

San Francesco d'Assisi a Ripa Grande



San Francesco d'Assisi a Ripa Grande is a heavily restored 13th century convent church, now parochial and titular, at Piazza San Francesco d'Assisi in the south of Trastevere. It is dedicated to Saint Francis of Assisi because the adjacent convent hosted his visit to Rome in 1229. It is the first Franciscan church in Rome. The name is derived from an old gate on the Tiber called *Ripa grande*. [1] [2]

History

In the years 936-949 Count Benedetto of Campania built a Benedictine monastery, named after the two medical brothers SS Cosma and Damiano. This monastery immediately made its influence felt in the district as the monks wanted to do their utmost for the benefit of the poor sick people and pilgrims, erecting a hospice-hospital. The San Biagio Hospital was built very close to the Tiber (Ripa Grande) and, for this reason, it became very important for pilgrims. [2] [6]

St Francis visited Rome several times between 1209 (the first visit after his conversion) and his death in 1226, and at times he stayed in the hospice here while in the city. Above the sacristy, still today, the cell where he lived (Sanctuary). After the approval of the Franciscan Rule by Pope Honorius III in 1223 he and his followers had made the hospice into a base for their Roman activities and visits. [1]

The renovation of the first Franciscan house in Rome took place thanks to two benefactors: Donna Jacopa de' Settesoli and Count Pandolfo dell'Anguillara. It was precisely Donna Jacopa, who knew and loved the Saint, who introduced him to the Abbot of San Cosimato and granted him hospitality together with his companions. [2]

In 1229, Pope Gregory IX transferred the property to the Franciscans after the death of their founder in 1226. Frate Jacopa apparently used her influence again. In 1231, three years after St

Francis had been canonized, the Franciscans, who had found the complex in a state of decay, rebuilt the church while maintaining its size and shape and adapted the hospital to a convent, keeping in mind the intention of keeping intact the cell that had housed the Saint. At least some of the work being paid for by Count Pandolfo II Anguillara. His Palazzetto dell'Anguillara with its tower survives opposite San Crisogono. In about 1290, **Pietro Cavallini** painted an important fresco cycle showing scenes from the Old and New Testaments and the life of St Francis, in which Anguillara as the donor was depicted dressed as a tertiary. This cycle was destroyed in the 16th century. [1] [5]

The original convent was erected to the right (west) of the church. Back then the church was a simple basilica with a nave of three bays, flanked by side aisles with arcades. There was a transept, and a small apse. There was a schola cantorum in front of the altar; the choir and side chapels came later. [1]

In 1236 the complex was granted to the Poor Clare nuns as one of their first nunneries, and from then on the two convents formed a working pair with the friars at San Francesco acting as chaplains. In 1249, the Franciscans obtained the monastery of Santa Maria in Aracoeli from the Benedictines. This immediately became their headquarters in Rome, instead of the convent here. [1]

In 1444, Pope Eugene IV assigned the monastery to the Friars Minor (observant), who, in 1579, rebuilt the old convent, equipping it with a cloister. [5]

The changes to the medieval church took place in various phases, starting with the construction of chapels, sponsored by noble families, all set on the left side so as not to compromise the cloister which was adjacent to the right side of the church. The first chapel was that of the Immaculate Conception, for the Cetra family at the end of the 15th century. In 1536, the chapel of the Albertoni family was built, based on designs by **Baldassare Peruzzi**, on the occasion of the death of Ludovica Albertoni who had died in 1533, whose statue is the work of **Bernini** from 1674. In 1560 it was the turn of the Chapel of the Annunciation and, in 1566, of the Chapel of Saint Michael. [5]

Between 1603 and 1608, the convent was enlarged with the addition of an infirmary, while in the church, **Onorio Longhi**, was commissioned to expand the choir and renovate the high altar. The result of this fragmented series of works was that the friars decided to restore unity to the church as a whole. [5]

In 1675 Cardinal Lazzaro Pallavicini financed a radical restoration project of the church, directed by **Mattia de Rossi** as architect. It seems that much of the fabric of the mediaeval church was kept, although it is now invisible. The vaults of the church and the façade were completely replaced and the chapels on the right were built "ex novo", while the magnificent columns that divided the naves and formed the cross were only fortified and, in part, incorporated into the current pillars. All Cavallini's frescoes disappeared. The church became Baroque and reconsecrated in 1701 by the Eminent Cardinal Sperelli of Assisi. [1] [2] [6]

The patronage of the families with funerary chapels off the left hand side of the church was so welcome that the friars then allowed more chapels to be built off the right hand side. This entailed the loss of part of the original mediaeval convent cloister. The completely re-cast church was re-consecrated in 1701. At its height, this was a large convent with four cloisters or courtyards. The original cloister is to the west or right of the church, and has arcades on all four sides. However, the eastern range was demolished to make way for chapels off the right hand aisle of the church. [1]

From 1737 to 1746 the High Altar was rebuilt twice. Consecrated in 1738, the statue of St. Francis which was on the altar on the right was transferred to the High Altar, together with the ancient indulgences conferred with the bull of Clement XII. There was also a grating frontal and two angels with candlesticks were placed on the two side marble doors. All this must not have pleased the religious very much, who in 1746 commissioned the well-known Franciscan architect **Fra Secondo di Roma** to demolish the previous altar and, with another design by him, to remake it in marble. As soon as the work was completed, everything was rededicated again on 17 September of that year. [2]

To the east of the church is the narrow rectangular infirmary court, without arcades. To the south are two other arcaded cloisters. To the south of these were the convent's recreational and herb

gardens. The enclosure of the convent took up the entire block all the way to the present Via della Madonna dell'Orto. The area was taken up by extensive vegetable gardens and vineyards. [1]

On May 17, 1809, the State of the Church was declared null and void by Napoleon and the Franciscans here were particularly targeted. Subsequently, in 1849, the Garibaldians expelled the Religious and camped within the walls of the Convent, thus leaving the Church closed; subsequently it passed to that of the Italian Republic, with the occupation by the Piedmontese troops in 1870, the Franciscans here were ordered to leave the Convent in 1873. Pope Pius IX kindly granted the Father Superior some rooms in Via della Luce, where six religious could reside for the service of the Church. The church is still managed today by the Italian Fondo Edifici di Culto (FEC). [2]

