

San Martino ai Monti

SS. Silvestro e Martino ai Monti



San Martino ai Monti, is a 9th century minor basilica, a parish and titular church on ancient foundations dedicated to St Martin of Tours, 4th century Bishop of Tours. The church is also known as **Santi Silvestro e Martino ai Monti - Titolo Equizio**. It is located on the Colle Oppio, the southern spur of the Esquiline Hill. This is in the rione Monti neighborhood. The church is now served by the Calced Carmelites. It was granted to them in 1299 by Pope Bonifatius VIII. Their ownership was confirmed in 1559. ^[1] ^[2]

History

During the third century a *titulus* was founded on the site of, or at least very close to, the former Baths of Titus. This *titulus* was, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*, founded in the house of the priest Equitius as a private place of Christian worship, thus the name of *Titulus Equitii*. More than a century later the first real church was founded adjacent to this *titulus* by Pope St. Sylvester I between 314 and 335. The church thus constitutes one of the the oldest documented churches in the city of Rome. ^[5] ^[6]

At the beginning it was an oratory devoted to all the martyrs. It was the site of the preparatory meetings in 324 for the Council of Nicaea in 325 and the site of a diocesan Council over which both Constantine and Sylvester presided. It was here, in fact, that the Nicene Creed was first proclaimed in Rome. ^[1]

In 500 the church was rebuilt by Pope Symmachus (498-514) and dedicated to Saints Martin of Tours and Pope Sylvester I. On this occasion, the church was elevated and the earlier oratory become subterranean. The crypt shows signs of the ancient alternate name of the church as “San Martino in Thermis.” ^[1]

Pope Adrian I, in 772, provided for the restoration of a ruined basilica dedicated to St Sylvester. In the 9th century Pope Sergius II (844-847) had the old church of Pope Symmachus demolished and

rebuilt at its current location along with the adjoining monastery. He merged the two existing early Christian churches that lay beside each other: Titulus Aequitii and Chiesa dei Santi Silvestro e Martino. He also ordered the bones of martyrs, originally buried in the catacombs of Priscilla, to be transferred to the church. According to a now lost inscription, Pope Sergius died before it was complete, so Pope Leo IV (847-55), the successor to Pope Sergius, adorned the interior with frescoes and mosaics, also now lost. The 9th century church, still largely intact, is a good example of church building style at the end of the Carolingian Renaissance in Rome. ^[1] ^[2] ^[4]

The basilical plan was preserved, and the twenty-four antique columns from the first church were reused in the nave. Many relics of early martyrs were brought here from the suburban cemeteries, which were threatened by raiders. Among these were the relics of [St Sophia of Rome](#) from the Catacomb of Gordianus and Epimachus. Also, the relics of SS Artemius, Paulina and Sisinnius, which were translated from the Catacomb of Priscilla, were put under the high altar. They were joined by the relics of Pope St Martin I (649-655), who died as a martyr in the Crimea. ^[1]

In the crypt are the relics of many more martyrs, including those "whose names are known to God alone". Notable are those of Pope St Soter, which were brought here from a church on Via Appia before that church was destroyed in the 8th century. Also there are relics of Popes Sylvester, Victor I and Fabian. ^[1]

In the reign of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), the church was restored by Cardinal Ugucione. In 1570, [St Charles Borromeo](#) had some alterations made including the provision of a new ceiling. He had been appointed Cardinal here in 1559 when aged only twenty-one, and still a layman. Also, he paid for a new entrance doorway. ^[1]

In 1636 the building underwent a radical structural renewal by the will of the prior Giovanni Antonio Filippini (future general of the Order), who entrusted the work to the architect **Filippo Gagliardi**. The works lasted until 1667, when the current façade was erected, the long and narrow staircase leading to the rear entrance and the small bell tower above the apse. The crypt of the martyrs under the high altar was given an Baroque makeover, and Filippini had an 'old' marble slab with inscribed names of the martyrs in archaic Latin copied in contemporary Italian and inserted next to the steps leading down into the crypt. In the process of restoring the crypt, the old aula a sei vani was cleared of rubble and dirt and made sound. The ceiling was dismantled, and the coffering panels obtained by St Charles were re-inserted into a new frame. The floor of the nave was lowered. As a result, the columns now stand on rather large box plinths. Unfortunately, the restoration entailed the loss of ancient decorations and fittings from the basilica. ^[1] ^[5] ^[6]

The façade had to be rebuilt shortly afterwards, in 1667, by **Camillo Arcucci** from the design of **Gagliardi**, on the instructions of the then prior Francesco Scannapieco. In 1714 a new bell tower was added. A further expensive restoration took place in 1780, paid for by Cardinal Francesco Saverio de Zelada. ^[1] ^[2] ^[4] ^[5]

From 1687 to his death in 1720, Bl Angelo Paoli was resident at the convent. He was beatified in 2010, and his shrine is in the church. ^[1]

In 1873 the basilica was expropriated and forfeited from the state property of the Kingdom of Italy, subsequently passed into that of the Italian Republic, which still manages it today through the Fondo Edifici di Culto (FEC). ^[5]

