

# San Marco Evangelista al Campidoglio



**San Marco** is a 9th century minor basilica and parish and titular church, on ancient foundations, located on Piazza Venezia. The dedication is to St Mark the Evangelist, patron saint of Venice, and it is the church for Venetian expatriates at Rome. The full official name is **San Marco Evangelista al Campidoglio**, "St Mark the Evangelist at the Capitol".

## History

The basilica was probably founded by Pope St. Marcus (Mark) in 336 over an older oratory. Located at the foot of the Capitoline Hill, it is one of the oldest Roman churches, and contends with the Church of San Crisogono in Trastevere for the title of the oldest parish in the city. It stands on the site where St Marcus is said to have lived, and was known as the *Titulus Pallacinae*. The church is thus recorded as *Titulus Marci* in the 499 synod of Pope Symmachus. [1] [11] [d]

The church was restored several times, both due to the repeated and devastating floods of the Tiber, and after the raids and looting carried out by the Goths, the Lombards and the Byzantines between the sixth and seventh centuries. It seems from the archaeology that the basilica had a serious fire in the fifth century, as burnt debris was found in the stratigraphy. The church was rebuilt on the previous one with an inverted orientation of 180 ° compared to the current one, and had plastered walls painted with fake marble panels. [1] [9] [11]

It was reconstructed in the 8th century by Pope Adrian I (772-795), whose family resided in a building near the church. The floor of the basilica was raised by one meter, two side aisles were added to the central one, the roof was redone. It was flooded when the Tiber rose above its banks soon after, in 791. Pope Gregory IV (r. 827-844), titular cardinal of San Marco when elected to the papacy, was responsible

for what is now considered to have been a complete rebuilding. The orientation of the church was reversed, with the old apse being demolished and replaced by a main entrance. The old entrance was replaced by a new apse, with the Byzantine-style mosaics of the apse and apsidal arch and dedicatory inscription that survives intact to this day. However, the three windows which the apse had were later blocked. The nave floor was raised further, and a confessio or devotional crypt provided for the veneration of relics of catacomb martyrs. Here, the saints concerned were Abdon and Sennen, originally Persian and buried on the Via Portuensi, and St Hermes whose suburban basilica, on the Via Salaria, has left remains as Sant'Ermete. More obscure were St Restitutus and companions, from the Via Nomentana at the twenty-sixth milestone. [1] [10] [11] [d] [f]

In 1145, the relics of Pope St Mark were brought from Velletri and enshrined under the main altar. The campanile was built in a restoration in 1154, when a baldacchino or canopy was provided for the high altar. This was inscribed, and a transcription survives which gives the names of the craftsmen, four brothers: [1] [9]

In N[ostro] D[omino], Mag[iste]r Cil. Prr. Card[inalis] S[ancti] Marci iussit  
hoc fieri, pro redemptione animae suae, ann[o] D[omi]ni MCLIII,  
ind[ictione] II factum, est per manus Iohis Petri Angeli et Sassonis,  
filiorum Pauli.

This baldacchino was later destroyed: the porphyry columns are now located at the side entrances of the presbytery, while the 10 columns have been positioned in the portico. [11]

The link with Venice arose in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Cardinal Pietro Barbo, who was titular of the church before being elected as Pope Paul II in 1464, restored it in the period 1455 to 1471. He added the present frontage, including a second-storey loggia which he used for blessings and addresses as pope after finishing it in 1466. He also provided the church with a roof in lead, a coffered ceiling, a Cosmatesque floor and windows with Gothic tracery in the central nave walls above the arcades. The ancient columns of the arcade were enclosed in piers (the lead roof was heavy), and chapels inserted into the side walls. [1] [d]

As part of the same building project, the pope built the Palazzo Venezia around the church, which was completed in 1477 and used as the papal residence. Pope Paul then declared San Marco to be the national church of the Venetians. Leon Battista Alberti seems to have had some overall responsibility for the work on both church and palazzo, but the documentary evidence for this is not good. **Giovanni De' Dolci** is on record as having worked here in 1464. The façade with its loggia is now attributed to **Francesco del Borgo** instead of Alberti himself. The Palazzo Venezia remained the papal residence only until 1564, when Pope Pius IV gave it to the Republic of Venice as an embassy. [1]

In 1654 Nicolò Sagredo, the Venetian ambassador, sponsored a restoration supervised by **Orazio Torriani**. This involved interior decoration, including the nave fresco panels, and the glazing of the windows, and took three years. In 1735, Cardinal Angelo Maria Quirini ordered a major re-modelling in the Baroque style, the architect being **Filippo Barigioni**. The columns are replaced with others made of bricks covered with red and white Sicilian jasper, and the stucco bas-reliefs above the columns of the central nave are added. The altar and the marble balustrade of the Chapel of the Sacrament, the presbytery and the Confession are arranged. [1] [9]

The arches of the Loggia of Blessings were walled up and converted into large windows, thus turning the loggia into an enclosed room. Very fortunately, the proposal to replace the Renaissance ceiling with a Baroque vault was not carried out. Very unfortunately, the 12<sup>th</sup> century altar canopy was destroyed. There have been no significant interventions in the church fabric since then, apart from the provision of an organ gallery by **Giuseppe Valadier** in 1796. [1]

The Baroque remodelling of the Loggia of Blessings was reversed in 1916, converting it back into its original form. [1]

To eliminate or at least reduce the humidity of the church, important restoration works were carried out between 1947 and 1949: in this circumstance the crypt was reopened and restored and archaeological investigations were carried out to understand the ancient phases of the building and the area.

