

Santa Maria ad martyres in Campo (Pantheon)



Santa Maria ad Martyres, also known as the **Pantheon**, is a 1st century Roman temple that was consecrated as a church in the 7th century. It is at Piazza della Rotonda in the rione Pigna, and is a minor basilica and collegiate church but is not titular or parochial. The dedication is to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to all the martyrs of the city of Rome. [1]

The edifice has been in use as a church, with the name Santa Maria ad Martyres, for a period over five times as long as its period of use as a temple with the name Pantheon. [1]

History

In the aftermath of the Battle of Actium (31 BC), Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa started an impressive building program: the Pantheon was a part of the complex created by him on his own property in the Campus Martius in 29–19 BC, which included three buildings aligned from south to north: the Baths of Agrippa, the Basilica of Neptune, and the Pantheon. [4]

The temple had to be rebuilt by Domitian after a massive fire destroyed much of the neighbourhood in AD 80, and was burnt again in AD 100 when it was struck by lightning. It was restored, or possibly completely rebuilt, by Emperor Trajan, and completed by his adopted son Hadrian, between ca. 114 and 128. The widely accepted architect was **Apollodorus of Damascus**. To honor his illustrious predecessors, Hadrian installed the false inscription attributing the new building to the long-dead Agrippa. [1] [2] [4] [5]

It is the most completely preserved building of the Imperial Roman capital. It was originally built in honor of Augustus, and dedicated to the dynastic gods of the Julio-Claudian family: Mars, Venus and Julius Caesar. The meaning of the dedication to all the gods, Pantheon, is somewhat uncertain - it may have actually been a dedication to a single deity, Nature, which in a sense includes and surrounds all the other deities. The earliest Roman document in which the name Pantheum occurs

dates from the year AD 59, during the reign of Nero. [1] [e]

It was repaired by Emperor Septimius Severus and his son and co-emperor Caracalla in AD 202. They placed a second inscription below the original one. This is now lost, but it was recorded as saying: IMP CAES L SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS ... ET IMP M AURELIUS ANTONINUS... PANTHEUM VETUSTATE CORRUPTUM CUM OMNI CULTU RESTITUERUNT, meaning "Emperor L. Septimius Severus... and Emperor M. Aurelius Antoninus... carefully restored the Pantheon, ruined by the passage of the years". [4]

The building's function as a temple was suppressed in 395, when the emperor Theodosius I ordered the closure of all pagan temples in the Empire. Its function for the next two centuries is unknown, but it is fairly certain that it was used as an assembly hall. [1]

However, in 609 the Byzantine emperor Phocas donated it to Pope Boniface IV who converted it into a Christian church. It was consecrated and dedicated to Our Lady and all the Martyrs on 13 May 609. A grateful Roman Senate ordered the erection of a surviving memorial column in the Forum to the honor of the emperor, which happens to be the last act on record that the Senate performed. In 609, Boniface IV confirmed All Saints Day as a feast. [1] [2] [4]

The building's consecration as a church saved it from the abandonment, destruction, and the worst of the spoliation that befell the majority of ancient Rome's buildings during the early medieval period. However, Paul the Deacon records the spoliation of the building by the Emperor Constans II, who visited Rome in July 663, stripping the city of much of its bronze and precious metals, including much of the bronze from the roof. Pope Gregory III had it re-clad with lead in 735. [1] [2]

At some unknown date the three columns at the left hand end of the portico were robbed, and replaced with the walls of a house inserted into that end. The destination of the pillaged columns seems unknown as well. [1]

In 1270, as recorded by an inscription placed in the Pantheon portico, a bell tower was constructed at the apex of the portico pediment. Also at this time the early Christian *schola cantorum* in the rotunda was replaced by a new high altar with a reliquary decorated with colored mosaics. Both bell tower and high altar were part of an extensive 13th century campaign to restore the interior and exterior. [e]

In the period when the papacy was based in Avignon (1309-1377), the church fell into disuse and was used at one time as a fortress, and later the portico was used as a poultry market. The scars on the columns of the portico are attributed to the supports for its stalls. [1]

With the return of the popes from Avignon to Rome, the church was restored to use. In 1418 Pope Martin V began the process of civic enhancement of the edifice, and this was continued by Eugene IV in 1435. This entailed the clearing away of the houses stuck to the rotunda on the right hand (west) side, and also demolishing those in front of the church to create a piazza. The houses on the left hand side were left. The house within the portico could not be demolished because its walls were holding the left hand end up in lieu of the three missing columns. Unfortunately, the portico and piazza then continued to be the location of the above-mentioned market which continued until the 19th century. [1]