The old convent was demolished to widen the road and create the piazza, and the Carmelite Curia moved to new premises just west of the church. They remain there. Also next to the church is the Paoli Social Centre of St Martin, an institution aiding the poor. ^[1]

It has been a titular church since 1299. In 1921, Achille Ratti became titular of the church. The next year, he was elected pope and took the name Pius XI. Giovanni Battista Montini became titular of the church in 1958. He was elected pope in 1963, taking the name Paul VI. ^[1]

Exterior

This church has a classic aisled basilical layout, with the main nave under one long pitched roof and

with the right hand aisle having a lower pitched roof. However the left hand aisle has a range of former convent rooms over it, with a flat roof. The church has no transept. There is an impressive semicircular external apse, which is a prominent feature on the Via Giovanni Lanza. [1]

The brickwork of the church walls is typical 9th century work. The fabric is mostly re-used brick and render, but the lower part of the wall on Via Equizia is made of large blocks of tufa. This is thought by some to be a remnant of the original church, and the blocks to be spoila from some ancient structure such as the Servian Wall nearby. [1] [4]

At the rear of the church, facing the Piazza di San Martino ai Monti and Via Giovanni Lanza, is the impressive apse wall. Today there are two rectangular windows, protected by iron grilles, but in the fabric it is apparent that there used to be three round-headed windows. In the 18th century, two of these were intact and the middle one had been converted into a rectangular window. The latter is now completely blocked, as is the little square window below it which used to light the crypt. On top of the apse on its left hand side is a two-storey Baroque bellcote with arched openings for three bells, two below and one above. There is a little triangular pediment on top, and two incurved volutes flanking the upper storey. [1]

The door left of the apse is the entrance to the right aisle, which is no longer used.

In the Piazza are two mediaeval fortified towers. The Torre dei Capocci is the free standing one. It dates to about 1300, and has seven floors as well as a crenellated roof terrace. The other one is the Torre dei Cerroni, to the north-west on the other side of the road. It has been incorporated into a complex that is now a convent, and is about the same age. There are five storeys, as well as a basement and a terrace. [1]

Façade (1)

The Baroque stucco façade was thought to have been designed by Pietro da Cortona in 1650, but is now ascribed to **Filippo Gagliardi**. It is rather old-fashioned for its time, and the overall design is poor. The nave frontage is designed independently, and the two side aisle frontages are added on in a way which leaves the composition rather incoherent. The façade was cleaned and restored in 2010. [1]

The façade, set on a high podium with a staircase. The nave frontage has two storeys. The first has four Composite pilasters on high plinths, tripletted and supporting a deep entablature. The frieze of the latter has an inscription proclaiming the presence of the Carmelite Generalate, and the year 1674. The tall entrance doorway is approached by a flight of nine steps, and has a slightly oversized triangular pediment broken at the top and supported by volute corbels. Into the break is inserted a scallop shell flanked by a pair of involuted crescent volutes; the motif recalls the earlier entrance set up by St Charles Borromeo. [1] [5]

In between the two pilasters on either side are florid Baroque aedicules carved in shallow relief, which contain trophy stands displaying two busts which face towards the entrance. These are of SS *Sylvester* (on the left) and *Martin*, and the stucco work is by **Stefano Castelli** (1667). [1] [5]

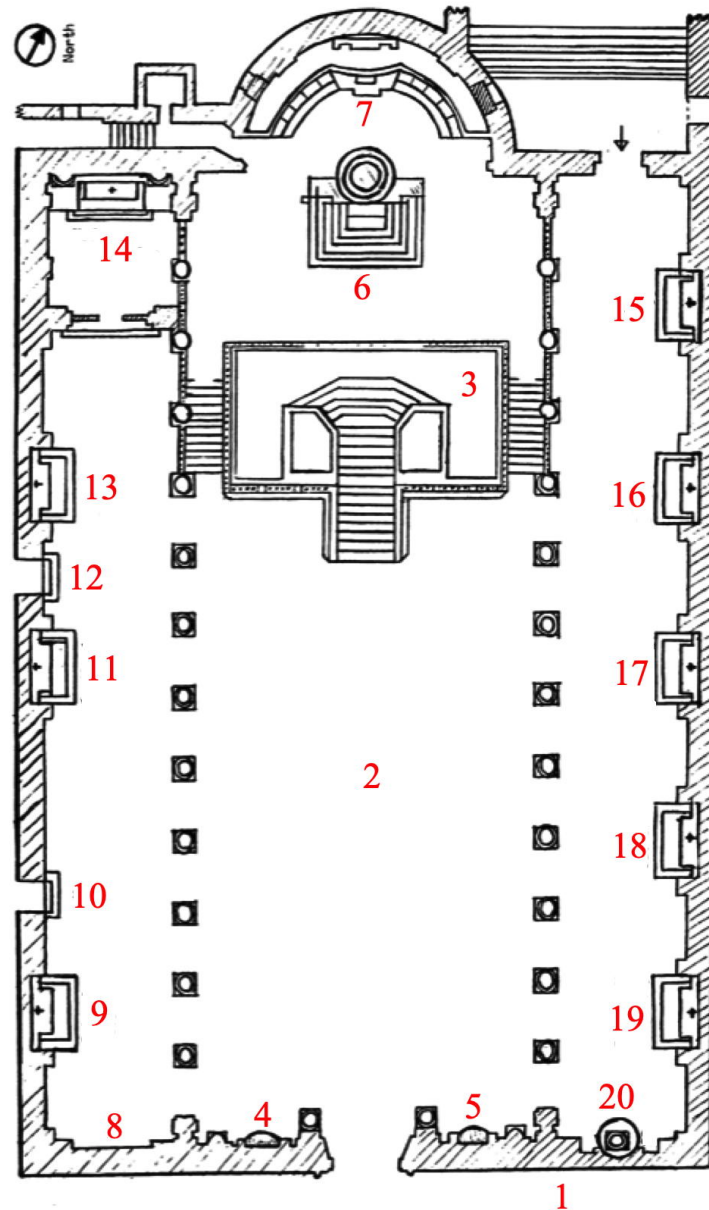
The second storey has four tripletted pilasters in the same style as those below. They support an entablature with a dedicatory inscription on its frieze, above which is the crowning triangular pediment with a horizontal elliptical window in its tympanum. This is wrapped around by a pair of large volutes, tied at the top with a crown. [1]