The square in front of the church has one Ionian column erected in 1847 by Pope Pius IX, taken from the ruins of the ancient Etruscan city of Veii. [7]

Previously, as a work of arrangement, the floors of the Church had been redone in 1866, replacing the ancient ones with today's marble ones; later, in 1882, when Blessed Carlo da Sezze was beatified, the Cappella della Pietà was restored by the architect **Paolo Belloni**, who kept the ancient frescoes as far as possible. [2]

The church was made parochial in 1906, and now has a parish covering southern Trastevere. In the mid 20th century the Franciscans recovered use of part of the convent, and their Provincialate is now here. [1] [6]

In 1931 the sanctuary was provided with a balustrade, and in the late 20th century some sets of iron railings guarding the chapels were removed. The cell of San Francesco was restored, the organ was renewed [2]

Although I cannot find any documentation for work on the façade around this time, the coat-of-arms for Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) is above the main entrance of the church, and has the same weathered appearance as the travertine behind it.

Cardinalate

The title was established in 1960 by Pope John XXIII. The present titular of the church (as of 2023) is H.E. Cardinal Norberto Rivera Carrera, Archbishop of México. [1] [4]

Exterior

The plan of the church is basilical. The nave with its lower side aisles has three bays, then comes the transept which is, in effect, a fourth bay of the same width as the nave and aisles, and then comes the combined sanctuary choir which is on a square plan of the same width as the central nave. The tiled and pitched roof has a single stepped ridge from one end to the other. Over the transept the roof is slightly higher than that of the nave, and the choir roof is higher still. The roofs of the side aisles are divided by buttresses supporting the central nave walls, two on each side. [1]

Façade (1)

The façade, as seen from the piazza, is not entirely genuine architecturally. The segmental pediment actually protrudes above the gabled roofline, and the outer two of the five vertical zones in the first story belong to the chapels. The architectural details are in travertine limestone, and the walls in between are rendered in dull orange. [1]

There are three entrances, the aisle ones having simple stone doorcases and the central one being larger with a triangular pediment. Above the pediment is the coat-of-arms of Pope Pius XI. There is a pair of tripletted rectangular pilasters flanking the main entrance, another triplet pair flanking the aisle frontages and a pair of singletons on the outer corners of the façade as a whole. The inner pair of triplets are bunched, but the aisle pair has one of the triplet pilasters separated. These pilasters do not have their own proper capitals, but support an entablature on which simplified Doric capitals appear in shallow relief. There is a square window over each aisle entrance, and two more in the outer zones. [1]

The upper nave frontage has a pair of triplet pilasters in the same style as the entrance pair

supporting an entablature and segmental pediment. There is a large rectangular window, and swooping curves over the aisle rooflines. Two rather bizarre halves of a broken segmental pediment are attached to the outer edges of the aisle rooflines. [1]

Side chapels

The eight side chapels, six off the nave and two off the ends of the transept, have varied roofings. Most have simple pitches, but the Chapel of St Michael to the left and the Chapel of St Peter of Alcantara to the right have lanterns. You can see these from the far end of the piazza. The former is a pepperpot with large rectangular windows and a slightly ogee lead cupola. The latter has an interesting design reminiscent of Borromini. This has four stylized curlicues forming an incurved cone meeting at a ball finial, on top of a cylinder with four windows separated by blind pilasters supporting a pronounced cornice with four posts. [1]