The church that exists today is thus an architectural hybrid of very mixed pedigree, similar pattern of structural and decorative renovation can be seen in older churches throughout the city. The typical early church, it turns out, was rebuilt during the Middle Ages, extensively during the Renaissance, and then given a superficial overlay interior decoration during the Baroque era. [d]

In the 1940's, excavations under the nave floor found the flooring of the original basilica, and a second floor on top of this. However, debate on the dating of the early remodellings of the church was inconclusive until another excavation under the portico in the 1980's. [1]

## **Exterior**

The exterior fabric of the church is enclosed by the structures of the Palazzo on all sides except the façade. The nave and sanctuary are under one pitched and tiled roof (tiles replaced lead in the 18th century), while the aisles have lower pitches. The loggia has its own roof, pitched at right angles to that of the nave. [1]

The Renaissance façade (1466) was built by Pope Paul II with travertine marble taken from the Coliseum and the Theatre of Marcellus to integrate San Marco into his new Palazzo Venezia, and was traditionally ascribed to Leon Battista Alberti, but is now considered to have been by **Francesco del Borgo**. [1]

It has a portico with three large arches, having rectangular piers with impost. Half-round Ionic pilasters are applied to the piers, and the arches are filled with ornate iron gates. Above the entablature is the Loggia of Benedictions, which was completed by **Giuliano da Maiano** in 1471 and was used for Papal blessings when the pope lived in the Palazzo Venezia. It repeats the three arches, except that the applied pilasters are Corinthian and are in shallow rectangular relief. Each pilaster has a papal emblem with a lion's mask above which recalls the lion emblem of St Mark the Evangelist. [1]

### Portico (2)

The external portico with three arches and semi-columns with capitals was erected composites, with travertine from the Colosseum and the Teatro Marcello. In 1468 the overlying loggia with three arches was built, marked by pilasters with Corinthian capitals, from where the pope gave blessings. The four coats of arms hanging from the loggia are two of Paul II and two of Cardinal Marco Barbo. [11]

The portico of the church contains many interesting pieces of carved stonework, some of them ancient Roman and some from the palaeochristian basilica. They include little columns attached to the wall at the left hand end, alleged fragments of the 12th century altar canopy or ciborio demolished in the 18th century restoration. [1]

The wall at the right hand end has a wall tablet with a very long and tiresome description of the remodelling carried out by Pope Paul II. [1]

To the right of the entrance is the funerary epitaph of Vannozza dei Cattanei, moved here from her tomb in Santa Maria del Popolo in obscure circumstances. She was the mistress of Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia before his election as Pope Alexander VI (r. 1492-1503). She was the mother of Cesare, Lucrezia, Gíofrea and Giovanni Borgia, and their names were recorded with pride in the inscription on the tomb. Because of this, it is thought that enemies of the Borgias later looted the tablet, brought it here and used it as paving for the portico. [1] [f]

Near the epitaph is an early well-head carved out of a drum of a large ancient column, 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century. It has a very crudely carved inscription on it, cursing anyone who sold water drawn from it. The original well was almost certainly in the church, rather like the one surviving in San Bartolomeo all'Isola, but its exact location is unknown. [1]

The marble Renaissance doorcase of the main entrance is thought to be by **Isaia da Pisa**. It has a pair of Composite fluted pilasters supporting a lintel richly decorated with sunbursts and swags. Above the lintel is a lunette with a bas-relief carved in 1464 and depicting St Mark. [1]

Before this entrance, and flanking it, is a pair of recumbent stone lions which are facing each other warily. The lion of St Mark is the symbol of Venice, but several other churches had this decorative detail in mediaeval times. [1]

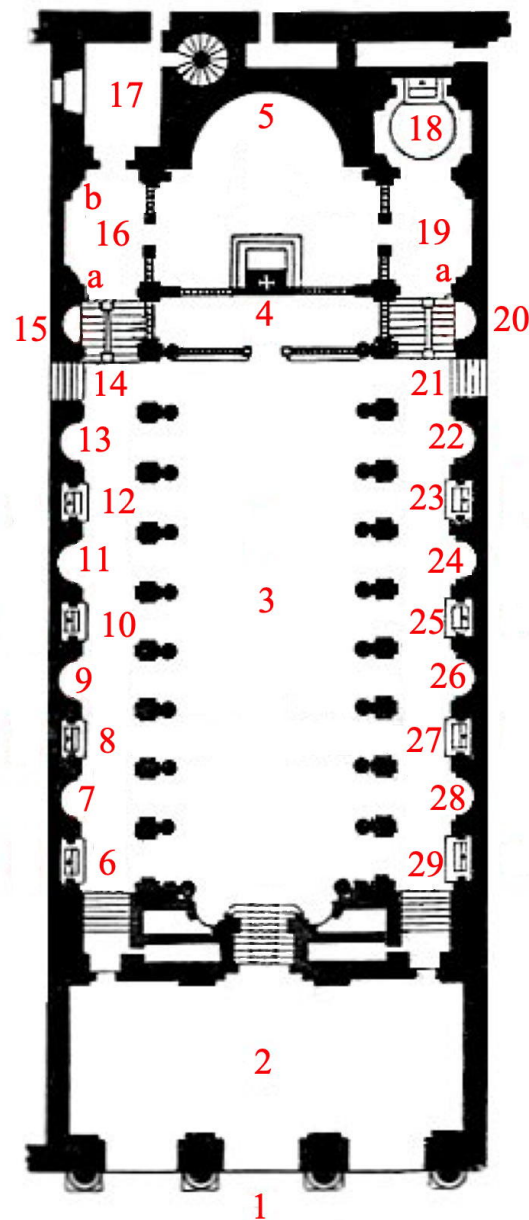
Flanking the main entrance is a pair of matching wall memorials, to Tommaso Contarini 1634 and Daniel Contarini 1656. They had been ambassadors for Venice. There are two other smaller, simpler entrances into the side aisles on the other sides of these monuments. [1]