The center of this storey is occupied by a large round-headed window in a rectangular frame, which has a broken segmental pediment with corbels in the same style as the triangular pediment of the doorway below. To either side is a Baroque panel topped by an eight-pointed star (which features on the Carmelite coat-of-arms) and decorated with curlicues and swags. This pair of panels contain a device consisting of a crozier and processional cross in an X through a mitre and tied with ribbon. [1]

The aisle frontages are rectangular. They are symmetrical, but the right hand one is false. The left hand one hides the convent rooms on top of the left hand aisle. In ascending order each has an oeil-de-boeuf window, a large vertical rectangular window and a square tablet decorated with tassels and

showing two palm fronds crossed through a crown. This device recalls the martyrs enshrined in the church. The tablet is flanked by a pair of square windows, and crowned by a segmental pediment without a cornice. On the left hand side these rectangular and square windows are genuine, but to the right they are false because there is nothing behind them. [1]

Plan



Interior

The interior has a nave and two side aisles, separated by 24 ancient Corinthian columns reused from the fifth century church on the site. The presbyterium and high altar are raised above the level of the nave, and this draws attention to the magnificent entrance to the crypt below. The entrance to the aula a sei vani is to the left in the crypt. There are three side-chapels in the left hand aisle, set in shallow arched niches, and five in the right hand one. Additionally, there is a chapel at the end of the left hand aisle. The interior is richly decorated, but all the decoration dates from the 17th century and later. [1] [5]

A plan of the church indicating the location of the art can be downloaded [here](#). [a]

Nave (2)

The colonnades have twelve antique marble columns on each side, some of which are Corinthian and some Composite (note the capital volutes on the latter). These do not form a single set, and the buildings that they originally came from are unknown. It is now usually thought that they were looted for the church put up by Pope Symmachus, rather than that by Pope Sergius. The capitals have had some restoration. The stones used for the columns are: Eleven of marmo imezio from Mount Hymettus near Athens (this stone also provided the colonnades at Santa Maria Maggiore), six of bigio antico from Africa, five of pavonazetto and two of cipollino. ^[1]

The columns of the colonnades are trabeated, that is, the horizontal entablatures are placed directly onto their capitals instead of on arcades. This was slightly risky structurally, but the church has survived for centuries. They stand on high box plinths that look very odd, but this arrangement was necessitated by the lowering of the floor in the 17th century. The frieze of the entablature above the colonnades is embellished with rows of instruments of torture and martyrdom on a gold background executed by **Paolo Naldini** in the years 1649-1652. Each side the entablature is also decorated with four round plaques, which show scenes of Jewish worship in Old Testament times to the right, and the symbols of the four Evangelists to the left. ^[1] ^[2]

Above the entablatures the nave walls have ribbed Corinthian pilasters corresponding to the columns below, and these support an entablature lacking a frieze which in turn supports the ceiling. There are three widely separated windows on each side and these are provided with projecting balconies which have pin balustrades. The window on the far left hand side is false. The central window on each side is rectangular, and is behind an aedicule formed by two Corinthian columns supporting a triangular pediment with its entablature missing between the capitals. ^[1] ^[d]

A selection of the saints whose relics were kept in the church are depicted in the clerestory of the nave. The painter and architect **Filippo Gagliardi** supervising the entire project of the church's decoration, devised a scheme for this part of the interior. In between the windows are large stucco statues of saints in ornate aedicule-niches, eight in all. Each statue is flanked by a pair of roundels containing heads of the martyred saints, affixed below the ceiling entablature. In total there are 14 of these roundels, seven on each side of the clerestory, designed by **Gagliardi** and made by **Paolo Naldini**, who was a member the Bernini workshop. The work was carried out between 1649 and 1652. Below roundel is a trompe-l'oeil device in fresco, which gives you an impression of looking through an archway into a set of rooms and passageways beyond. ^[1] ^[7] ^[b] ^[d]

Paolo Naldini was responsible for these statues of saints. Clockwise from the near left:

