch. Lorenzo Cesanelli. [1] [b]

The paintings on the side walls are anonymous: to the left, *St Bernard Tolomei Gives Spiritual Instruction*, 17th century, and to the right *St Bernard Tolomei Performs an Exorcism*, 16th century. [1]

Side entrance vestibule (11)

In the vestibule of the side entrance are two monuments. The memorial for Cardinal Marino Vulcano (died 1394, also known as Bulcani) was executed in 1412 by **Paolo Romano**. It has three allegorical figures representing *Faith, Hope and Charity*, as well as a reclining figure of the deceased. This work is a rare example of late Gothic sculpture in Rome. [1] [6] [b] [c]

The other tomb is that of Antonio da Rio (or Rido), (d. 1450 of the plague), captain of Castel Sant'Angelo and commander in chief of the army of the pope in the time of Eugenius IV (1431-1447). The tomb was executed in the second half of the 15th century by **Mino da Fiesole**. The monument was erected by Rido's son, and is the only surviving example of equestrian of the Early Renaissance to be seen in Rome. It shows the deceased as a knight on horseback, and has two putti flanking the epitaph who are having a really good cry. The shields that they are holding display his coat-of-arms. [1] [b] [c] [d]

Chapel of the Crucifixion (12)

The first chapel on the right hand side is dedicated to the Crucifixion. The altarpiece is a large 18th century oil canvas of the *Calvary*, by **Emanuele Alfani**. It shows Christ Crucified in the center, with the Three Marys. [4] [6]

The painting on the right side wall shows *St Bernard Tolomei in prayer*. This work and that of the altar are by **Giuseppe Maria Crespi Lo Spagnolo**. On the left wall, a painting of the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, with the Holy Virgin sitting on a boulder with baby Jesus in her arms and St. Joseph watching over them, by **Domenico Maria Canuti**, 1672. [4] [6] [b]

In the vault: *Dove of the Holy Spirit and Angels*, surrounded by *Saints Augustine, Jerome, Gregory the Great, and Ambrose*. On the entrance arch the *Creation, the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve*, frescoes by **Melozzo da Forli**. [b]

Artists and Architects:

Alessandro Castaldi (17th cent), Italian woodworker, carpenter

Ambrogio [Fumigalli](#), OSB Oliv, (1915-1998), Italian painter

Andrea [Busiri Vici](#) (1817-1911), Italian architect

Angelo [Caroselli](#) (1585-1653), Italian painter of the Baroque period
 Augusto [Orlandi](#) (1879-1954), Italian painter
 Carlo [Lombardi](#) (1559-1620), Italian architect of the late-Renaissance and early-Baroque period
 Carlo [Maratta](#) (1625-1713), Italian Late Baroque Classical painter (also see [here](#))
 Cesare [Maccari](#) (1840-1919), Italian painter and sculptor
 Domenico Maria [Canuti](#) (1625-1684), Italian Baroque painter
 Emmanuele Alfani (active 1736/74), Italian painter
 Ercole [Ferrata](#) (1610-1686), Italian sculptor of the Baroque period (also see [here](#))
 Francesco Betania (17th cent), Italian stonemason
 Francesco [Ferrari](#) (18th cent.), Italian architect and painter
 Francesco Nicolini (17th cent), Italian woodworker, carpenter
 Giacinto [Brandi](#) (1621-1691), Italian painter of the Baroque period
 Gian Lorenzo [Bernini](#) (1598-1680), Italian Baroque sculptor and architect [also see [here](#) and [here](#))
 Giosuè Bernardino [Meli](#) (1816-1893), Italian sculptor
 Giovanni Domenico [Cerrini](#) [aka *il Cavalier Perugino*] (1609-1681), Italian painter of the Baroque period
 Giuseppe Maria [Crespi](#) [aka *Lo Spagnolo*] (1665-1747), Italian late Baroque painter of the Bolognese School
 Giuseppe [Pirovani](#) (c.1755-c.1835), Italian painter of the Neoclassic period
 Giuseppe [Valadier](#) (1762-1839), Italian architect and designer, sculptor, urban planner and archeologist, a chief exponent of Neoclassicism in Italy
 Jacopo [Zucchi](#) (1541-1590), Florentine painter of the Mannerist style. Brother of Francesco
 János “Giovanni” [Hajnal](#) (1913-2010), Master glassmaker from Budapest (Stained glass and mosaics)
[Liberale da Verona](#) (1441–1526), Italian painter of the Renaissance period
 Melozzo [da Forlì](#) (1438-1494), Italian Renaissance painter (also see [here](#))
 Mino [da Fiesole](#) (c.1429-1484), Italian sculptor of the early Renaissance period
 Mino [del Reame](#) (15th cent), Italian (Neapolitan) Renaissance sculptor
 Pierre [Subleyras](#) (1699-1749), French painter of the late-Baroque and early-Neoclassic period,
 Piero Bonaccorsi [aka *Perino del Vaga*] (1501-1547), Italian painter of the Late Renaissance/Mannerism
 Pietro Paolo [Olivieri](#) (1551-1599), Italian sculptor and architect
 Paolo [Romano](#) [aka *Paolo Tuccone*] (15th cent), Italian early Renaissance sculptor and goldsmith
 Pietro [Tedeshi](#) (1744-1812), Italian painter
 Simone Lagi (17th cent.), Italian painter
 Sinibaldo [Ibi](#) (16th cent), Italian painter