### Campanile

The brick bell-tower was added to the right hand corner of the nave just inside the entrance in 1154, and can be seen peeping over the façade. It has three storeys above the nave roof, separated by dentillate brick cornices and with an arcade of three arches separated by white marble columns on each face. Also, the fabric is decorated with roundels of dark green serpentine. [1] [e]

### Plan and Layout

The plan of the church forms a narrow rectangle. Firstly there is the portico, the depth of which is actually a third of the length of the nave. Then comes the nave with side aisles, which has ten bays. Finally there is the sanctuary with an internal semi-circular apse, flanked by continuations of the aisles which end in a chapel on the right, and the sacristy on the left. [1]



## Interior

From the portico the church is entered by descending nine marble steps. The inside is clearly Baroque. However, the basilica shows noteworthy elements of all her millenary history. [1]

The church plan has a nave and two aisles, with twenty columns veneered in Sicilian jasper. The coffered wooden ceiling, with the emblem of Pope Paul II, is from the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and is possibly the oldest in Rome, though the ceiling in Santa Maria Maggiore may be older. [1]

The first bay is taken up by the three staircases down into the church, and the organ gallery. The following nine bays are the nave proper, and the last two bays comprise the sanctuary which is raised above a devotional crypt or confessio and is hence approached by stairs. [1]

There are four side altars on each side of the nave, which are simply rather small barrel-vaulted niches on a shallow rectangular plan. These alternate with four cross-vaulted apsidal niches into which large funerary monuments have been inserted. [1]

### Counterfaçade

Over the main entrance in this first bay of the nave is the organ gallery, 1796 by **Giuseppe Valadier**, which is impressive in its own right. The actual main entrance is flanked by a pair of doubletted Composite pilasters revetted in pink and grey marble, and on these the central section of the gallery is cantilevered out on stone beams. Above is a marble balustrade, topped by a railing in gilded wood featuring flaming torches as posts connected by festoons. [1]

This gallery is inserted into what is structurally an apse, with a triumphal arch and conch. You can see this from the curved walls on either side of the entrance below the gallery, which have a pair of memorial busts. One is of Italian architect Virginio Bracci, (d.1815) by **Raffaele Tuccimei** and the other of the painter Agostino Tofanelli, (d. 1834) by **Achille Stocchi**. [1]

The main part of the organ is in an aedicule inserted into the apse, which has doubletted pilasters matching those flanking the entrance. These support a triangular pediment raised on posts, into which is inserted a large coat-of-arms which breaks the cornice. The organ itself is a very fine instrument, built in 1936 by the firm **Tamburini di Crema**. [1]

### Nave (3)

Unlike in most ancient Roman churches, the floor level in the 9<sup>th</sup> century was kept in later remodellings. Hence, the floor is now substantially below the level of the street outside and you have to descend a flight of stairs after passing through the entrance door. [1]

The nave has nine arcade archways on each side. These are actually double. In front, each arcade has a set of arches set on the most notable design feature of the church, a matching set of Composite columns in Sicilian jasper, red and yellow veined with white, with gilded capitals. These columns are free-standing. Behind the archivolts that they support are a second set of narrower archivolts, springing from piers revetted in what looks like Carrara marble in white with horizontal grey streaks. These piers are behind the jasper columns. The columns, and the stucco and fresco decorations on the nave walls above, are from the 1744 restoration. [1]

In the first nave bay, the arches are surmounted by a pair of gilded cantorie or opera-boxes for solo musicians. After these, over the columns in the other bays are either stucco bas-reliefs or large fresco panels -these alternate. Then come the 15<sup>th</sup> century windows over a cornice, and then the ceiling. Note that nothing in the design of the nave side walls links the ceiling with the arcades. [1]

The rather splendid lectern at the top right hand side of the nave, showing the gilded lion of St Mark emerging from a green brecciated marble pillar, is worth a look. [1]

Over the columns are bas-reliefs in stucco, executed from the designs of Carlo Orlandi by various sculptors. There are a total of twelve, for the twelve Apostles, four of which are in the sanctuary. They were executed in the four years after 1741: [1]

- *St. James the Great (The Baptism of Hermogenes)*, by Carlo Monaldi
- *St. Philip (The Baptism of the Eunuch)*, by Carlo Monaldi
- *St. Matthew (The Call of St Matthew)*, by Carlo Monaldi
- *St. Thomas (The Incredulity of St Thomas)*, by Carlo Monaldi
- *St. Andrew*, by Andrea Bergondi
- *St. Bartholomen*, by Giovanni Le Dous
- *St. Simon*, by Salvatore Bercari
- *St. John the Evangelist*, by René-Michel Slodtz
- *St. Matthias*, by Pietro Pacilli
- *St. Peter*, by Pietro Pacilli
- *St. James the Less*, by Carlo Monaldi
- *St. Paul*, by Carlo Monaldi

The frescos under the Gothic windows, between the bas-reliefs, are also by a variety of artists, and are from the Sagredo restoration in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They feature two story cycles. The left hand ones deal with Pope St Mark, and the right hand ones with SS Abdon and Sennen. There are five panels in each cycle. [11]

Right side:

- *Saints Abdon and Sennen bury the bodies of martyrs* by Francesco Mola
- *Saints Abdon and Sennen refuse to worship idols* by Francesco Allegrini
- *Saints Abdon and Sennen yoked to the triumph of Emperor Dacius* by Giovanni Angelo Canini
- *Martyrdom of Saints Abdon and Sennen* by Guillaume Courtois
- *Clement XIII approves the decree of the beatification of Abdon and Sennen*

Left side:

- *San Lorenzo Giustiniani takes possession of the diocese of Venice*
- *Transfer of the body of St. Mark to Rome* by Fabrizio Chiari
- *St. Mark consecrates an altar of the basilica* by Francesco Allegrini
- *St. Mark approves the project of the basilica* by Giovanni Angelo Canini
- *Coronation of St. Mark Pope* by Guillaume Courtois

Two smaller panels are next to the cantorie (artists not listed). The arch spandrels below the frescoes are decorated with three fleur-de-lys on a blue background. [1]

The coffered wooden ceiling dates from the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and is possibly the oldest in Rome (though the ceiling in Santa Maria Maggiore may be slightly older). It was made by **Giovannino** and **Marco de' Dolci**, and is coffered in identical blue squares each of which contains a gilded rosette. The gilding was by **Giuliano degli Amidi**. The coat-of-arms on a red background in three tondi is of Pope Paul II, and serve as a reminder of his 15<sup>th</sup> century remodelling of the church. [1]

The opus Alexandrinum floor is in white and dark grey marble was laid by order of Cardinal Quirini in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It has grave slabs from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and a fine Cosmatesque panel featuring a quincunx. This is a remnant of the Cosmatesque flooring which was laid in the entire church in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. [1]

### Sanctuary (4)

There are two parts to the sanctuary. The first is at the same level as the nave and is the external confessio, although that term properly belongs to the crypt. The second is the presbyterium, and contains the high altar and choir. It is raised up over the internal confessio, which is a set of underfloor crypt passages dating to the original 9<sup>th</sup> century church. [1]

### External confessio

The external confessio occupies the eleventh bay, and is flanked by the two sets of stairs to the presbyterium. It is protected by sets of intricately curlicued wrought iron railings between piers revetted with alabaster, and a matching central set of gates. Over it, on the edge of the presbyterium, is a balustrade with a central concave section into which the high altar is inserted. This altar has a frontal which is itself concave and decorated with verde antico and alabaster, and protruding from it is a large porphyry urn in the form of a bathtub. This contains the relics of the founder of the church, Pope St Mark, to which those of SS Abdon and Sennen were added in the 15th century (they were put back into the confessio in 1948). [1]

Below the altar frontal is a large oval orifice, surrounded by a gilded palm leaf wreath on a grey stone background. This is topped by a pair of curlicues, on which two gilded angels sit. The opening is into the actual confessio or crypt, and is called a fenestrella confessionis. It was intended to aid the devotion of pilgrims. [1]

A pair of gilded standing angel candleholders are on the ends of the balustrade arc. The walls below the balustrade on either side of the fenestrella are revetted in polychrome stonework including alabaster, with two inscription tablets in bright orange and a pair of oval porphyry tondi at the outer ends. All this work is of the 18th century, by **Filippo Barigioni**. [1]

The large modern Byzantine-style icon below the left hand standing angel is a recent addition, in the glykophilousa mode ("loving kindness"). [1]

### Choir and tribune

The tribune is reached from the aisles by nine marble steps; and the choir is entered on either side by an arch decorated with two porphyry columns. To the right is a beautiful candelabrum, formed of one column of breccia coralline. Here there is a superb Cosmatesque floor too, focusing on a quincunx in the apse which is well worth detailed examination. It was laid in 1478. [1] [a]

Behind the altar in the apse are the stalls of the canons, arranged in a semicircle in one impressive piece of 18th century carpentry. Over the central stall of the choir is a medallion of Paul II in gilt bronze, placed there by Card. Quirini. [1] [a]

### Apse (5)

The apse wall has three large paintings featuring scenes from the life of St Mark the Evangelist. The central one is by **Giovanni Francesco Romanelli** showing the saint preaching (note the lion, his attribute) and the two side ones show his martyrdom and burial and are by **Guillaume Courtois, II Borgognone**. [1]

Originally, the apse wall had three windows but these were blocked in the 15th century when the palazzo was built. [1]

Above the paintings are two mosaics in the interior, and one on the exterior, of the apse. [a]

The apse mosaic dates from the 9th century, and was ordered by Pope St Gregory IV (827-844). It's in the Byzantine style known in an earlier example from Santi Cosma e Damiano, but it was probably made by Roman artists who imitated the style rather than Greeks who really knew it. The mosaics in this church are the last major ones made in Rome for nearly 300 years. [1]

On the triumphal arch are the monumental figures of Paul on the left with the *rotulus* of the laws and Peter on the right with the keys, both with right arms raised, pointing toward the apse. In the apex are five medallions, containing a central bust of Christ and the symbols of the four evangelists, all on a gold background. [g]

The upper mosaic of the conch represents *Christ* standing in the middle, flanked by *St Felicissimus*, *St Mark the Evangelist*, *Pope Gregory IV* (with the squared halo of the living pope, holding a model of the church, which he restored following a severe flood) on the left and *Sts Pope Marcus*, *Pope Agapitus* and *Agnes* on the right. St Mark has his hand on Pope Gregory's shoulder, meaning that he is introducing him to Christ. The under one within represents the *Mystic Lamb* surrounded by twelve other lambs, with the cities of Bethlehem and Jerusalem at the extremities. [a] [g]

Beneath the mosaics of the interior is the inscription:

Vasta tholi firmo sistunt fundamine fulcra,  
Quae Salomonico fulgent sub sydere ritu,  
Haec tibi, proque tuo perfecit praesul honore  
Gregorius, Marce, eximio cui nomine quartus,  
Tu quoque posce Deum, vivendi tempora longa  
Donet, et ad coeli post funus sydera ducat.

From this inscription we learn that these mosaics were executed, by order of Greg. IV., about the year 833; and accordingly his portrait is without a glory, having been still living at the time of their execution.

[a] [f]

The nave chapels are merely arched niches with just enough room for their little altars. They, and the accompanying monument niches, were carved out of the 9<sup>th</sup> century side walls in the 15<sup>th</sup> century remodelling. The side chapels and monuments are described clockwise, starting from the left of the entrance.