St. Justa

Pope St. Innocent I

St. Martin of Tours

St. Theodore

St. Nicander (a doctor of medicine beheaded at Alexander in Egypt in the early 4th century)

Pope St. Fabiannus

St. Stephen

St. Cyriaca

Naldini was also responsible for the large statues of *SS Peter (4)* and *Paul (5)* on the counter-façade. The inscription above the main door inside the church documents the restoration and redecoration of the church by Prior **Filippini** in the middle of the 17th century. ^[1]

The flat wooden ceiling is coffered and painted in blue, white and gold. It displays the coats-of-arms of the authorities involved in the 16th century restoration, which were re-set when the ceiling was rebuilt in the 17th century. The ceiling carries the coat-of-arms of Pope Pius IV Medici, as well as those of St. Charles Borromeo (consisting of the word HUMILITAS crowned), of the Carmelite Order, and the arms of Prior **Filippini**. ^[1] ^[e]

Sanctuary

The sanctuary is elevated above the nave, and is approached by two staircases running up the sides of the confessio. Along the top of the latter is an open pin balustrade, and in front of the altar the baluster pins are replaced by an interesting device of seven large gilded rings in a row over the arch into the crypt proper. ^[1] ^[5]

The high altar (6) is from 1795, when it replaced the former altar from 1598, adorned with exquisite marble and bronze. The design is by **Francesco Belli**. The expenses were partly covered by the Carmelites and partly by Card. Francesco Saverio de Zelada. The altar is isolated in the middle of the sanctuary, and is reached by five steps of statuary marble. Its base consists of breccia Africana, bianco e nero antico with a cornice of giallo antico; and the table of the altar is of white marble set in a frame of giallo antico, and resting on a beautiful urn of verde antique and two angels of white marble. At each side of the altar are two compartments of serpentine, with an angel in white marble between them, above which is a cornice of giallo antico, that runs round the front of the altar. Above this cornice is a gradino or step of fior di persico with a cornice of giallo antico, over which rises another step of fior di Persico with compartments of red porphyry, enriched with gilt bronzes and a cornice of giallo antico, above which rises another step of fior di persico. Under the altar are the relics of San Silvestro (Pope Sylvester I) and other saints, as Pope Sergius II had moved here from Priscilla's Catacombs. Behind the altar is the organ and a choir stalls of walnut, carved by Giovanni Panatta. The floor of the choir and of the presbytery is covered with precious marble, with a revival of the colors of the main altar. ^{[1] [2] [7] [e]}

The altar has no altarpiece or canopy, but instead sports a large tabernacle in the style of a circular temple with six columns and a cupola, occasionally used for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. This little temple stands on a circular base of bianco e nero antico, on which rises a circular basement of green porphyry, decorated with rich bronzes and two cornices of giallo antico: on this basement stand six exquisite little Corinthian columns of oriental alabaster with bases and capitals of gilt bronze, supporting a cupola, the frieze of which is of breccia di Francia, decorated with gilt bronzes and two cornices of giallo antico. The little dome of the cupola is of bigio, and is surmounted by a gilt bronze statue of *The Risen Christ*. The tabernacle and the accompanying six candlesticks were made by **Francesco Belli**, a famous silversmith of Rome in the 18th century. ^{[1] [e]}

The apse triumphal arch and the apse (7) itself with its conch are decorated in white and gold scrollwork panelling, with frescoes inserted. The apse wall has two large windows, lighting the choir of the friars which is located here. ^[1]

The semicircular apse and the triumphal arch are decorated with fresco murals, executed in 1794, on commission of Cardinal Francesco Saverio de Zelada, by **Antonio Cavalluccia** of Sermoneta with the help of **Giovanni Micocca**. The decoration of this church was Cavalluccia's last work, which he undertook the same year of his death. ^{[5] [6]}

The apse conch has *God the Father* at the top, the *Madonna and Child* in the middle and SS *Peter and Paul* to the sides. Between the windows are depicted four Carmelite saints:

Andrew Corsini,
Mary Magdalen De' Pazzi,
Peter Thomas and
Teresa of Jesus.

The apse triumphal arch has *Pope St Sylvester* and *St Charles Borromeo* to the left, and SS *Martin* and *Francis Xavier* to the right. ^{[1] [2] [5] [e]}

Confessio (3)

In the center and in front of the sanctuary is a staircase that goes down to the small confessio or crypt, that was built to hold the relics removed from the catacombs in the 9th century. The confessio was completely re-ordered and provided with a ceremonial staircase by **Gagliardi** in the 17th century. The reason why this restoration focused the layout of the church on the crypt is because relics of several sainted popes, among them Pope St Martin I, as well as a large number of unnamed martyrs are enshrined here. ^[1]

At the base of the stairs from the nave to the crypt is an inscription on marble listing the names of the saints whose relics were removed from the catacombs and deposited in this church. ^[b]

Straight ahead at the bottom of the crypt stairs and directly under the high altar is an aedicular shrine topped by a small rectangular chamber containing the martyred saints' relics. The chamber is fronted by an impressive device comprising a large porphyry disc in a ring in white marble and in a rectangular frame filled with verde antico. The aedicule is flanked by Tuscan columns (an Italian

form of the Doric style), and has a jewelled crucifix. The vaulted ceiling has bas-relief stucco decoration by Naldini, and there is an ambulatory or passageway running in a semi-circle behind the shrine. The marble work is by **Benedetto Folchini**. [1] [9]

