

Santa Maria in Via



Santa Maria in Via is a late 16th century former parish and titular church. The church was already built in the 9th century, but was rebuilt in occasion of a miracle to host an icon. The church is at the west end of the Via del Tritone in the rione Trevi (II). The dedication is to the Blessed Virgin Mary under a special title of Our Lady of the Well (Madonna del Pozzo). The church has been served by the Order of the Servants of Mary (Servite Order) since 1513. [1]

The church of S. Maria in Via now serves as a national church in Rome for the Ecuadorian community. [4]

The name "in via" is of uncertain origin. Some scholars believe it may derive from its proximity to Via Lata (today's Via del Corso) - popularly known as "the Via". Others from its position because, as is still visible today, the church was located "in via", or "in the middle of the road". [7]

History

The origins of the church are entirely unknown. However, a church or a chapel is mentioned in a bull of Pope John XII in 962. In 1042 the church has its first fairly unambiguous documentary reference, in the archives of the nearby Santa Maria in Via Lata. There, it is already recorded under

the name Santa Maria in Via. [1]

On the site there was the stables of the palace of Cardinal Pietro Capocci (c.1200-1259), and there was a well in his stable yard. According to tradition, in the night of 26 September 1256, the well overflowed. The horses were frightened, and when the domestics rushed out they found an icon of the Blessed Virgin, painted on a slate tablet, floating on the water. Pope Alexander IV declared it a miracle and ordered the construction of a chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin as "Madonna del Pozzo", as documented in the inscription in the chapel. The new chapel was over the well, and was an annexe of the older church. [1] [2] [7] [a]

In 1491 Innocent VIII (1484-492) ordered that the chapel, now in ruins, be demolished and a new church built, to which a convent was subsequently annexed. In 1513 it was granted to the Servite Order by Pope Leo X (1513-1521), and they still serve the church. [1] [7] [a]

The Servites decided to rebuild, but took some time as firstly they built a convent from 1585 to 1590. Then, thanks to the generosity of Monsignor Giovanni Battista Canobi, first secretary of Gregory XIII and Clement VIII, they started rebuilding the church, entrusting the project to **Giacomo della Porta** for the year after 1592, and then **Francesco da Volterra** to 1596. He left the church with the nave unroofed, and after a pause **Carlo Francesco Lambardi** (who was a parishioner) finished the edifice, did the basic internal decoration and installed the altars by 1609. This work was patronised by Cardinal St Robert Bellarmine, titular of the church. However the façade took much longer, and it was only completed in 1681 by **Carlo Rainaldi**, commissioned by the bishop of Rieti, Giorgio Bolognetti (1595-1680), a relative of Canobi. The interior was restored in 1848 by **Virginio Vespignani**, who added much polychrome marble decoration, and again in 1857 by **Giuseppe Alezziani**, who removed the stuccos and the coating in faux marble of the pillars. [1] [3] [6] [7] [a]

The external left side of the church was redone at the start of the 20th century on the occasion of the opening of the extension of Via del Tritone. The convent, which was to its right, was demolished around 1930. A major restoration was completed in 2006. [a]

The *Titulus S. Mariae in Via* was instituted by Pope Julius III in 1551, but the title is currently vacant (2021). The church used to be the parish seat, but was suppressed on October 18, 2020. [7]

Exterior

The roofs are pitched and tiled, with the one over the presbyterium slightly lower than that on the nave. There is no campanile, but a bellcote with spaces for two bells is placed over the far right hand corner of the sacristy. Unusually, this is at an acute angle to the major axis of the church. [1]

The 19th century side frontage on the Via del Tritone features six Corinthian limestone pilasters, the pair on the corners being doubletted. They support a roofline entablature which is a continuation of the dividing one in the façade. In between each pair of pilasters is naked brickwork with a large recessed frame, below a large lunette window. [1]

Façade (1)

The façade was designed by **Giacomo della Porta**, and completed by **Carlo Rainaldi** who made some alterations to the upper of the two stories. The second storey is false, being much higher than the nave roof behind. [1] [6]

The façade is built of travertine limestone and presents two orders of Corinthian pilasters with a sculptured frieze between the capitals of the lower range, and an entablature between both with a projecting dentillate cornice and a dedicatory inscription on the frieze. The inscription reads, in Latin,

Deo in hon[ore] Mariae virginis matris Dei, d[e]d[ic]at[a] MCCLVI
("Dedicated to God in honor of the Virgin Mother, AD 1256").