### Left side aisles, chapels and monuments

#### Chapel of the Altare Pasquale [6]

The first chapel to the left used to be the baptistry and was dedicated to St John the Baptist, but there is no font here now. The frescoes are attributed to **Carlo Maratta**, with an elliptical altarpiece showing the *Madonna and Child* which has almost completely perished. The side wall frescoes show allegories of *Prudence* to the left and *Innocence* to the right, for which the artist used a pretty blonds as a model. [1]

The tabernacle on the altar is a fine piece, embellished with alabaster and with a bronze Lamb of God on top. The little wrought iron railings guarding the chapel are 17<sup>th</sup> century. [1]

#### Monument to Cardinal Marcantonio Bragadin (7)

The first monument niche on the left contains a memorial to Cardinal Marcantonio Bragadin (d. 1658), a grandson of the famous Venetian army commander Marco Antonio Bragadin. The work, dating from 1662, was built by the stonemason **Alessandro Vitale**, and the four putti and portrait bust of the deceased were executed by the sculptor **Lazzaro Morelli**, another of Bernini's school who demonstrates the master's influence here. The portrait bust is in an elliptical tondo from which two putti are recoiling violently. The background is a curtain hanging down above a sarcophagus, all in dark grey marble. [1] [c]

#### Chapel of St Gregory Barbarigo (8)

The second chapel on the left is the most impressive of the nave side chapels. It is dedicated to St Gregory Barbarigo, who was a titular of the church and canonized in 1960. He was beatified in 1761, and in response the chapel was re-fitted by **Ermenegildo Sintesi** in 1764. Unlike the other nave chapels, here space is taken from the side aisle by means of a curved balustrade in red and yellow marble with a little pair of wooden entrance gates. The curve is followed by an entablature above, on which is the Barbarigo coat of arms supported by an angel and a putto. This entablature is supported by a pair of massive Corinthian pillars in yellow marble with bronze capitals, and a matching pair flanks the altar. [1]

[a]

The altarpiece is a bas-relief by **Antonio d'Este**, a pupil of Canova, and depicts the saint giving alms. The round-headed frame is topped by festoons and a wreath in bronze. [11] [12]

Next is a shell-shaped niche from the time of Paul II (9) with wooden confessional, but contains fresco of *coats of arms, Prophets and Sibyls* by **Gagliardi**. [11]

#### Chapel of St Dominic (10)

The third chapel on the left is dedicated to St Dominic, and the altarpiece, *St. Dominic restoring to life Napoleone Orsini, the young son of Gertrude de Bubalisch*, which occurred in 1218 when preaching the Lent in this church, is attributed to **Baccio Ciarpi**. The damaged side wall frescoes depict *St Francis of Assisi* (right) by **Lazzaro Baldi**, and *St Nicholas of Bari* (left) by **Ciro Ferri**. [1] [1] [a]

#### Monument to Luigi Priuli (11)



The third monument niche to the left contains a memorial to Cardinal Luigi Priuli, sculpted by **Francesco Moderati** in 1720. This monument is in a light grey striped marble. The allegorical figures are *Justice* to the left, and *Charity* to the right. The former is accompanied by a putto bearing the fasces, and the latter is being overwhelmed by a pair of putti running riot. [1]

#### Chapel of St Michael the Archangel (12)

The fourth chapel on the left is dedicated to St Michael the Archangel. The altarpiece of *St Michael Defeating the Devil* is by **Mola**. The chapel used to be dedicated to SS Vincent and Anastasius, hence the side wall frescoes depict them. They are by **Courtois**. The frescoes in the ceiling vault have rotted away. [1]

#### Monument to Pietro Basadonna (13)

The fourth monument niche on the left contains another spectacular Baroque memorial, to Cardinal Pietro Basadonna. This is "cool" Baroque, white on dark grey with no polychrome, and is by **Filippo Carcani** who was another artist from Bernini's school. The allegorical figures are *Fortitude* on the right, and *Faith* on the left, and the high-relief carving of the drapery on these and on the portrait bust is impressive. Especially enjoyable are two little cameo portraits of *Death*, lower down at the sides. In one he has a scythe, in the other an hour-glass. It has been said that the church is worth visiting for these alone. [1]

The monument conceals a shadowy fresco above of a prophet by **Gagliardi**. [1]

Then there is a side entrance to the church, (14) with the fresco *The Victory of Joshua* by **Guglielmo Courtois**. [11]

Next are a double set of stairs. (15) The descending stairs lead to the 9th century semi-annular crypt. The ascending stairs lead to the side of the sanctuary.

By the stairs up to the next chapel is an apsed niche containing the restrained 15th century monument to Paolo Capranica, archbishop of Benevento (died 1476), consisting of a large marble sarcophagus, on the lid of which is sculptured in relief the recumbent figure of the deceased. [1] [a] (b)

#### Chapel of the Immaculate Conception (16)

The vestibule of the sacristy has an altar under its lunette window, and is hence a chapel dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady. It is the Cappella Capranica. The artworks are by **Pier Francesco Mola**. The altarpiece shows the *Immaculate Conception*, and to the sides are frescoes of *St Luke* and *St John the Evangelist*. [1]

Memorials in here are to Giovanni Luigi Priolo, (16a) a Venetian patrician (d.1801) to the left, and Gabrielle Scala (Scaglia), (16b) Countess of Saluzzo (d. 1796) to the right. The latter is thought to be the first sculpture in Rome by **Felice Festa**, and is a very accomplished neo-Classical work showing an angel (or genius, if regarded as pagan) leaning on an amphora. [1] [a]

There is also a well executed portrait of Nicolò Sagredo, Doge of Venice. [a]