Aula a Sei Vani

To the left in the confessio, you will see the door of the passageway into the 3rd century underground edifice. This was provided again in the 17th century restoration, when the aula was cleaned out and restored. The restorers had the sense not to adorn the architecture, but left things mostly as they found them except for erecting an altar in honor Pope Sylvester. [1]

At the end of the passage, the main hallway is straight ahead and the so-called vestibule is beyond that which was only discovered in 1930. To the left of the passage end is the ancillary chamber formed out of three former rooms. [1]

There are decayed remnants of 9th century frescoes on the walls and vaults, and old drawings show these more clearly. The most famous is a 9th century fresco fragment showing *Christ flanked by SS Peter, Paul, Processus and Martinian*. Also of the same age is *Our Lady between two saints*, the *Lamb of God with St John the Evangelist*, a jeweled cross on a vault and some other fragments. Recently discovered has been a large fresco panel of the early 6th century, showing the *Denial of St Peter*, the *Annunciation*, an angel with a saint, three scenes with unknown saints and a saint receiving a crown from Christ. [1]

There are two mosaics of the late 5th century or early 6th century. The better preserved one is a mosaic of *Our Lady with Pope St Sylvester*. A badly damaged mosaic apparently of *Pope Symmachus venerating Pope Sylvester* has been preserved over a 17th century altar with stucco angels. [1]

Other ancient and mediaeval carved fragments of architecture are scattered about, including an interesting medieval tomb slab showing the full-length effigy of a Carmelite friar. There is a small ciborium with some Cosmatesque decoration, and some fragments from the former medieval choir or schola cantorum that the restorers brought down here. [1]

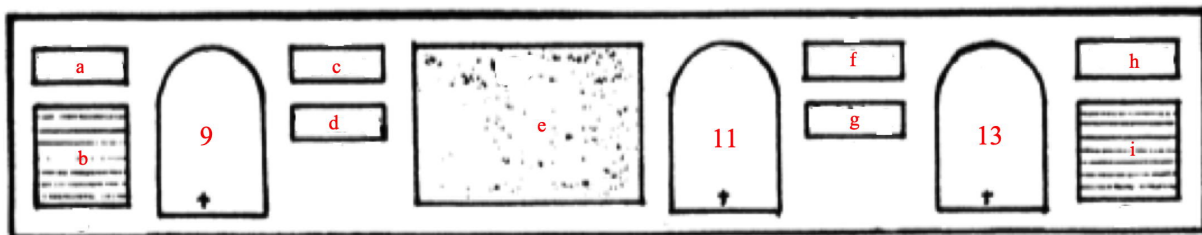
Aisles

The aisles have flat coffered ceilings resembling that of the central nave. The side altars are in almost identical arched niches with Doric piers and simple paneled decoration. In between these are several framed paintings. [1]

Along the outer walls of the aisles are 18 landscape frescoes, 6 large and 12 small, 16 of which are by **Gasparo Dughet**, and two by **Giovanni Francesco Grimaldi**. All the subjects appear to be of importance in the Carmelite attempt to document the origin of their order, to which this church belongs, and to trace its history back to Elijah. The Carmelite Order claims the prophet as its spiritual founder. They illustrate scenes from the life of the prophet Elijah. The artists placed the little figures in sylvan settings, more romantic than devotional. The frescoes were all completed between 1647 and 1650. [1] [a] [c]

Left side painting and altars

(proceeding from the back towards the apse)



At the near end of the left hand aisle, above the confessional, is a fresco by **Jan Miel** depicting (8) *St Cyril Baptizes the Sultan of Damascus*, executed in 1651. That is, St Cyril of Constantinople. He was a Greek monk in the Holy Land in the early 13th century. The painting is from when this altar formerly was the baptistery. [1] [2] [c]

Next is a fresco (b) by Filippo Gagliardi, showing the *Interior of San Giovanni in Laterano*. It was made in 1651 and shows the basilica before Borromini's Baroque changes. Above that is a landscape fresco (a) by Dughet, *Elijah on Mount Horeb*. [1] [a] [c]

The first altar in the left-hand aisle (9) was built in 1604 by Carmelite prior Angelo Minicucci, and was restored in 1640 by Filippini. The altarpiece has a depiction of *The Vision of St Angelo the Carmelite in the Wilderness*, oil on canvas by Pietro Testa, painted in 1646. St. Angelo was a Carmelite from Jerusalem in the early days, when the order had been formed from hermits living on Mount Carmel. He travelled to Sicily and was beaten up by a knight whom he had accused of incest, dying as a result. [1] [2] [5] [7] [d]

On the wall at the bottom is a marble plaque listing the names of those from the parish who died in the military during the First World War. Above that is an inscription, then a cardinal's crest. Above that is a landscape fresco (d) by Dughet, *Elisba Venerated after crossing the Jordan*. Above that, at the top, is a landscape fresco (c) by Dughet, *Elisba mocked by the youth of Bethel, and avenged by bears from the neighboring forest*. [1] [a] [c] [e]