The area in front of it had over the centuries become choked with a maze of sheds and small shops that had grown up around its columns. These medieval accretions were cleared by order of Pope Eugenius IV (1431-39) and the piazza was laid out and paved. In the center of the piazza is a fountain, the *Fontana del Pantheon*, surmounted by an Egyptian obelisk. The fountain was constructed by [Giacomo Della Porta](#) under [Pope Gregory XIII](#) in 1575, and the obelisk was added to it in 1711 under [Pope Clement XI](#). The surrounding buildings are 18th and 19th century. [6]

During the reign of Nicholas V, new lead roof tiles emblazoned with the papal shield and dated 1451 were installed (some of these Renaissance tiles are still on the dome today). [e]

In 1491 Innocent VIII had a new high altar installed and moved it toward the center of the building in order to make the relics accessible from behind the mensa. The relics had been culled from 28

cartloads of bones removed from the catacombs by Boniface IV in 609, when the Pantheon was rededicated to Santa Maria ad Martyres. At the time of the rededication, only the bones of Saints Rasmus and Anastasius could be identified by name, and they were interred near the high altar to be particularly venerated there. [b] [c]

The Renaissance saw the building become the focus of admiration. In 1520, Raphael was buried here and other great artists such as Annibale Caracci and Taddeo Zuccherò followed his example. Also, the fifteen altars started to be adorned with high quality altarpiece paintings in this century. Pope Pius IV repaired or recast the ancient door in 1563. There is doubt as to whether this door belongs to the ancient building, as it seems not to be properly fitted to the doorcase. [1]

The Confraternity of the Virtuosi at the Pantheon was a confraternity of artists and musicians that was founded here by a 16th century Canon of the church, Desiderio da Segni, to ensure that proper worship was maintained in the chapel of St Joseph and to foster artistic and cultural activities. The first members were, among others, Antonio da Sangallo the younger, Jacopo Meneghino, Giovanni Mangone, Taddeo Zuccari, Domenico Beccafumi and Flaminio Vacca. The confraternity continued to draw members from the elite of Rome's artists and architects, and among later members we find Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Pietro da Cortona, Alessandro Algardi and many others. The institution still exists, and is now called the Accademia Pontificia di Belle Arti (The Pontifical Academy of Fine Arts), based in the palace of the Cancelleria. [1]

In 1600 Pope Clement VIII commissioned **Giacomo della Porta** to clad the exterior of the dome in lead. [2]

Pope Urban VIII (1623-1644) replaced one of the granite columns (the first on the left) and had his coat-of-arms carved in the capital. He then had the belfry demolished and had two bell-towers built on top of the second, internal pediment; they were designed by **Gian Lorenzo Bernini** in 1625, which became known as the 'ass's ears'. They survive in many depictions, as they were only removed in 1883. The bronze covering of the pronaos wooden truss was removed to make 80 cannons for Castel Sant'Angelo and (supposedly) the columns of the canopy of S. Pietro. Concerning this, an anonymous contemporary Roman satirist quipped in a pasquinade (a publicly posted poem) that *quod non fecerunt barbari fecerunt Barberini* ("What the barbarians did not do the Barberinis [Urban VIII's family name] did"). In fact, the bronze for the baldachin came from Venice. [1] [2] [4] [c]

Two other columns on the left side were finally replaced by Pope Alexander VII in 1662. He used columns in red granite found in the Alexandrine baths near San Luigi dei Francesi, and also put his coat-of-arms in the capitals. These three replacement columns are obvious, because their capitals are much crisper than the eroded ancient ones of the others. The other major intervention by Pope Alexander was to lower the level of the piazza outside. As mentioned, the edifice when newly built had been approached by a short flight of steps but the ground level had risen so much that the entrance was now below ground level. The work left the floor of the portico level with the piazza, as it still is. [1] [2]

Pope Innocent XI (1676-1689) had the roof repaired. The high altar and the apse were refitted by Pope Clement XI (1700-1721), the new altar being designed by **Alessandro Specchi**. In 1749 there was a major restoration of the polychrome marble interior wall decoration, which was done to a different design to the ancient one it replaced. This was done by **Paolo Posi** on the commission of Pope Benedict XIV. [1] [2]

In 1833 the lost tomb of Raphael was rediscovered, then opened to verify he was buried there. [2]

In 1747, the broad frieze below the dome with its false windows was "restored," but bore little resemblance to the original. In the early decades of the 20th century, a piece of the original, as could be reconstructed from Renaissance drawings and paintings, was recreated in one of the panels. [4]

The last restorations performed by the popes were those of Pius VII around 1820 and Pius IX in 1857. After the conquest of Rome by Italy in 1870, the Italian government took over the responsibility for maintenance. In 1873 Pope Pius IX had the floor restored in a way faithful to its original design. The buildings hugging the right hand, western side of the church were finally

demolished to create the present Via della Rotonda. The 17th century iron railings were removed from the portico, but was replaced by a railing fence which enclosed that part of the piazza nearest the portico. The quid pro quo was that the church was to become a nationalist shrine. It was the burial place of King Victor Emmanuel in 1878, one of the chapels being destroyed for his memorial. His son King Umberto was similarly interred in 1900. The two royal tombs are maintained by the "National Institute of Honor Guards to the Royal Tombs", founded in 1878. [1] [2]