#### Sacristy (17)

The sacristy is in the top left hand corner of the church. The altar in here is the previous 15th century high altar, replaced by the present one in the 18th century. The altarpiece of *St Mark the Evangelist* is by **Melozzo da Forlì**. There are also fragments of 14th century frescoes from the school of **Pietro Cavallini**, which some think are by the master. [1]

The real treasure in the sacristy is the magnificent sculptured holy oil cupboard or aumbry, commissioned by Cardinal Barbo. This was a joint effort by **Mino da Fiesole** and **Giovanni Dalmata** over the two years from 1474, and experts have identified the contributions of the two of them on stylistic grounds. Giovanni executed the relief to the left, depicting *Jacob Receiving the Birthright of Esau*, as well as the two angels, while Mino executed the relief to the right depicting *Melchizedek Greeting Abraham* and *God the Father* at the top. [1] (b)

#### Right side aisles, chapels and monuments

### Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament (18)

The Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament is in the far right hand corner of the church, to the right of the apse. It amounts to a continuation of the right hand side aisle, and has a vestibule which connects to the raised area of the sanctuary via a wide archway containing a colonnaded screen. The dedication is to Pope St Mark. [1]

The vestibule floor has the same 15<sup>th</sup> century Cosmatesque paving as the sanctuary. It contains a rectangular slab (19) in imperial porphyry bearing the epitaph of Cardinal Marco Barbo, 1491. He was a distant cousin of Pope Paul II. [1]

The chapel itself was built for the ambassador Nicolò Segredo based on a design by **Pietro da Cortona** in 1653. It has a plan based on a chamfered square, and is domed. The chamfered corners of the square are occupied by wide piers with slightly incurved faces, and from these spring four arches which outline the pediments. The dome itself sits on a cornice supported by these. It has an unusual design, since as well as a lantern there are four side windows in lunettes which touch the lantern oculus. This gives a Maltese cross effect. The rich stucco decoration of the dome and pendentives is a joint effort by **Cosimo Fancelli** and **Ercole Ferrata**. [1] [11]

The altar is in the far arch. It was designed with the Blessed Sacrament in mind, and the tabernacle is an integral part of the design. A pair of Composite columns in red and grey marble support a split segmental pediment, and into the split is inserted a richly framed tablet with its own pediment. This reads:

**Ecce tabernaculum Dei cum hominibus**  
(Behold, the tent of God is with men)

The tabernacle referred to is in the form of a miniature round temple, with columns in the same marble. The 15<sup>th</sup> century altarpiece portrait of *Pope St Mark* is by **Melozzo da Forli**. [1]

The side arches are occupied by two large frescoes by **Guillaume Courtois, Il Borgognone**. The left hand one shows *The Collection of the Manna by Aaron*, and the right shows *The Sacrifice of Aaron*. Above these are two lunettes with frescoes by **Ciro Ferri**, the left hand one being *The Martyrdom of St Catherine of Alexandria*, and the right hand one *The Martyrdom of SS Cyprian and Martina*. [1]

Near the chapel of the Bl. Sacrament, is a small monument, erected by her mourning parents to their dear daughter, Maria Teresa Genotte Markenfel, who died, in 1825, aged five years. [1]

The Christian inscription beneath this little monument reads:

**Dep. imp, XV Kal, Sep. Fortissimo., Cons. Timasio et Promote V. C. ;**

It informs us that St. Fortissima suffered martyrdom on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August, in the consulate of Timasius and Promotus. She suffered in the reign of Theodosius, A. D. 389, on occasion of the tumults excited by the expulsion of Symmachus and his Pagan adherents; and her body, extracted from the Catacombs of S. Cyriaca in 1795, is preserved in the sacristy. [1]

### Monument to Cardinal Giambattista Rubini (19a)

On the pier at the top of the stairs to the right is a monument to Cardinal Giambattista Rubini, bishop of Vicenza, who died in 1707. It has his bust and shield backed by yellow Siena marble and his epitaph on a black marble plaque shaped like a manta ray. [1]

### Monument to Leonardo Pesaro (20)

The next memorial is in a small niche which actually next to the stairs leading up to the sanctuary area. It is the funeral monument of a young son of a Venetian ambassador Pietro Pesaro, who died aged sixteen. By **Antonio Canova** early in his career, it was executed in 1796 in the purest neo-Classical style, and has attracted much admiration since then. The decorative details, involving a swag hanging from the mouths of a pair of lions' masks, a wreath with ribbons and the acroteria (little projections) with acanthus leaf decoration, are all Classical. [1] [11]

The side door that comes next (21) actually aligns with the main entrance of the palazzo on the Piazza Venezia. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century this door was how you got into the church. Over the entrance is a battle scene, *Route of the Midianites*, in fresco by **Courtois**. [1] [11] [a]

### Monument to Francesco Erizzo (22)

The fourth monument niche on the right contains the impressive late Baroque memorial to Francesco Erizzo, 1700 by **Francesco Maratti**. The deceased was the son of one of the ambassadors from Venice. The work is in the shape of a squat obelisk, bearing a cameo portrait in a tondo of brown marble supported by a pair of flying angels. Above is the family coat-of-arms, with crowned lion supporters backed by a drape. This obscures a fresco of a *Sibyl* by **Gagliardi**. [1]

### Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows (23)

The fourth chapel on the right is dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows, and preserves its 17<sup>th</sup> century decoration. It was the Cappella Vitelleschi. The frescoes are by **Gagliardi**; the altarpiece is a *Pietà*, and the side panels show *St. John the Evangelist* and *St. Mary Magdalen*. [1] [11]

There is a fragment of Cosmatesque paving outside the chapel. [1] [11]