There follows a niche with a statue of *St. Anthony of Padua*. (10) This formerly was the entrance to the monastery cloister. [e]

Next, on the lower wall, is the tomb of Bl. Angelo Paoli (1642-1720). He was a Calced Carmelite priest who was Beatified by Pope Benedict XVI in 2010. Above that is a large painted inscription, recording that in the old church were held two councils by Pope St. Sylvester, both attended by Constantine, one in the year 324 and the other in 325, confirming the acts of the Council of Nicaea in Bithynia, in which Arius, Sabellius and Victorinus were condemned, and their books burnt in presence of the Emperor. Above that is a fresco (e) of *Pope Sylvester Presiding at the Synod of 324* which is by Galeazzo Leoncino from 1640. [1] [3] [e]

The second altar (11) has a depiction of *St Albert the Great*, oil on canvas by Girolamo Muziano, executed in 1575. St. Albert is the patron of scientists. This altar differs from the other side altars in having a proper aedicule, with a pair of green marble Composite columns supporting a triangular pediment with a broken top. Into the break is inserted a tablet depicting *The Dove of the Holy Spirit*, which has its own segmental pediment. Below the altar is a glass case containing an effigy of St Giuseppe Maria Tomasi di Lampedusa (1649-1713), Theatine and cardinal titular of the basilica. The urn previously contained the mortal remains of the saint before they were taken to Sant'Andrea della Valle. [1] [5] [7]

Sacristy (12)

Next is the entrance to the sacristy. The sacristy was remodeled by Card. Zelada in the late 18th century. A 5th century votive lamp in sheet silver is kept here, which was once considered to have been made from the tiara of Pope Sylvester. Also here is a set of liturgical objects that probably belonged to Cardinal Guala Bicchieri (1211-27). These comprise an episcopal mitre, and a maniple and lavabo towel embroidered with gold thread. [1]

The next fresco (g) by Dughet, over the sacristy door, is *Elijah inviting Elisba to abandon all and follow him*. Above that is another fresco (h) by Dughet, *The Meeting of Elijah and Ahab*. Opposite the sacristy door is a slab that covers the tomb of the painter Antonio Cavallucci from Sermoneta who contributed to the decoration of the church. [1] [a] [c] [e]

The third altar in the left hand aisle (13) was built around 1640-1644 by Bartolomeo Sebregondi, it was later embellished with inlaid marble. The altarpiece depicting *The Holy Trinity with SS Nicholas and Bartholomew* which is an oil on canvas by Giovanni Angelo Canini, from 1644. [1] [2] [5] [7]

On the side wall is a fresco (i) of the *Interior of the Constantinian Basilica of St Peter* executed by Filippo Gagliardi about 1649. This has been treated as an important historical witness to the basilica's appearance in the past, although there are now doubts as to its accuracy. Above that is a landscape fresco (h) by Dughet, *Elijah on Mount Horab*. [1] [a] [c] [e]

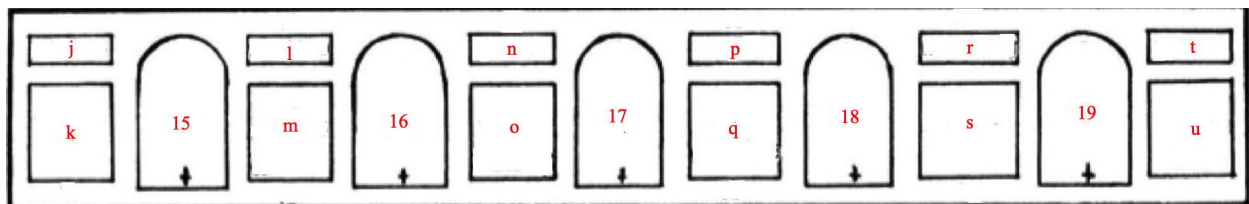
Chapel of Our Lady of Carmel

At the far end of the left hand aisle is a chapel (14) dedicated to **Our Lady of Carmel**, which is the only proper side chapel that the church has. It was founded in 1593 by Catherine de' Nobili, married to Count Sforza di Santa Fiore. The chapel was restored in 1790-93 by **Andrea De Dominicis** and equipped with a splendid decoration of paintings, 14 different kinds of marble, alabaster, gilded bronze, stucco, etc. The venerated icon of the *Madonna and Child* is by **Girolamo Massei** from 1596, which, until 1793 was on the main altar. The icon is inserted into a painting of *The Souls in Purgatory* by **Antonio Cavallucci**. He also executed the picture of the prophet *Elijah*. The vault fresco of *The Vision of Blessed Simon Stock* is by **Giuseppe Sciacca** from 1793. Simon Stock is venerated as a saint by the Carmelites. He is listed as a beatus in the revised Roman Martyrology. [1] [2] [7]

The rich frame of gilded bronze is by **Giuseppe Boroni**, the glory of the angels and the bas-reliefs of the vault are the work of **Agostino Penna**, the stuccoes by **Filippo Godioli** and the marbles were worked by **Domenico Manzolini**. Under the altar table rest the remains of the saints Crescenzo, Lanziano and his bride. [7]

Right side painting and altars

(proceeding from the apse end towards the back)