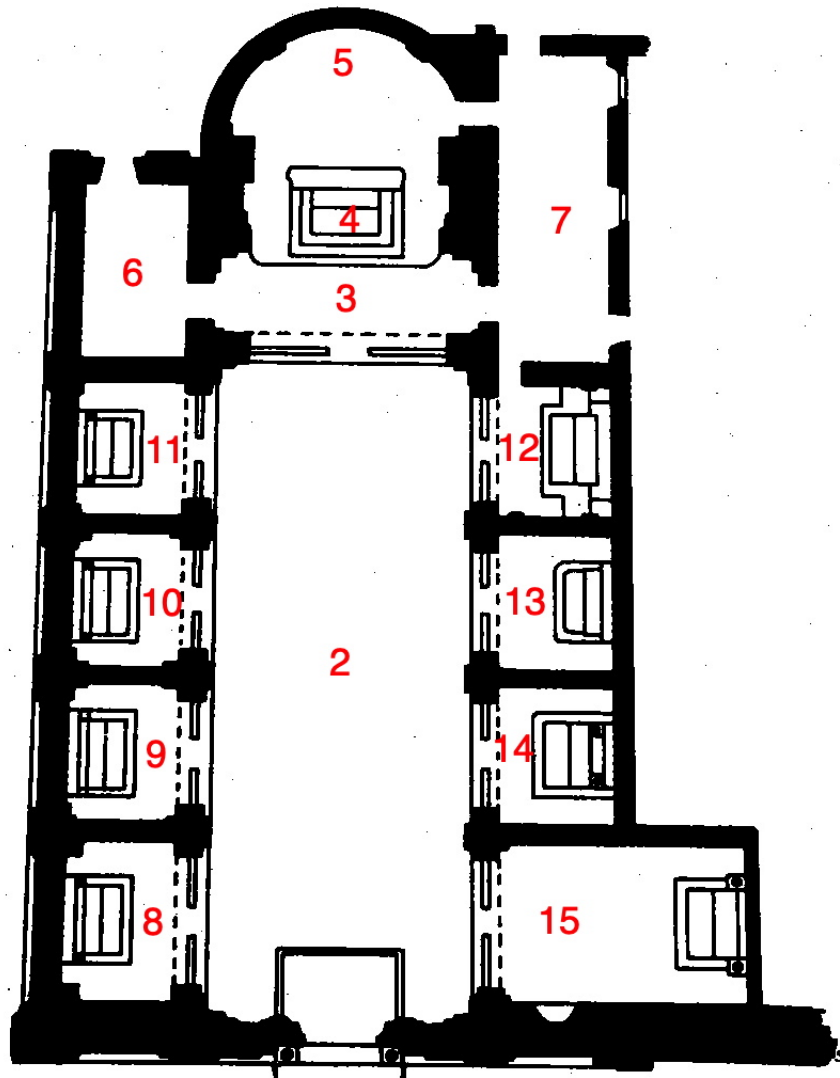
In between the pilaster capitals are panels richly decorated with swags, ribbons and heads of putti. In its center is the entrance, adorned with two Corinthian columns, supporting a raised triangular pediment containing a bust in a wreath. The plaque above the pediment records a restoration of

1900. To either side is a rectangular window with a raised segmental pediment, and below this a blank tablet with a Baroque raised border. [1]

The second storey has a pair of pilasters in the same style as those below, and these support an entablature and compound pediment formed by inserting a segmental one into a triangular one. In the center is a large rectangular window flanked by Corinthian columns supporting a pediment with an ogee curve. This window has a balustrade, and the pediment contains a scallop shell. A pair of gigantic incurved double volutes frames this storey, and on the corners at either end is a pair of flaming torch finials. [1]

There is a plaque in relief celebrating the myrical of the icon placed on an adjoining building which was bequeathed to a brotherhood which met in the church. This in order to support unmarried young women (*pro maritandis puellis*) by providing them with a dowry.