### Monument to Cardinal Vidman (24)

The third monument niche on the right contains a memorial to Cardinal Cristoforo Vidman, 1660. He was a Venetian of Austrian descent (his name was actually Widmann). The impressive work is by **Cosimo Fancelli**, with obvious allusions to Bernini. Note the ruffled shroud on the bust plinth, being manipulated by two very Berniniesque putti. Also impressive is the pair of eagles holding the ends of a swag at the sarcophagus, executed in white marble. The rayed effect in the conch is achieved by using alabaster panelling, the same stone being employed for the sarcophagus. [1]

### Chapel of the Epiphany (25)

The third chapel on the right is dedicated to the Epiphany, belonging to the Specchi family. The altarpiece, one of the better paintings in the church, is by **Carlo Maratta** and shows *The Adoration of the Magi*. Seriously damaged flanking fresco panels were by **Courtois**; it is impossible to make out the subjects now. [1]

On the altar is a little circular bas-relief of the *Sacred Heart*, infinitely better artistically than what is usually to be had in this genre. [1]

### Monument to Luigi Oreste Borgia (26)

The second monument niche contains a modern memorial to Luigi Oreste Borgia, a canon of the church who died in 1916. Its style is such that it could have been executed a century earlier. [1] [11]

Above is a damaged fresco of the *Cumanian Sibyl* by **Bernardino Gagliardi** again. [1] [11]

### Chapel of St Anthony of Padua (27)

The second chapel on the right is dedicated to St Anthony of Padua, and was the Cappella Tomacelli. The altarpiece showing *Madonna presenting the Christ-Child to SS Anne and Anthony* is by **Luigi Primo**, a Flemish painter whose real name was Louis Cousin. There are decayed 17<sup>th</sup> century frescoes in the vault.

### Monument to Cardinal Pisani (28)

Next along the right hand aisle is the fantastic memorial to Cardinal Francesco Pisani, 1570. It is in the form of the frontage of a pentastyle Greek temple with the central column missing, and is in polychrome marble and alabaster. The revetted panel in alabaster below the temple is a simple display of wealth without artistic merit.

Above the monument is a fresco of a *Sibyl* by **Gagliardi**, shown as reclining on the cardinal's coat-of-arms.

### Chapel of the Resurrection (29)

The first chapel on the right side of the nave is dedicated to the Resurrection, although the dedication used to be to St Andrew the Apostle. The altar is a miniature copy of an ancient sarcophagus, in red and yellow jasper with a table in purple-veined white marble. The altarpiece of *The Resurrection* is by **Jacopo Negreti**, executed about 1600.

The barrel vault has a foliated archivolt, and rests on a vine-leaf cornice. These details are 15<sup>th</sup> century. In the top of the vault is the *Dove of the Holy Spirit*, with a fresco of *Our Lady* to the left (the corresponding

fresco to the right is lost). The back lunette has a fresco of *God the Father*, which is damaged. The fresco work is by Bernardino Gagliardi, 1654.

## Special Notes

*Madama Lucrezia* is one of the "talking statues" of Rome, and is located next to the basilica entrance. It was once the bust of a statue of the goddess Isis, whom a temple was dedicated in Rome not far from its current place.

It is possible to ask permission to visit the excavations of earlier churches underneath the present church.

Open daily 07:00-12:30, 17:00-19:30

## Artists and Architects:

Achille [Stocchi](#) (19<sup>th</sup> cent), Italian sculptor  
Alessandro Vitale (17<sup>th</sup> cent.), Italian stonemason  
Andrea [Bergondi](#) (18<sup>th</sup> cent), Italian sculptor  
Antonio [Canova](#) (1757-1822), Italian Neoclassical sculptor (also see [here](#))  
Antonio [d'Este](#) (1754-1837), Italian sculptor  
Baccio [Ciarpi](#) (1574-1654), Italian painter of the late-Mannerism and early-Baroque style  
Bernardino [Gagliardi](#) (1609-1660), Italian painter of the Baroque period  
Carlo [Monaldi](#) (c.1683- c.1760), Italian sculptor (and also see [here](#))  
Carlo [Maratta](#) (1625-1713), Italian Late Baroque Classical painter (also see [here](#))  
Carlo Orlandi (18<sup>th</sup> cent), Italian sculptor  
Carlo [Pacilli](#) (1720-1772), Italian woodcarver and sculptor  
Ciro [Ferri](#) (1634-1689), Italian Baroque painter and sculptor  
Cosimo [Fancelli](#) (1618-1688), Italian sculptor of the Baroque period from Rome (also see [here](#))  
Ercolo [Ferrata](#) (1610-1686), Italian sculptor of the Baroque period (also see [here](#))  
Ermenegildo Sintes (18<sup>th</sup> cent), Italian architect  
Fabrizio [Chiari](#) (1621-1695), Italian painter  
Felice [Festa](#) (1764-1825), Italian neo-Classical sculptor  
Filippo [Barigioni](#) (1690-1753), Italian sculptor and architect of the Late Baroque tradition  
Filippo [Carcani](#) [aka *Filippone*] (17<sup>th</sup> century), Italian sculptor  
Francesco [Allegrini](#) da Gubbio (1587-1663), Italian painter of the Baroque period  
Francesco del Cera (aka *Francesco del Borgo*) (1415-1468), Italian architect  
Francesco [Maratti](#) (1669-1719), Italian sculptor  
Francesco Moderati (1680-1721), Italian sculptor  
Giovanni Angelo [Canini](#) (1609-1666), Italian painter and engraver of the Baroque period  
Giovanni [Dalmata](#) (1440-1514), Dalmatian sculptor  
Giovanni Francesco [Romanelli](#) (1610-1662), Italian Baroque painter from Viterbo  
Giovanni Le Dous (18<sup>th</sup> cent), Italian sculptor  
Giovanni [Tamburini](#) di Crema (1857-1942), Italian organ maker  
Giovannino [de Dolci](#) (1435-1485), Italian architect  
Giuliano [da Maiano](#) (1432-1490), Italian architect, intarsia-worker and sculptor  
Giuliano degli Amidi (15<sup>th</sup> cent), Italian gilder  
Giuseppe [Valadier](#) (1762-1839), Italian architect and designer, sculptor, urban planner and archeologist, a chief exponent of Neoclassicism in Italy  
Isaia Ganti [da Pisa](#) (1410-1464), Italian sculptor  
Jacques [Guillaume] [Courtois](#) [aka *Il Borgognone*] (1628-1679), French-Italian painter and etcher  
Jacopo [Negreti](#) [aka *Palma il Giovane*] (1550-1628), Italian Mannerist painter from Venice  
Lazzaro [Baldi](#) (c. 1624-1703), Italian painter of the Baroque period  
Lazzaro [Morelli](#) (1608-1690), Italian sculptor of the Baroque period  
Leon Battista [Alberti](#) (1404-1472), an Italian humanist author, artist, architect, poet, priest, linguist, philosopher and cryptographer  
Luigi [Primo](#) [aka *Louis Cousin* or *Luigi Gentile da Bruxelles*], (1605-1667), Flemish painter of the Baroque period  
Marco [de Dolci](#) (15<sup>th</sup> cent), Italian architect, carpenter  
Melozzo [da Forlì](#) (1438-1494), Italian Renaissance painter (also see [here](#))