At the end of the right-hand aisle are back stairs that lead down to the Piazza di San Martino ai Monti. The staircase is from 1575, and the door is from the 1587. [2]

Next is a landscape fresco (**k**) by **Dughet**, *The Vision of St. Emerentia*. The subject comes from an early 16th century translation by Josse Badius of a book by a monk named Petrus Dorlandus, who wrote about the life of St. Anne, the mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the story [St. Emerentia](#) was the mother of St. Anne. Above that is a landscape fresco (**j**) by **Dughet**, *The Vision of Elijah's Parents*. [a] [c] [e]

The fifth altar on the right (**15**) shows *The Ecstasy of St Charles Borromeo* from 1693 by **Filippo Gherardi**. This altar was constructed later than the other altar chapels. It was constructed in 1653. [1] [a]

Next is a landscape fresco (**m**) by **Dughet**, *Basilides' Prophecy to the Emperor Titus*. Above that is a landscape fresco (**l**) by **Dughet**, *The Miraculous Mass of St. Cyril*. [a] [c] [e]

The next altar on the right (**16**) is dedicated to *St Stephen the Protomartyr*, and the altarpiece, in late Baroque style, is by **Giovanni Angelo Canini** from the 1645. [1] [2]

Next is a landscape fresco (**o**) by **Dughet**, *The Anointing of the Kings*. Above that is a landscape fresco (**n**) by **Dughet**, *Elijah Fed by the Angel*. [a] [c] [e]

The central altar in the right aisle (**17**) has an altarpiece depicting *St Martin of Tours Dividing his Cloak with a Beggar* by **Fabrizio Chiari** from 1645. The work refers to a story that the saint met a naked destitute man on a freezing day while on army service, cut his soldier's cloak in half and gave him one of the halves. [1]

In the floor in front of the altar of St. Martin is the engraved marble plaques over the tombs of Cardinal Ugo Spinola and Francisco Spinola.

Next is a landscape fresco (**q**) by **Grimaldi**, *Elisha Crossing the Jordan*. Above that is a landscape fresco

(p) by Dughet, *Elijah Fed by the Ravens*. [a] [b] [c] [g]

The next altar on the right (18) altarpiece, from 1646, shows *The Ecstasy of St Teresa of Jesus* by Giovanni Francesco Greppi, who is more famous as an architect. Painting was his hobby. The sides are painted with frescoes by Filippo Gagliardi. [1] [2]

On the floor before the next fresco is a green and gold urn with a crystal front, containing an effigy of the dead Christ, with a reliquary at his feet. Above the urn is a landscape fresco (s) by Grimaldi, *Elijah and his Servant See a Cloud Rising from the Sea*. Above that is a landscape fresco (r) by Dughet, *Elijah's Ascension into Heaven*. [a] [c] [e]

The first altar in the right hand aisle (19) has an altarpiece showing *The Vision of St Maria Magdalen de' Pazzi*, a patron of Florence and Naples and a Carmelite mystic, which was executed by Matteo Piccione in 1647. This seems to be the only work in Rome by this artist from Ancona. [1]

Next is a landscape fresco (u) by Dughet, *Elijah Punishes the Priest of Baal*. Above that is a landscape fresco (t) by Dughet. The subject comes from the Carmelite Ceremonial. It shows *St. Simon Stock living in a tree trunk*. [a] [c] [e]

At the bottom of the right hand aisle is the attractive little baptistry (20), formed by providing a semi-circular balustrade with black marble baluster pins. The same stone is used for the font. On the wall there was a fresco from 1700 by Antonio Cavallucci depicting *The Baptism of Christ*, but unfortunately it was stolen in 1999. [1] [2]

On the wall next to the baptistry is a marble slab that recalls that San Gaspare del Bufalo, founder of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, was baptized here. [7]

Access

The church is normally open daily, 07.00-12.00 and 16.30-19.00.

It is part of the Centro Storico marriage circuit, so you may find a wedding in progress -especially on Saturdays.

Liturgy

This is an active parish church. The times of Mass are now (2015):

Weekdays 8:30, 18:00.

Sundays: 8:30, 10:00, 11:30, 18:00, 19:30.

In summer, the 11:30 Sunday Mass is cancelled and the 18:00 Masses celebrated at 18:30.

Lauds is celebrated after the 8:30 Mass, and Vespers after the 18:00 (or 18:30) Mass.

The Rosary is said daily at 17:30 (18:00 in summer). There is Exposition after the 18:00 (or 18:30) Mass on First Fridays.

The feast of St Martin is celebrated on 11 November. Another important feast in this church is that of Our Lady of Mount Carmel on 16 July, which is a solemnity as she is Patron of the Order. The prophet Elijah is also celebrated with a solemnity on 20 July, although he is now referred to as Father of All Carmelites rather than as their founder. Pope Sylvester has his feast on 31 December.

This is the station church of Thursday after the fourth Sunday of Lent.