Burials

[Santa Francesca Romana](#) (1384-1440)

[Pope Gregory XI](#) {Pierre [ROGER DE BEAUFORT](#), (1329/1331-1378)}

Marino Cardinal [BULCANI](#), (?-1394) [also see [here](#)]

Alamanno pseudocardinal [ADIMARI](#), (1362-1422)

Pietro Cardinal [MOROSINI](#), *inuiore*, (?-1424)

Placido Maria Cardinal [SCHIAFFINO](#), O.S.B.Oliv. (1829-1889) [also see [here](#)]

Francesco [Uguccione](#), Archbishop of Bordeaux (d. 1412)

Antonio [da Rio](#) (or Rido), castellan of Castel Sant'Angelo (d. 1457)

Giovannino [de'Dolci](#) (c. 1435 - c. 1485), Italian architect and cabinetmaker

Location

Piazza Santa Francesca Romana 4, Roma

Open: 9.30-12 and 16-19

Coordinates: [41°53'28"N 12°29'20"E](#)

Access

Opening times:

Daily 10:00 to 12:00, 15:00 to 17:00.

Enter at the side of the church from Via dei Fori Imperiali, not through Palatine Hill (which charges an admission fee). Veer to the right as you're walking towards the Coliseum and go up the ramp, the so-called Clivo di Venere Felice. Follow the path round to the right where the entrance is located. Here there is a section of ancient Roman street surface. If the gate on that side isn't open then the church is closed – check back later.

Liturgy

Mass is celebrated on Sundays at 11:00. Weekday Masses are no longer advertised.

The feast-day of St Frances is on 9 March. It was the tradition for Roman drivers to park their cars as close as possible to the church to have their vehicles blessed on that date, since St Frances is the patron of motorists as well as of Benedictine oblates. The inevitable chaos could be quite entertaining. However, the tradition seems to have tailed off in later years and the recent closure of the Via dei Fori Imperiali to private traffic has probably put a stop to it. [1] [2]

Links and References

1. [Roman Churches Wiki](#)
2. [Corvinus blog site](#)
3. [Cardinals of the Catholic Church](#)
4. [Info.roma web-page](#)
5. [Wikipedia article on János Hajnal](#)
6. [Romapedia](#)
7. [All Saints and Martyrs blog](#)
8. [roma.andreapollett.com](#)
 - a. Basilica brochure guide
 - b. Information Plaques in Basilica
 - c. Davies, Gerald S.; RENASCENCE, THE SCULPTURED TOMBS OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY IN ROME; 1916; pg 220
 - d. Thynne, Roger; THE CHURCHES OF ROME; 1924; Pp. 180-186
 - e. Curzietti, Jacope; "The Confessio of Santa Francesca Romana in S. Maria Nova at the Roman Forum"; *Studi di Storia dell'Arte*; 2012
 - f. 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)

Other related links

[English Wikipedia article](#)

<http://www.umilta.net/francesca.html>

<http://www.tordespecchi.it/public/en/index.php>

[Frescoes outside of her cell in the monastery of Santa Maria Annunziata a Tor de' Specchi](#)

[Italian Wikipedia page](#)

[Interactive Nolli Map Website](#)

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

[Roma SPQR web-site](#) with gallery

[Monte Oliveto Abbey](#)

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