Plan



Interior

The plan of the church is straightforward, there being a nave with two structural aisles, a short presbytery and a segmental apse. The aisles are divided by blocking walls to create four chapels on either side, the bottom right hand one (where the well is) being twice as deep as the others and hence protruding beyond the external wall on that side. On the left hand side of the presbytery is a room containing a crèche, and on the right hand side is the sacristy. [1]

Nave (2)

The single nave has four chapels on each side, entered through arches with molded archivolt springing from Doric impost pilasters embellished with polychrome marble work. These arches form two arcades, and are separated by gigantic Corinthian pilasters in dark grey marble. The pilasters support an entablature which runs round the church, and which has a prominent cornice embellished with modillions (little brackets). [1]

On the entablature is a barrel-vaulted ceiling, which has horizontal rectangular windows inserted without lunettes (in other words, cut-outs). The vault has a fresco from 1724 by **Giovanni Domenico Piastrini** from Pistoia, and features *The First Mass of St Philip Benizi* who was one of the founders of the Servites. [1] [5] [a]

Much of the polychrome marble decoration is of the 19th century, but the marble floor was relaid in 1933. It features the monogram of the Servites: SM for Servi Mariae. This symbol is also in the stained glass window at the end of the vault above the entrance. In front of the entrance in the floor is an inscription commemorating the relaying of the floor. [1]

Also in the floor near the sanctuary step is the coat-of-arms for Cardinal Patrick Hayes, who was the titular cardinal from 1924 until his death in 1938. [9]

To the right of the entrance is the funerary monument of Pietro Antonio Seiassi (d. 1719), a distinguished orator and poet of the 18th century. His memorial was designed by **Vincenzo Pacetti**. Over the entrance is a painting of *Card. Capocci, in the act of extracting from the well the Madonna*, as is explained in a long inscription under the painting. On the left is a monument to Francesco Maria Campello, a nobleman from Spoleto who died in 1759. [1] [6] [a]

Sanctuary (3)

The nave ceiling vault ends in the triumphal arch, which springs from the entablature over a pair of clustered pilasters. The sanctuary beyond has two bays, and then an apse with a conch containing a circular window. The vault of the first bay has a pair of windows, and unlike those in the nave these have vault lunettes. The circular window has stained glass with the Servite monogram again. [1]

The spectacular polychrome marble high altar, commissioned by Cardinal Flavio Chigi, is against the apse wall, and is from 1758. The Cardinal's coat-of-arms is on the frontal. [a]

The aedicule is flanked by a pair of pilasters revetted in pink marble, and contains a polychrome carved wood statue of *Our Lady of Sorrows* by **Ferdinando Raggi** of 1763. The Servites have a special devotion to her, and were instrumental in spreading the devotion of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady. There is a modern altar (4) in the middle of the sanctuary with an intricately carved frontal. [1] [7]

Flanking the altar is a pair of curtained doorways, above which are segmental pediments. Above each is a gilt statue of a putto holding a candelabrum, by **Valentino Consalvi** (1730). Beyond these doorways is the conventual choir, fitted out by St Robert Bellarmine, and donated by Prince Luigi Boncompagni Ludovisi. Bellarmino was the Cardinal of the church from 1599 to 1620. [1] [3] [a]

On the left hand side of the presbyterium is a room containing a crèche (6) that is from Naples, and is of the 18th century. [1]

Sacristy (7)

The sacristy contains a painting of the *Deposition* is by an unknown 18th century painter, while *Our Lady of the Assumption* in the ceiling is a copy, also from the 18th century, of a canvas by Stefano Pieri, which had originally been in the 2nd chapel to the left. [a1]

In the sacristy is a very good painted wooden statue of *Our Lady of Sorrows* by **Raimondo Gaggi** of 1725. In a room over the sacristy is kept a chair used by St Robert Bellarmine when he preached here as the church's cardinal. [1]

Chapels

The chapels are described in clockwise order, beginning to the left of the entrance.