Location:

Addr: Via del Monte Oppio 28, 00184 Roma

Normally open every day 07.00-12.00 and 16.30-19.00

Coordinates: [41° 53' 40"N](#) [12° 29' 53"E](#)

Artists and Architects:

Agostine Penna (1730-1800), Italian sculptor

Andrea De Dominicis (18th cent.), Italian architect
 Antonio [Cavallucci](#) (1752-1795), Italian painter of the late Baroque
 Benedetto Folchini (17th cent.), Italian marble worker
 Camillo Arcucci († 1667), Italian architect
 Domenico Manzolini (19th cent), Italian marble worker
 Fabrizio [Chiari](#) (1621-1695), Italian painter
 Filippo [Gagliardi](#) (c.1607-1659), Italian Baroque architect, painter
 Filippo [Gherardi](#) (1643-1704), Italian painter of the Baroque period
 Francesco Belli (17th cent.), Italian goldsmith
 Galeazzo Leoncino (17th cent.), Italian painter
 Gaspar [Dughet](#) [aka Gaspar Poussin] (1615-1675), French /Roman painter
 Giovanni Angelo [Canini](#) (1609-1666), Italian painter and engraver of the Baroque period
 Giovanni [Baglione](#) [aka *il Sordo del Barozzo*] (1566-1643), Italian Late Mannerist and Early Baroque painter
 Giovanni Francesco [Grimaldi](#) [aka *Il Bolognese*] (1606-1680), Italian architect/painter
 Giovanni Francesco Greppi (17th cent), Italian architect/painter
 Giovanni [Micozza](#) (1763-1825), Italian painter
 Girolamo [Massei](#) (c.1545-1620), Italian painter
 Girolamo [Muziano](#) (1532-1592), Italian painter, active in a late-Renaissance or Mannerism style.
 Giuseppe Boroni (18th cent), Italian sculptor
 Giuseppe Sciacca (18th cent.), Italian painter
 Jan [Miel](#) (1599-1663), Flemish painter
 Matteo [Piccione](#) (1615-1671), Italian painter
 Paolo [Naldini](#) (1619-1691), Italian painter
 Filippo Godioli (19th cent), Italian sculptor
 Pietro [Testa](#) (1611-1650), Italian painter of the High Baroque
 Stefano Castelli (17th cent.), Italian sculptor

Relics:

Sts Artemius, Paulina and Sisinnius
 Under the main altar
 St. Sylvester
 Under the altar in the crypt
 Pope Sergius
 Pope Fabian
 Pope Stephan I
 Pope Soter (166- 175)
 Pope Cyriacus
 Pope Anastatius I (399- 401)
 Pope Innocent I (401- 417)

Burials:

Pope St. [Martin](#) I (649-655) [also see [here](#)]
 Buried before the main altar

 Gervais Cardinal [JEANCOLET DE CLINCHAMP](#), (?-1287) [also see [here](#)]
 Simon Cardinal d'[ARMENTIÈRES](#), O.S.B.Clun., (?-1297)
 Buried in the center of the choir
 Diomedes Cardinal [CARAFA](#), (1492-1560)
 Buried before the main altar
 Opizio Cardinal [PALLAVICINI](#), (1632-1700)
 Buried in the vestibule of the subterranean church
 Francesco Saverio Cardinal de [ZELADA](#), (1717-1801) [also see [here](#)]
 Ugo Pietro Cardinal [SPINOLA](#), (1791-1858)

 Hieronymus Belardi (d. 1826)
 Francisco Spinola (d. 1859)
 Antonio [Cavallucci](#) (1752-1795), Italian painter from Sermoneta

Links and References:

1. [Roman Churches Wike](#)
 2. [Anna's Rome Guide](#) (Danish)
 3. [Cardinals of the Catholic Church](#)
 4. [Info.roma web-page](#)
 5. [Cathopedia entry](#) (Italian)
 6. [Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani](#) (Italian)
 7. [GonGoff.com](#)
- a. Sutherland-Harris, Ann B., Ph.D.: The Decoration of San Martino ai Monti; *The Burlington Magazine*; Vol. 106, No. 731, (Feb., 1964), pp. 58-67+69; Vol. 106, No. 732 (Mar., 1964), pp. 114-12
 - b. Witte, Arnold: Depictions of Martyrs in San Martino ai Monti; *Autopsia: Blut- und Augenzeugen Extreme Bilder des christlichen Martyriums*; pp. 167-180; 2013
 - c. Heideman, Johanna.: The Dating of Gaspard Dughet's Frescoes in San Martino ai Monti in Rome; *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 122, No. 929 (Aug., 1980), pp. 540-546
 - d. Witte, Arnold: The San Martino ai Monti as a theatre of painting: churches, artists and plays in mid-seventeenth-century Rome; *Officine del nuovo: sodalizi fra letterati, artisti ed editori nella cultura italiana fra Riforma e Controriforma : atti del Simposio internazionale*, Utrecht 8-10 novembre 2007; pp. 65-70
 - e. Donovan, Jeremiah; ROME ANCIENT AND MODERN AND ITS ENVIRONS; 1842: Vol I, pg 599
 - f. Webb, Matilda: THE CHURCHES AND CATACOMBS OF EARLY CHRISTIAN ROME; 2001; pp. 72-74
 - g. Heideman, Johanna; The Decoration of S. Martino ai Monti, Rome; *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 106, No. 737 (Aug., 1964), pp. 377-379

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