Mino [da Fiesole](#) (c.1429-1484), Italian sculptor of the early Renaissance period  
Orazio [Torriani](#) (or Torrigiani) (1602-1657), Italian architect and sculptor  
Pier Francesco [Mola](#) [aka *Il Ticinese*] (1612-1666), Italian painter of the High Baroque  
Pietro Berrettini [da Cortona](#) (1597-1669), Italian Baroque painter and architect (also see [here](#))  
Pietro [Cavallini](#) [aka *Petrus Caballinus de Cerronibus*] (1259-ca.1330), Italian painter  
Pietro [Pacilli](#) (1720-1773), Italian sculptor  
Raffaele Tuccimei (1812-1849), Italian sculptor  
René-Michel [Slodtz](#) [aka *Michelangelo Slodtz*] (1705-1764), French sculptor from Paris  
Salvatore Bercari (18<sup>th</sup> cent), Italian sculptor

### Burials:

P. [Saint Mark](#) (Marcus) (336)

Marco Cardinal [BARBO](#), (1420-1491)

Buried in the tomb that he had built

Francesco Cardinal [PISANI](#), (1494-1570) [also see [here](#)]

Matteo Cardinal [PRIULI](#), (1577-1624)

Buried next to the main altar

Marcantonio Cardinal [BRAGADIN](#), (1591-1658)

Cristoforo Cardinal [VIDMAN](#), (1617-1660)

Buried in the right nave

Pietro Cardinal [BASADONNA](#), (1617-1684)

Buried on the left side of the church

Giambattista Cardinal [RUBINI](#), (1642-1707)

buried in front of the chapel of *SS. Sacramento*

Luigi Cardinal [PRIULI](#), (1650-1720)

Ludovico Cardinal [MERLINI](#), (1690-1762)

Carlo Cardinal [REZZONICO](#), *iuniore*, (1724-1799)

Luigi Cardinal [ERCOLANI](#), (1758-1825)

Giuseppe Ottavio [Pitoni](#) (1657-1743)

<Composer> [also see [here](#)]

buried in the Pitoni family vault

### Location:

Address: Piazza San Marco 48, 00186 Roma

Coord: [41° 53' 45" N, 12° 28' 53" E](#)

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#### Opening times

Tuesday to Saturday 7.30am-12:30pm 4.00pm-7.00pm

Monday 4.00pm-7.00pm

Sunday 7.30am-12.30pm 4.00pm-7.30pm

#### Masses

Weekdays 7.30am 7.30pm

Holidays 12.00am 7.00pm

### Links:

1. [Roman Churches Wiki](#)

2. [info.roma web site](#)

3. [English Wikipedia page](#)

4. [Amo Roma.blogs](#)

5. [060608.it web page](#)
6. [Basilica web site](#)
7. [Information on organ from Basilica web site](#)
8. [Cardinals of the Catholic Church](#)
9. [Catholic.org](#)
10. [Corvinus blog](#)
11. [I Viaggi di Raffaella blog](#)
12. [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-d-este\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-d-este_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)

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

- a) Donovan, Jeremiah; ROME ANCIENT AND MODERN AND ITS ENVIRONS; 1842
- b) Davies, Gerald S.; RENASCENCE: THE SCULPTURED TOMBS OF THE 15TH CENTURY IN ROME; 1916
- c) Bershad, David L.; "The Cardinal Marco Bragadin Tomb in the Church of San Marco, Rome, a New Attribution"; *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 119, No. 887 (Feb., 1977), pp. 114+116-117 (jstor 878664)
- d) Sullivan, George H.; **NOT BUILT IN A DAY: Exploring the Architecture of Rome**; Carroll & Graf Publishers; 2006; pp. 21-22
- e) 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)
- f) Lansford, Tyler; THE LATIN INSCRIPTIONS OF ROME; The Johns Hopkins University Press; 2009; Pp. 291, 298-301
- g) Bolgia, Claudia; "The Mosaics of Gregory IV at S. Marco, Rome: Papal Response to Venice, Byzantium, and the Carolingians"; *Speculum*, vol. 81, no. 1, [Medieval Academy of America, Cambridge University Press, University of Chicago Press], 2006, pp. 1–34, (jstor 20463605)