Chapel of St Andrew the Apostle (8)

The first chapel to the left is also known as the Cappella Del Bufalo-Cancellieri. The altarpiece depicting *St Andrew the Apostle* (1610) is by **Giuseppe Franco**, nicknamed **delle Lodole**. If you look carefully at the work in the lower left you will see a little bird, which is a lark and which the artist used as a signature. [1] [7] [8]

To the left there is a 15th century fresco fragment depicting the *Blessed Virgin*. This icon is known as *Our Lady of the Fire*. [1] [a]

On the right wall is a memorial to Cardinal Innocenzo del Bufalo-Cancellieri, 1610. It was built by his brother Muzio. [a]

Chapel of the Sacred Heart (9)

The second chapel on the left. It has an oil on canvas altarpiece of the *Sacred Heart of Jesus* from 1961 by **Tarsicio Bendini**. [1] [7]

On the side walls of the chapel are lifesize statues of two saints in niches: *St Francis* on the left and *St. Rita of Cascia* on the right.

Chapel of the Seven Holy Founders (10)

The third chapel on the left is dedicated to the Seven Holy Founders of the Servite Order. The oil on canvas altarpiece, *The Seven Founders receiving the habit from the Bl. Virgin*, is copied from that of Massucci in the church of St. Marcello, by **Giovanni Bigatti**. [1] [3] [7]

The paintings on the wall are by unknown artists. On the left side is *The Ecstasy of St. Francis*. On the right wall is *Christ and Mary Magdalene*. [a]

Chapel of St Pellegrino (11)

The first chapel on the left of the sanctuary is dedicated to St Pellegrino Laziosi, who is a patron of cancer sufferers. It is also known as the Marucelli Chapel. The oil on canvas altarpiece, a mid 18th century work by **Giuseppe Montesanti**, shows the saint having a vision of the crucified Christ curing him of a cancer in his leg. The nun also depicted in the work is St Juliana Falconieri, foundress of the Servite Tertiary nuns. [1] [7] [a]

As shown in the inscriptions on the walls, the chapel belonged to the Florentine family Marucelli. In 1859, the Marucelli Library of Florence, the beneficiary of the family, undertook a radical restoration, with a contribution from the Grand Duke, Leopold II of Tuscany. [a]

Chapel of the Holy Trinity (12)

The chapel to the right of the sanctuary. The chapel rises on the location of the old, late-16th century sacristy. It was sold to the architect **Carlo Lambardi** for his family chapel (1608), and dedicated to the Trinity. The Lambardi coat-of-arms, an eagle with three lilies, is in the center of the ceiling with stucco lacunars. [1] [3] [a]

The altarpiece depicting *The Holy Trinity and Sts. John the Baptist, Francis, John the Evangelist and Mary Magdalene* is a composite work, with a 16th century wooden crucifix superimposed. The backing painting was by **Cristoforo Casolani**. [1] [a]

The small picture on the altar is of *Our Lady as a little girl, with her mother St Anne*. [1]

Francesco Lombardi, the brother of the architect, painted the fresco on the right hand wall, which depicts *The Apparition to Abraham of Three Angels*. The fresco to the left depicting *The Ark of the Covenant* is by **Cherubino Alberti**. The archivolt has little Biblical scenes by **Casolani** and his

school. [1] [3] [6]

Chapel of the Annunciation (13)

The third chapel on the right belonged to the Aldobrandini family, who lived in the nearby palace of piazza Colonna. Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini had it fitted out in 1596, and there was a re-ordering in 1750. The family coat-of-arms is inlaid in marble in the floor. [1] [a]

There have been serious problems of damp penetration in this chapel, with restorations effected to the paintings in 1971 and 1990. Unfortunately, damage has been serious. [1] [a]

The altarpiece depicting *The Annunciation* (1596) is by the Cavalier d'Arpino, but was restored in the 19th century by Francesco Coghetti and again in 1971. [1] [5]

The wall frescoes are by the Cavalier d'Arpino again, with *The Nativity* on the left and *The Adoration of the Magi* on the right. In the latter, the figure looking at the viewer is thought to be a self-portrait by the artist. [1] [5]

The frescoes in the vault are by Jacopo and Francesco Zucchi from Florence. They date from 1596, and depict *The Eternal Father* in an elliptical tondo in the middle. To the sides are four panels showing *Noli Me Tangere*, *Transfiguration*, *Pentecost* and *Assumption*. [1] [a]