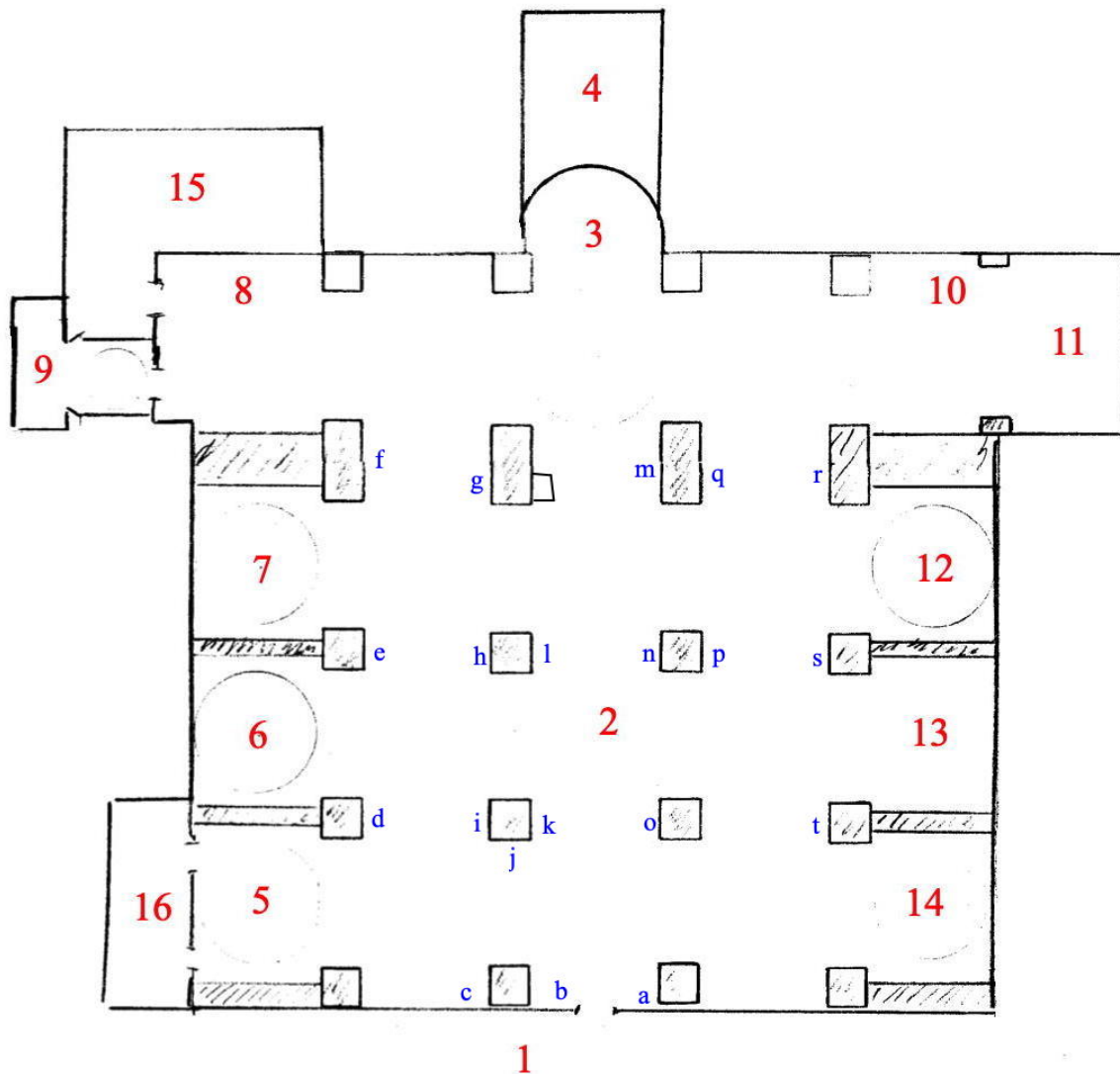
Campanile

In 1734, the original bellcote was replaced with a stuccoed brick slab on the right hand edge of the transept, parallel to the church's major axis and having a tall arch with space for two bells below a triangular pediment. [1]

Choir façade

Unusually, the back end of the church has its own façade with an entrance into the choir between four shallow rectangular pilasters supporting an entablature and triangular pediment and a round window over the entrance. This is not usually accessible to the public. [1]

Plan



Interior

Nave (2)

The nave has three bays, with arcades. The latter have wide rectangular piers, with Doric impostes and a matching Doric pilaster in shallow relief on the face of each pier. There is an entablature running just above the arches and below the central nave windows, and this is molded with the frieze projecting as well as the cornice. [1]

There are cross-vaulted ceilings over nave and aisles without ribs, and a (false) saucer dome on pendentives over the transept crossing. There are no proper triumphal arches into the transept or sanctuary, only a pair of simply molded archivolts. [1]

The church interior is plain and simple, which is probably in line with Franciscan teachings on soberness. The dominant color is cream. The dome, vaults and arcades are simply painted in the one color without any stucco or figurative fresco work. This probably does demonstrate a wish on the part of the brethren to display a commitment to poverty, rather than a simple lack of funds. [1]

The marble floor, with its simple geometric design, is mid-19th century. The nave pulpit is by **Carlo Fontana**, 1685 but was remodelled in 1747. [1]

Nave monuments

On the counterfaçade just inside the entrance are monuments to Marquis Tommaso Raggi (a) (1679) and his wife Ortense Spinola (b) (1672). These are attributed to **Girolamo Lucenti**. On the wall to the left of the entrance is an incised slab tombstone (c) of Agnese, wife of Pietro Andrea Massimi (d. 1328). [1] [c]

Pillar mounted monuments will be addressed starting from the nave pillar at the left of the entrance.

On the first pillar are three monuments: memorials here are to Agnese Moratti (j) (1867) and Caterina Poggioli (i) (1861), both by **Luca Carimini**. Monument of Mons. Alberto Barbolani (k) (1804-1857). He was born in Arezzo, with the title of Count of Montauto. He studied in Rome and was ordained a priest in 1827. Appointed secret waiter, by Leo XII in 1827, canon of St. Peter, by Gregory XVI, in 1831 and cupbearer in 1836. In 1856 he received the honorary position of Latin Patriarch of Antioch. [1] [5]

The second pier on the left has a monument to Fra Innocenzo da Chiusa, (l) (1643), a famous mystic in his time. This is by **Giovanni Battista Mola**. Also here is the monument of Ignazio Magliocchetti (h) (1860). It seems he worked in the manufacture of woolen drapes (1851-1860) and was a confrere of the Archconfraternity of Santa Maria dell'Orto (1852). [1] [5]

The third pillar on the left has a memorial for Antonio Forti (g) (d. 1859), a medical doctor.

The third pillar on the right has a memorial for Gioacchino Costa (m) (1852), by **Camillo Pistrucci**. The Costa family has been present in Rome since the 16th century, to carry on the banking business. Here also is a monument for Mons. Ulisse Calvi (q) (1693). Part of the Calvi di Bergolo family, he was born in Imperia in 1617 and was parish priest of St. John the Baptist, in that city. He moved to Rome in 1655, where he was Apostolic Prothonotary and Consistorial Advocate, dean of the patron lawyers in the College of the Apostolic Palace. He left his substantial inheritance to the College of the Fathers of the Pious Schools, for a boarding school to be built in his hometown. [5]

The second pier on the right has a memorial to Fra Bartolomeo Cambi da Salutio (n), another mystic and noted poet who died in 1617. It has a painted portrait of him, and was commissioned by Pope Benedict XIV. Here also is a memorial to Cardinal Francesco di Paolo Cassetta (p) (1922) by **Riccardo Grifoni**. He is actually buried in the Campo Verano cemetery in Rome. [1] [4] [5]

The first pillar on the right has a monument to Maria Costa (o) (1862), with a bust by **Domenico**

Morani. Among Maria Costa's children, Nino Costa, a landscape painter, who wrote of her mother, after her death: "Among everyone in the family, she was the only one who did not oppose or ridicule my passion". [1] [5]

Sanctuary (3)

The sanctuary is now entered through a 1930's neo-Baroque balustrade. [1]