Chapel of St Philip Benizi (14)

The second chapel on the right is dedicated to St Philip Benizi, one of the founders of the Servite Order. He was canonised in 1669. The chapel was decorated at the wish of the noblewoman Licinia Della Porta after 1626. It was restored by Virginio Vespignani in the mid 19th century. The inscription on the left wall commemorates the restoration carried out by the Gherardi Family in 1750. [a]

The oil on canvas altarpiece depicting *St Philip Benizi in Ecstasy* (1626) is by Antonio Circignani, (*Il Pomarancio*). The side wall paintings are by Tommaso Donini from the first half of the 17th century; the left wall shows *The Burial of St. Philip Benizi*, and the right one *St. Philip Benizi Gives his Habit to a Poor Man*. In the ceiling vault are three fresco panels also by Circignani, showing scenes from the life of the saint. [1][7][a]

Chapel of the Madonna of the Well (15)

The first chapel on the right is the Cappella della Madonna del Pozzo. It is the deepest among the chapels of the church because it includes the well. The present chapel dates back to 1591 and was built at the expense of Monsignor Giovanni Battista Canobi, whose funeral monument is on the left. [1] [2]

The chapel is dedicated to the highly venerated Madonna of the Well, a small painting on slate that came to light thanks to the overflowing of a well, during the night between 26 and 27 September 1256. The altar, where the painting is located, is decorated with mottled marbles and was rebuilt in the mid 18th century. The entire structure of the altar was restored at the expense of Card. Pietro Francesco Bussi, Titular of the church. On the sides of the altar frontal the coat of arms of the cardinal. [2] [a]

To the right of the altar is the holy well, which was there first so the chapel is built around it. The 13th century icon is the altarpiece. It is painted on a slate fragment, which is why the fact that it floated on the water in the well was regarded as miraculous. In 1646 it was crowned by Papal decree, and framed in polychrome marble and alabaster pietra dura work (the jewelled crown has since been removed). [1] [a]

The vault frescoes showing *The Coronation of the Virgin* (1946) in the center are by Michelangelo Bedini and are inspired by a late-baroque decoration. [1] [2]

The painting to the left wall showing *Cardinal Capocci receiving the icon*. According to a note existing in the archive of the convent, the painting was executed by a Venetian artist in 1672 by order of Card. Carlo Carafa Jr, who in 1675 became the titular of the church. Also on the left wall is the funeral

monument to Mggr. Giovanni Battista Canobi, built in 1681 by the Brotherhood of the Holy Sacrament. He was the First Secretary for Popes Gregory XIII and Clement VIII. [2] [3] [7]

On the right wall is the baptismal font, built and placed here in 1825. The iron gate with two doors is surmounted by the coat of arms of the Order of the Servants of Mary. The two polychrome stained glass windows on the right wall are the work of the Servant of Maria Fra **Fiorenzo M. Gobbo** and were installed in 1956. Also in the right wall is the inscription of Pope Alexander IV. [2]

The intricate gilt and frescoed vault shows the *Coronation of the Virgin* in the center and the *Four Evangelists* in the corners. In the floor is a pietra dura picture of two doves drinking from the Holy Well.

The holy well is still taken very seriously by believers, and is one of the few in the Centro Storico (see San Lorenzo in Fonte for another one, now disused). It used to be the case until recently that a Servite friar would always be present in the church during opening hours, and would serve you fresh water on request from the well. Unfortunately, the friars nowadays may have other calls on their time. If one is not available, there are prayer cards of the miraculous icon to be had. [1]

If you are not a Christian believer, be careful about drinking from the well just for the "experience". The water comes from the ground not an aqueduct, and has filtered through several thousand years of history. The water is to be drunk with faith, and may not be healthy otherwise. [1]

Special notes

There is a feast of the Madonna of the holy well on 8th September, and a night vigil on 26th September, the anniversary of the miracle of the well.

The feast of the Seven Holy Founders of the Servite Order is celebrated on 17 February, and the feast of St Pellegrino Laziosi on 1 May.

The parish support a good choir, the *Cappella Musicale di Santa Maria in Via*, and they give their repertoire at the 12:00 Mass.

Artists and Architects:

Cherubino [Alberti](#) [aka *Borghesiano*] (1553-1615), Italian engraver and painter
Giuseppe Aleggiani (19th cent), Italian painter
Michelangelo [Bedini](#) (1904-1973), Italian painter and mosaicist
Tarsicio [Bendini](#) (1929-1962), Italian painter
Giovanni [Bigatti](#) (1774-1817), Italian painter
Francesco [Capriani](#) da Volterra (1535-1594), Italian architect
Cristoforo [Casolani](#) (c. 1582-1622), Italian painter
Giuseppe [Cesari](#) [aka *Cavaliere d'Arpino*] (1568-1640), Italian Mannerist painter
Antonio [Circignani](#) [aka *il Pomarancio*] (1567-1630), Italian painter of the late-Renaissance/
Mannerism period
Francesco [Coghetti](#) (1804-1875), Italian painter
Valentino Consalvi (18th cent), Italian sculptor
[Giacomo della Porta](#) (d. 1602), Italian architect and sculptor
Tommaso [Donini](#) [aka *Il Caravaggino*] (1601-1637), Italian Baroque painter
Raimondo Gaggi (18th cent), Italian sculptor
Fiorenzo M. [Gobbo](#), OSM (1926-2014), Italian artist (Painter, draftsman, engraver, specialized in fresco, mosaic and stained glass windows)
Giuseppe [Franco](#) [*delle Lodole*] (1565-1628), Italian painter
Carlo [Lombardi](#) (1559-1620), Italian architect of the Renaissance period
Francesco Lombardi (17th cent), Italian painter
[Agostino Masucci](#) (1691-1758), Italian painter of the late-Baroque or Rococo period
Giuseppe Montesanti (18th cent), Italian painter
Vincenzo [Pacetti](#) (1746-1820), Italian Neoclassical sculptor
Giovanni Domenico [Pestrini](#) (1680-1740), Italian painter

Ferdinando Raggi (18th cent), sculptor
Carlo [Rainaldi](#) (1611-1691), Italian architect of the Baroque period.
Virginio [Vespignani](#) (1808-1882), Italian architect
Francesco [Zucchi](#) (?-1622), Italian painter, sculptor. Brother of Jacopo.
Jacopo [Zucchi](#) (1541-1590), Florentine painter of the Mannerist style

Burials:

Innocenzo Cardinal [DEL BUFALO-CANCELLIERI](#), (1566-1610)

Buried in the tomb of his ancestor

Angelo Cardinal [GIORI](#), (1586-1662)

Pietro Francesco [BUSSI](#), (1684-1765)

Monsignor Giovanni Battista Canobi

First secretary for Popes Gregory XIII and Clement VIII

Framcescp Maria [Campello](#) (d. 1759)

Carlo [Lombardi](#) (d. 1620)

Italian Renaissance architect

Pierantonio [Serassi](#) (1721-1791)

Abbot, scholar and student of Tasso, secretary to Cardinal Joseph Furietti

Location:

Addr: Via del Mortaro 24, 00187 Roma

Coord: [41° 54' 6" N, 12° 28' 54" E](#)

Telephone: 06-69.76.741

Info:

Normally open:

Weekdays 07.15 to 12:15, 16:00 to 20:00; Saturdays it closes an hour later in the evening.

Sundays 8:30 to 13:00, 16:00 to 22:00.

Mass times:

Saturday 7:30 Mass is in the Well Chapel in honour of Our Lady

Sunday: 10:00, 11:00, 12:00, 17:00 (not July or August), 19:00, 20:00, 21:00

Links and References:

1. [Roman Churches Wiki](#)
 2. [Parish website](#)
 3. [info.roma.it](#)
 4. [English Wikipedia page](#)
 5. [Art in Rome web site](#)
 6. [ROMAPEDIA blog](#)
 7. [Catholic.org](#)
 8. [Biography of G. Franco](#)
 9. [Cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church](#)
- a. Informational plaques in church

Other Links:

romeartlover.com

[Youtube tour](#)

Cathopedia.org

[Roma Segreta](#)

[Roma SPQR](#)

© [Skip Conde](#)
[Churches of Rome.info](#)