The Baroque altar dates from 1746, and was designed by one of the Franciscans called **Secondo di Roma**. It is a startling contrast to the simplicity of the nave. The slightly coved (convex) aedicule has bunched Corinthian pilasters in yellow and black-and-white marbles, and these are fronted by a pair of columns in red Sicilian jasper supporting a curved horizontal entablature which is yellow-red-yellow. On top of this a pair of stucco angels is venerating the *Dove of the Holy Spirit* in a gabled oval tondo, with a pair of putti on the gable supporting a rayed cross. The angels are by **Giuseppe Frascari** to a design by **Lorenzo Masucci**. [1]

The wooden statue which serves as an altarpiece is much older than the aedicule, and is now dated to the 1650s. It was carved by another Franciscan, **Diego da Careri**, and shows *St Francis in Ecstasy* accompanied by angels. [1]

Choir (4)

The pair of arched doorways flanking the altar, set diagonally and embellished with a pair of curlicues each, lead into the choir. There are two large statues of allegorical virtues over them, by **Fra Secondo**, and these depict *Faith* and *Charity*. They were installed in 1751. They are accompanied by two little putti holding candlesticks. [1]

The choir was designed by the architect **Onorio Longhi** and dates back to 1608. The walnut stalls are by Franciscan craftsmen, cabinet makers of the 17th century. The organ with two keyboards and 26 real registers is the work of the **Vincenzo Mascioni** firm of Cuvio-Varese (1956). [2] [6]

High up, on the wall above the passageway to the sacristy, is a large canvas depicting *Fr. Salvatore Lilli of Cappadocia*, martyred in Turkey in 1895. The work was done in 1981 by the painter **Alberto De Rossi**, probably in preparation to beatification by Pope John XXIII in 1982. [2]

On the wall to the right behind the main altar there is a painting of the *Madonna enthroned with the blessing Child* on her knees, by an unknown author, from the 19th century. In the rear part of the main altar there is a Eucharistic monogram with a golden radial pattern, a Franciscan coat of arms in black marble and a white marble frame (1746) and a niche below with a small bronze crucifix. [2]

On the right wall of the choir, before the exit towards the convent, there is the plaque in memory of Cardinal Lelio Biscia, cleric of the Apostolic Chamber (he had the choir built at his own expense, as mentioned in 1608) and below there is his coat of arms in white marble. [2]

On the wall above the exit door from the choir is a tapestry by an unknown artist, made in the early 18th century, depicting the *Apparition of Jesus and the Madonna to St. Francis*. This is the famous vision of the Portiuncula. [2]

The side chapels and transepts are described in clockwise order, beginning from the back left aisle.

Chapel of the Immaculate Conception (5)

The first chapel on the left is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, and is the mortuary chapel for the Morini family. The altar has a pair of fluted Corinthian columns in verde antico with gilded bronze capitals. The altarpiece is oil on canvas of the *Immaculate Conception* is by **Marten De Vos** (1555). [1] [6]

The left hand side wall has an oil on canvas painting of *The Birth of Our Lady* by **Simon Vouet** (1614), as well as a bronze baptismal font. The right hand wall has an oil on canvas painting of *The*

The artist of the dome fresco is unknown, and unfortunately the work has been badly damaged by damp. It shows *The Coronation of Our Lady as Queen of Heaven*. The pendentives show *Sibyls*. [1]

On the pier between this chapel and the next is a memorial to Giuseppe Pallavicini (d) (1695). He was a cleric, treasurer and general prefect of the Castle of S. Angelo, and Governor of the Conclave of 1691. The monument is attributed to **Camillo Rusconi**. [5]

Chapel of the Annunciation (6)

The second chapel on the left is also known as the Cappella Castellani. In 1526 the chapel was endowed by its titular owner, Mariano Castellani, as his mortuary chapel. It has an oil on panel altarpiece of *The Annunciation*, by **Cecchino (Francesco) Salviati** (1535). At the beginning of the 17th century, the chapel was frescoed by **Giovanni Battista Ricci da Novara** (known as **il Navarro**), and by **Cristoforo Greppi**. It is dominated by the magnificent *Glory of the Eternal Father* in the cupola vault. The pendentives show the *Four Evangelists*. The three lunettes are each divided into three, and the outer panels show *Sibyls*. The back two are the Lamian and Phrygian Sibyls, the left hand two the Libyan and Hellespontine and the right hand two both of the Cumaeans, apparently. On the side walls are the *Visitation* and the *Birth of Our Lady*. [1] [2] [6] [a]

The side walls have two epigraphs. The left hand one proclaims an indulgence granted by Pope Gregory XV (1622), and is flanked by frescoes representing the prophet *Isaiah* and *King David*. The right hand one is a memorial to Bernardina Rustica de Castellanos (1614) and to the sides the prophets *Solomon* and *Jeremiah*. [1] [2]

Here are the graves of Mariano Castellanos (1524), Guardian of the Confraternita del SS. Salvatore ad Sancta Sanctorum, and that of his wife, Bernardina de' Rustici, who died in 1544. [a]

Under the floor rest the mortal remains of the servant of God Father Giuseppe Spoletini (1870-1951), who died here in the concept of holiness, a famous and sought-after confessor. [2]

On the pier between this chapel and the next is a memorial to Pietro Carcarasio (e) (1716).

Chapel of St Michael (7)

The third chapel on the left hand side used to be dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows. However, the original Pietà by Annibale, a painting donated by Lucrezia Mattei di Paganica, was taken by Napoleon in 1797 following the armistice with Pius VII and was taken at the Louvre. A copy of this painting, today, is located on the entrance door of the sacristy. [2]

The chapel was restored by **Paolo Belloni** in 1882 to honor Charles of Sezze, who was beatified that year. [1]

The present altarpiece is a fair copy of the famous work by **Guido Reni** at Santa Maria della Concezione dei Cappuccini, *St Michael the Archangel Conquers Satan*, and is thought to be by **Carlo Cignani**. [1]

The relics of St Charles of Sezze (1613-1670) are enshrined in a bronze urn beneath the altar here. The "Apostle of Trastevere" is a very attractive character, and remains popular in Rome. He was a humble and simple friar minor, writer of ascetic, mystical and spiritual works. [1] [2]

One of the lunette frescoes shows a *Miraculous Cure of a Sick Lady*, that took place through his intercession, and the other shows the famous event when the saint was wounded in the breast by a ray of light from the Blessed Sacrament. These are by **Marcello Sozzi** (1882) as are the putti in the cupola pendentives. [1]

The stained glass window above the altarpiece has the *Dove of the Holy Spirit* surrounded by winged putti heads.

This is the mortuary chapel of the Mattei family. To the right is a monument to Cardinal Orazio Mattei (1687) with a bust by **Lorenzo Ottoni**, and to the left is one to Laura Franipane (1594-1635), wife of Ludovico Mattei of Paganica, by **Francesco Peperelli** and bust of **Andrea Bolgi** (1637). Also here is a memorial for Mario Mattei Orsini (1671-172), duke of Paganica and Monte Negro. [1] [2] [5]

As is almost all Roman churches, here is a statue of *St. Rita of Cascia*.

The pier between this chapel and the next has a monument to Giulia Ricci (f) (1672), wife of Francesco Pallavicini, by **Ercole Ferrata**. The Ricci family is originally from Montepulciano and has been present in Rome since the mid-16th century. [1] []

Left Transept

Above the entrance to the sacristy is a 17th copy of the *Pietà* by **Annibale Carracci** looted by the French.

Altar of St Anthony of Padua (8)

In the left transept is an altar dedicated to St Anthony of Padua. The wooden statue is by **Fra Diego da Careri** again, and used to flank the high altar. [1]

Next to the sacristy door is a memorial to Luigi Maria Cardelli. Born in Rome in 1777, he entered the Order of the Reformed Observant Franciscans in 1794. Sent to Constantinople (1807), he was parish priest of S. Maria Draperis. In 1815 he was sent to Smyrna as apostolic vicar and appointed Latin Archbishop in that city in 1818. His resignation from this post, presented in 1829, was accepted only in 1832. He was appointed Archbishop of Achrida (1832), but returned to Rome, in 1835, where he was made canon of St. Peter's (1838) and prelate of the congregation of Immunity, until his death in 1868. [5]

Chapel of St Anne (9)

The fourth chapel on the left, at the end of the transept, is the Cappella Altieri or Paluzzi-Albertoni. It is dedicated to St Anne, mother of Our Lady, and the architect was **Giacomo Mola** (1625). [1] [5]

The chapel is a memorial chapel for blessed Ludovica Albertoni. The Blessed Ludovica, who lived and worked in Rome between 1473 and 1533 and dedicated her life to the poor and orphans, is today Patroness of the tertiary brothers of the Roman Secular Franciscan Order and Patroness of the City of Rome. [2]

This is the location of Bernini's late sculpture from 1674. The *Ecstasy of Blessed Ludovica Albertoni* is one of Bernini's most beautiful works. To pay homage to the Blessed, the Altieri family commissioned him to build an altar dedicated to Ludovica Albertoni herself. Although the space of the chapel inside which this altar is kept is quite small, the elderly Bernini managed to optimize the work, adapting the statue to the narrow space. Ludovica Albertoni is represented while she is lying on a bed embroidered in marble, in the act of Christian ecstasy. The sculpture serves as the central theme of the whole composition. The sense of theater is enhanced by the sculpture being located in a narrow niche behind the red jasper altar. The indirect lighting is from a window to the left. The niche widens out diagonally either side of the altar, and these diagonal walls have frescoes by unknown artists. The one on the right is an actual portrait of *Blessed Ludovica*, about 1540, and on the left is *St Claire*. [1] [2]

The pendentives of the vault depict *Sts Agnes, Cecilia, Frances of Rome* and *Bl Ludovica*, and the cupola fresco shows angels. These are by **Cristoforo Greppi**, and the intention was to proclaim the equality of the last-named with the three other great female saints of Rome. [1] [a]

The statue is below the round-headed oil on canvas altarpiece, which has a gilded stucco surround with floating white stucco heads of putti attached. This is by **Giovanni Battista Gaulli** [aka *il Baciccio*] (1675), and shows *Christ, Our Lady and St Anne*. [1] [2] [6]

On the floor in front of the steps to the altar is the tombstone of Blessed Ludovica. The balustrade

has the coat of arms of Casa Altieri, perhaps from 1702. A small fresco of *San Carlo Borromeo* (17th century) placed on the left wall and above an epigraph of 1625 which recalls the senatus consultus which prescribed January 31st as a holiday, the day on which the Blessed died. [2]

Right Transept

Altar of St Hyacintha Mariscotti (10)

In the right transept is an altar dedicated to St Hyacintha Mariscotti. She was a Franciscan tertiary nun at Viterbo who died in 1640, and who is the patron saint of religious leading unedifying lives. This is because she began her life as a nun while insisting on a luxurious standard of living, but converted and took on extreme penances. Despite being vicious with herself, she was very charitable towards poor and sick people. [1]

The wooden statue of her is by **Fra Diego da Careri**. It is within a white marble round-headed niche with a split and separated segmental pediment flanking a putto's head with swags. This in turn is in an aedicule with a pair of Ionic columns in pavonazzetto marble supporting a triangular pediment. [1]

Chapel of St Peter of Alcantara and Saint Pasquale Baylon (11)

The Cappella Rospigliosi-Pallavicini is off the end of the right transept, and is a tour-de-force in Baroque polychrome marble and gilding. The dedication is to St Peter of Alcantara, who was the founder of a very strict Spanish Franciscan reform movement with an emphasis on absolute poverty and penance (his friars always and everywhere went barefoot). [1]

The chapel was built between 1710 and 1725, begun by **Nicola Michetti** and completed by **Ludovico Rusconi Sassi**. The altar features a pair of ribbed Corinthian columns in verde antico with gilded bronze capitals, supporting a split and separated segmental pediment with stucco angels in between. The altarpiece is by **Giuseppe Bartolomeo Chiari**, and features *Sts Peter of Alcantara and Paschal Baylon in adoration of the Eucharist*. [1] [5] [6]

The altar is made of onyx and verde antico marble. The image on the altar is of the *Sacred Heart*.

In the corner to the right of the altar is a memorial plaque for Princess Elvina Pallavicini (1914-2004).

The elliptical cupola, with a lantern oculus of the same shape, is richly tricked out in gold and white, the stucco decoration featuring scrolls, shells and torches. A thick wreath of flowers surrounds the oculus, which contains the *Dove of the Holy Spirit*. The pendentives are by **Giuseppe Bartolomeo Chiari**, and features allegories of the *Cardinal Virtues*. [1]

The over-the-top memorials on the side walls are Baroque at its best. The design of the matching pair was by **Nicola Michetti**, and the sculptural work was by **Giuseppe Mazzuoli**. Each has a black marble sarcophagi with gilded bronze fittings, on a plinth of green verde antico and red Sicilian jasper with the epitaph in black marble. The sarcophagus is flanked by two white marble sculptures of female allegorical virtues, and above are two portrait busts in jasper tondi, on a background of alabaster, purple veined, verde antico and yellow marbles. The busts are guarded by a bronze skeleton with gilded wings. The skeletons are by **Michele Garofolino**.

The left hand memorial is to Lazzaro and Stefano Pallavicini (1714) with allegories of *Fortitude* and *Justice*. Brother of Cardinal Lazzaro and father of Maria Camilla (below), Stefano Pallavicini came to Rome, from his native Genoa, for the marriage of his daughter. In Rome he successfully set up an important banking business, so much so that on his death (d. 1687) he left two million scudi. [1] [5]

The right hand one is to Maria Camilla and Giovanni Battista Rospigliosi (1713) with allegories of *Charity* and *Prudence*. Prince Giovanni Battista Rospigliosi (1646-1722), first duke of Zagarolo, nephew of Clement IX, married Maria Camilla Pallavicini (1645-1710), niece of cardinal Lazzaro Pallavicini, in 1670, bringing together, thus, a great heritage. In 1708 they bought the "Palazzo del Giardino" at the Quirinale from the Barberinis, where they introduced their entire conspicuous art

collection. [1] [5]

The pier between this chapel and the next has a monument to Nicola Grappelli (r) (1690). He was a Curial lawyer of Neapolitan origin. A Canon under Innocent XI, he kept the heart of San Carlo da Sezze (layman of the reformed order of S. Francesco), his friend, who died in 1670, to return it to the church on his death. [5]

Chapel of the Holy Family (12)

The third chapel on the right was designed by **Giovanni Corbelli** in 1686. The frescoes are by **Giuseppe Passeri**, but they appear to have suffered from a poor restoration. The very shallow saucer dome shows *Angels in Heaven*, the left hand wall has *The Dream of St Joseph* and the right hand one, *The Escape into Egypt*. There is good stucco detailing here, with a wide swag of fronds on the archivolt of the entrance arch and little putti apparently holding up the vault fresco. [1]

The altar has a pair of pink marble Composite columns supporting diagonal posts on which putti sit. In between the latter is a winged putto's head sprouting flowers under an incurved gable. The altarpiece is *The Holy Family with God the Father* by **Stefano Legnani** (1685). [1] [2]

To the right is a statue of *St Joseph*, and to the left a little shrine containing a statue of *Our Lady, Refuge of Sinners*. [1]

Underneath the altar are enshrined the relics of one St Leontia, who is depicted as a wax figure dressed up and lying in a glass box. The label states Corpus S[anctae] Leontiae, mart[yr]is, nom[en] pr[o]visum ("The body of St Leontia, martyr, name provided"). This indicates that the individual was anonymous, having been exhumed from a catacomb. Her status as a martyr was, at best, a guess. [1]

On the right wall is the tombstone of Simplicie Verecondie, or Fra Simplicio da Sant'Elia, a lay brother of the Reformed Roman Province, who lived for a long time in San Francesco a Ripa, where he died on February 23, 1656. [2]

On the pier here the memorial to Cardinal Cesare Gherardi (s) (1625). [1]

Chapel of St John of Capistrano (13)

The second chapel on the right was also designed by **Carlo Fontana**. It is worthwhile comparing the design of the altar here with that of the previous chapel. This one has bunched Composite pilasters in mostly black marble, with some pink, either side of the altarpiece and with red Sicilian jasper columns in each corner of the chapel. The round-headed altarpiece frame has a pair of curlicues on top on which a little pair of stucco putti sit. [1]

The saint was directly involved in the campaigns of the Habsburg Empire against the Ottomans and others, and this is reflected in the fresco cycle which is all by **Domenico Muratori** (1705). The altarpiece shows the *St. John of Capistrano at the battle of Belgrade*, 1456, the right hand wall depicts the *Siege of Vienna* in 1485. The left hand wall depicts the *Saint Preaching at Perugia*, the lunettes show his birth and death and the vault shows the *Apotheosis of the Saint*. The form of the vault is that of a saucer dome with integrated pendentives, with the fresco covering the entire surface. [1] [3]

The statue in the middle of the chapel shows *St. Francis embracing Christ on the Cross*.

The pier between this chapel and the next has a monument to Michelangelo Maffei (t) (1703). Count Maffei was general treasurer of Romagna (1689-1691). In particular, he is remembered in Cervia where he had a warehouse built to store salt and, next to it, a defense tower, called "Torre di S. Michele", against the intervention of pirates. [5]

Chapel of the Crucifix (14)

The first chapel on the right was fitted out by **Carlo Fontana** before 1701. The far corners are chamfered, allowing for a curved entablature on each side supported by a pair of ribbed Composite pilasters in grey marble. These entablatures do not meet, and their ends are supported by a pair of columns in the same style in red camposanto marble with capitals in yellow Siena marble. Above the

The polychrome carved wooden crucifix (1686), by a friar called **Angelo da Pietrafitta**, is on a light grey marble background. The vault is a saucer dome on pendentives, with an oculus containing a representation of *God the Father* surrounded by a stucco garland. Garlanded rays divide the cupola into a Maltese cross. The pendentives depict *Franciscan Saints* (1684-1686) and the lunette on the left has a representation of a saintly Franciscan bishop (St Bonaventure?). The right hand lunette is a window. These frescoes were by another friar, **Emanuele da Como**. [1] [6]

The side walls have two monuments: on the left wall, Cardinal Michelangelo Ricci (1697). The bust is attributed to **Domenico Guidi**. Cardinal Ricci was an important mathematician. [1]

On the right wall is the monument of Stefano Brandi (1794). He was Pope Pius VI's secret valet (cameriere segreto). [5]

Between this and the next chapel is a memorial to Michele Angelo Maffei (1793), by **Giuseppe Mazzuoli**, who has much more spectacular work on display in the Chapel of St Peter of Alcantara. Here, the bust sports a lush, curly wig in the fashion of the times. The winged skull below is also fun. [1]

Memorial to Giorgio De Chirico (16)

In 1992 the mortal remains of the great artist Giorgio de Chirico, first buried in the Roman cemetery of Verano, were moved to the church of San Francesco a Ripa. To house the tomb, a small chapel was created from a neighboring property of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, which is accessed today from two small doors at the end of the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception. The painter's widow, Isabella Pakszwer (aka writer Isabella Far), donated three canvases by the Master to the Franciscan friars to be placed in the Chapel of the tomb. The canvases are: *Self-portrait*, *Portrait of his wife Isa* (The veiled lady) and *The Fall of Christ Beneath the Cross*. At the bottom right of the painting Saint Francis of Assisi is depicted, as the first stigmatist in the history of the Church. [2] [6]

Maria Mustari (1923-2012) was the wife of the honorable Franco Evangelisti (assistant of the honorable Giulio Andreotti, former Prime Minister of Italy), with whom De Chirico fell in love (with a Platonic passion) and who is also buried here.

The Fall is a canvas of vast proportions, measuring 185 x 160 cm, and can be considered the Master's most important sacred work. The work represents one of Jesus' falls from the Via Crucis on Calvary, but in the lower right of the viewer, in the foreground and half-length, there is a painting of St. Francis of Assisi. De Chirico was well aware that St. Francis could not be present at Jesus' Calvary, but he wanted to include him in the picture because he saw in him the saint who mourns the passion of his Lord the most, as the first stigmatized saint in the history of the Church. [2]

Sacristy (15)

At the back of the room, between two twisted columns, stands a 17th century bronze crucifix, with a wooden base and cross, by **Alessandro Algardi**, before which Bl Ludovica used to pray. The vault fresco is of *St Michael the Archangel*, and is by **Francesco Corallo**. [1] [2]

Oratory of the Tertiaries

Entering the Sacristy, on the left, there is an iron gate that leads to the oratory of the Third Order of St Francis, a room furnished in 1973 for the meeting of associations. The altarpiece is perhaps by **Ottavio Hauser** (1837), and shows *St Elizabeth of Hungary*, who was herself a tertiary. [1] [2]

Corridor to Cell of St Francis

The shrine of the Cell of St Francis is accessed via a corridor and a steep set of stairs. [1]

Here are memorials to several members of the Anguillara family: Pandolfo, Francesco, Eleanora and Lucrezia. The first-named is dressed as a Franciscan tertiary, and might be the Pandolfo II Anguillara who helped build the first church. However, this is uncertain as he had a nephew of the same name. [1] [2] [6]

Cell of St Francis

The Stanza di San Francesco should be accessible to visitors on asking.

The original cell that the saint occupied was enlarged in 1603 by knocking through the wall into a neighboring cell. Then it was redecorated in the Baroque style in 1698, with wooden panelling all around the walls including above the altar. The work was by **Fra Bernardino da Jesi**. [1]

Above the altar is a depiction of the saint, which is a 13th or 14th century copy of an actual portrait by **Fra Margaritone d'Arezzo**, made in the saint's lifetime or shortly after his death. The original can be seen in the Pinacoteca Vaticana, part of the Vatican Museums. To the left is *St Anthony of Padua*, and to the right *St Louis of Toulouse*. On the side walls *Our Lady and the Angel Gabriel of the Annunciation* are depicted. [1]

In 1708, the panelling around the altar was converted into a reliquary for allegedly more than 1000 relics including those from the Franciscan saints canonized by then. The work was by Fra Tommaso da Spoleto. The arrangement is mechanical, and if a handle is turned panels revolve to reveal the silver reliquary caskets. These are in the pair of wooden columns flanking the altarpiece, as well as behind SS Anthony and Louis. [1]

To the right is a niche with a grating, containing a stone that is said to have been used as a pillow by St Francis. [1]

Frescoes in the cloister

During the 17th century, the convent nucleus became a grandiose complex, including a third cloister - the current corridor flanking the church -, near the 16th-century refectory. The set of building works (1682-1701) were directed, until his death in 1695, by **Mattia De Rossi**, the favorite pupil of Gian Lorenzo Bernini. This environment, illuminated by openings on the uncovered area of the medieval cloister, extends for twenty meters and is decorated with frescoes by **Emanuele da Como**, whose cycle was completed, except for some subsequent additions, in 1686. The works of this painter, a Franciscan professed layman, show an effective stylistic code, as demonstrated, for example, by the large painting of the *Approval Regula Bullata*. [2]

Access

The church's website advises that the church is open:

8:00 to 13:00, 15:30 to 19:00 daily.

The Cell of St Francis should be visitable during these times. However, the Museum of St Charles of Sezze and the Memorial Chamber of Giorgio De Chirico can only be visited as part of a guided tour. An online booking form for a tour is available on the website.

Visitors are not allowed to wander around the church during Mass. Please note the times of Mass below, and plan your visit accordingly (unless you wish to attend Mass here, of course).

Liturgy

Mass is celebrated:

Weekdays 7:30, 18:30

Sundays 8:00 (9:00 in July and August), 11:00 (not July or August), 18:30.

Major feast-days are: St Francis 4 October, St Charles of Sezze 5 January, Bl Ludovica 31 January.

Location:

Addr: 88 Piazza San Francesco d'Assisi, 00186 Roma

Tele: 06-58.19.020

Coord: [41°53'05"N, 12°28'24"E](#)

Burials:

- Clemente Cardinal [GROSSO DELLA ROVERE](#), O.F.M.Conv., (ca. 1462-1504)
Buried here or in the Lateran Basilica
- Cesare Cardinal [GHERARDI](#), (1577-1623)
- Helio Cardinal [BISCIA](#), (1575-1638)
Buried on the left side of the main altar
- Lazzaro Cardinal [PALLAVICINO](#), (1603?-1680)
Buried in the chapel of S. Pasquale
- Michelangelo Cardinal [RICCI](#), (1619-1682)
Buried in the chapel of *SS. Crocifisso*, in his family's tomb
- Orazio Cardinal [MATTEI](#), (1621-1688)
Buried on the left side of his family's chapel of *della Pietà*
- Rannuzio Cardinal [PALLAVICINO](#), (1633-1712)
Buried in front of the main altar
- Giorgio [de Chirico](#) (1888-1978)
Noted Greek-Italian Surrealist Painter and Sculptor
- Giuseppe Paravicini
- Laura (Mattei) Frangipani (d. 1635)
- Maria Camilla
- Giambattista Rospigliosi

Artists and Architects:

- Alberto De Rossi (20th century), Italian painter
- Alessandro [Algardi](#) (1598-1654), Italian high- Baroque sculptor, architect (also see [here](#))
- Andrea [Bolgi](#) [aka *Carrarino*] (1606-1656), Italian sculptor from Carrara
- Fra Angelo [de Pietrafitta](#) (1620-1699), Italian, Franciscan sculptor
- Annibale [Carracci](#) (1560-1609), Italian painter of the Baroque from Bologna (also see [here](#))
- Antonio [della Corgna](#) (1584-1654), Italian painter
- Baldassare [Peruzzi](#) (1481-1536), Italian painter and architect from Siena
- Fra Bernardino da Jesi (17th century), Franciscan artist
- Camillo [Rusconi](#) (1658-1728), Italian sculptor of the late Baroque (also see [here](#))
- Camillo Pistrucchi (1811-1854), Italian sculptor
- Carlo [Cignani](#) (1628-1719), Italian painter of the Bolognese and of the Forlivese school
- Carlo [Fontana](#) (1634-1714), Italian architect of the Late Baroque period
- Cristoforo [Greppi](#) (17th century), Italian painter
- Fra Diego [da Careri](#) (1606-1661), Italian, Franciscan painter
- Fra Emanuele [da Como](#) (1586-1662), Italian, Franciscan painter
- Ercole [Ferrata](#) (1610-1686), Italian sculptor of the Baroque period (also see [here](#))
- Domenico [Guidi](#) (1625-1701), Italian sculptor of the Baroque period. (also see [here](#))
- Domenico [Morani](#) (1824-1870), Italian painter and sculptor
- Domenico Maria [Muratori](#) (1661-1744), Italian painter of the Baroque period
- Francesco [Corallo](#) (17th century), Italian Painter and Gilder
- Francesco (Cecchino) [Salviati](#) (1510-1563), Italian painter in the Mannerist (also see [here](#))
- Francesco [Peparelli](#) († 1641), Italian architect
- Gaspare [Celio](#) (1571-1640), Italian painter of the late-Mannerist and early-Baroque period
- Giacomo [Mola](#) (1583-1650), Swiss-Italian architect
- Gian Lorenzo [Bernini](#) (1598-1680), Italian Baroque sculptor and architect [also see [here](#)]
- Giovanni Battista [Gaulli](#) [aka *il Baciccio*] (1639-1709), Italian painter of the High Baroque
- Giovanni Battista [Mola](#) (1586-1665), Italian architect
- Giovanni Battista [Ricci](#) [aka *da Novara*] (c.1537-1627), Italian painter
- Giovanni Corbelli (17th century), Italian architect
- Girolamo [Lucenti](#) (1627-1692), Italian sculptor of the Baroque period
- Giuseppe Bartolomeo [Chiari](#) (1654-1727), Italian painter of the late-Baroque
- Giuseppe Frascari (18th cent), Italian sculptor
- Giuseppe [Mazzuoli](#) (1644-1725), Italian sculptor of the Baroque
- Giuseppe [Passeri](#) (1654-1714), Italian painter of the Baroque period
- Guido [Reni](#) (1575-1642), Italian painter of high-Baroque. (also see [here](#))

Lorenzo Masucci (d. 1785), Italian painter
Lorenzo [Ottomi](#) [aka *Il Lorenzone*] (1658-1736), Italian sculptor
Luca [Carimini](#) (1830-1890), Italian architect & sculptor
Ludovico Rusconi [Sassi](#) (1678-1736), Italian architect of the Rococo period
Marcello Sozzi (19th cent), Italian painter
Fra [Margaritone d'Arezzo](#) (1250-1290), Italian painter
Marten [de Vos](#) (1532-1603), Dutch painter and draughtsman
Mattia [de Rossi](#) (1637-1695), Italian architect of the Baroque period
Michele Garofolino (18th century), Italian sculptor
Nicola [Michetti](#) (1675-1758), Italian architect of the late Baroque
Onorio [Longhi](#) (1568-1619), Italian architect (also see [here](#))
Ottavio Hauser (19th century), Painter
Paolo Belloni (19th cent), Italian Architect
Riccardo [Grifoni](#) (1845-1933), Italian sculptor
Fra Secondo di Roma (18th cent.), Italian, Franciscan architect
Stefano [Legnani](#) [aka *il Legnanino*,] (1660-1715), Italian painter of the Baroque period
Simon [Vouet](#) (1590-1649), French painter of the Italian Baroque style
Fra Tommaso da Spoleto (17th century), Franciscan artist
Vincenzo [Mascioni](#) (20th century), Organ makers

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