The building is in the care of the Soprintendenze, the archaeological authorities. In the 1930's they proposed to restore the interior decoration to its ancient appearance, and did so to a small section of the wall as a demonstration. Outside, the 19th century railing fence was removed and the piazza tidied up so as to acquire its present appearance. There has recently been a major restoration and cleaning program. [1]

In December 2017, a new gilded bronze high altar "pro populo" was provided. The sculptor is **Federico Severino**. [1]

The church is served by ecclesiastical Canons. [1]

Exterior

The building consists of three separate architectural elements. The main part is a circular hall or rotunda into which the hemispherical dome is inserted. In front there is a pronaos or portico in the form of a Greek temple, and this is joined onto the rotunda by means of a large rectangular flat-roofed block. The fabric of the walls is in brick and Roman pozzolana concrete, with the dome in concrete only. The building was originally approached by a flight of steps. Later construction raised the level of the ground leading to the portico, eliminating these steps. [1] [4] [c]

Pronaos

The large entrance portico or pronaos contains sixteen monolithic granite columns of the Corinthian order, eight in the first rank and two groups of four behind, under a pediment. The shafts of the columns are about 12.5 meters (41 ft) high and 4.5 meters (15 ft) round. Originally eight were of grey granite, and eight of pink with capitals and bases in white marble. The grey granite came from a quarry in the Eastern Desert of Egypt called Mons Claudianus, the pink ones came from Aswan. [1] [4]

There are eight columns at the entrance (this arrangement is known as octostyle), and these support an entablature and a triangular pediment. The first, third, sixth and eighth columns have rows of two columns each behind them, forming three aisles in the portico. The wider central aisle leads to the entrance, while the side ones lead to two enormous semi-circular niches in the rectangular block. These are thought to have contained statues of Agrippa and Augustus. As mentioned, the three columns at the left hand side of the portico are not original, but came from the Baths of Nero. [1] [4]

The inscription on the architrave in raised bronze letters (modern replacements) reads: M AGRIPPA L F COS TERTIUM FECIT, meaning "Marcus Agrippa son of Lucius built this while consul for the third time". The tympanum of the pediment above is now blank, but analysis of the pattern of surviving clamp holes indicates that it used to have a bronze device featuring an eagle within a wreath with ribbons. [1] [5]

If you look round both sides of the portico, you will see surviving, badly weathered remains of the original exterior decoration which here features a pair of ribbed Corinthian pilasters attached as revetments connected by two friezes featuring swags. [1]

Inside, the portico now has no ceiling except for a short barrel vault with a single line of coffering over the door. The ceiling used to be bronze, possibly chased with decorations and gilded, before it was looted in the 17th century. [1]

The arched bay before the entrance has sculpted marble slabs on its side walls, featuring pagan

priestly symbols and sacrificial instruments. The side door in the left hand side is the entrance to rooms once used by the Confraternity of the Virtuosi, as well as the access to a staircase leading to the roof. [1]

The large bronze doors to the cella, once plated with gold, are not the original ones of the Pantheon. The current doors – manufactured too small for the door frames – have been there since about the 15th century. [4]

A design problem

The design of the pronaos raises a problem that has exercised analysts since the 16th century. It is not easy to see from the street, but over the roof of the portico the front wall of the rectangular entrance block has a triangular motif like a ghost pediment, the same size as the real one below. Further, the proportion between the size of the pediment and its height from the ground is incorrect according to the canons of Classical architecture. The reason for this seems to be that the columns used were too short for the initial design. [1]

Rotunda

The rotunda drum is a very solid construction, with a massive wall which is 6 meters (20 ft) thick in order to provide support for the dome. The area was marshy before the ancient city spread into it, and so there was a danger for the designers that the building would have started sinking on completion. So, the foundation is a solid ring of concrete 7.3 meters (24 ft) wide and 4.5 meters (15 ft) deep. On this is the cylindrical wall of the rotunda, made of three superimposed sections divided by two projecting stone string courses that run all the way round. In each section or storey is an arcade of brick relieving arches embedded in the concrete. [1] [c]

However, the rotunda drum wall is not solid concrete and brick. Apart from the weight of the dome, there was another problem that the original architects had to face -and that was the fact that Roman cement was exothermic. In other words, as it was setting it was giving off heat, so when it cooled it contracted and was liable to crack. To obviate this possibility, the structure contained a series of voids as well as the brick arches. Eight large internal niches break the rotunda into eight gigantic piers, and in each of these there is a semicircular room at ground level with a tiny passage connecting it to the outside (because of the shape on the plan, these are called “key chambers”). Also, there was an internal corridor above the above-mentioned internal niches, and you can see the windows giving light for this in the interior layout. [1] [c]

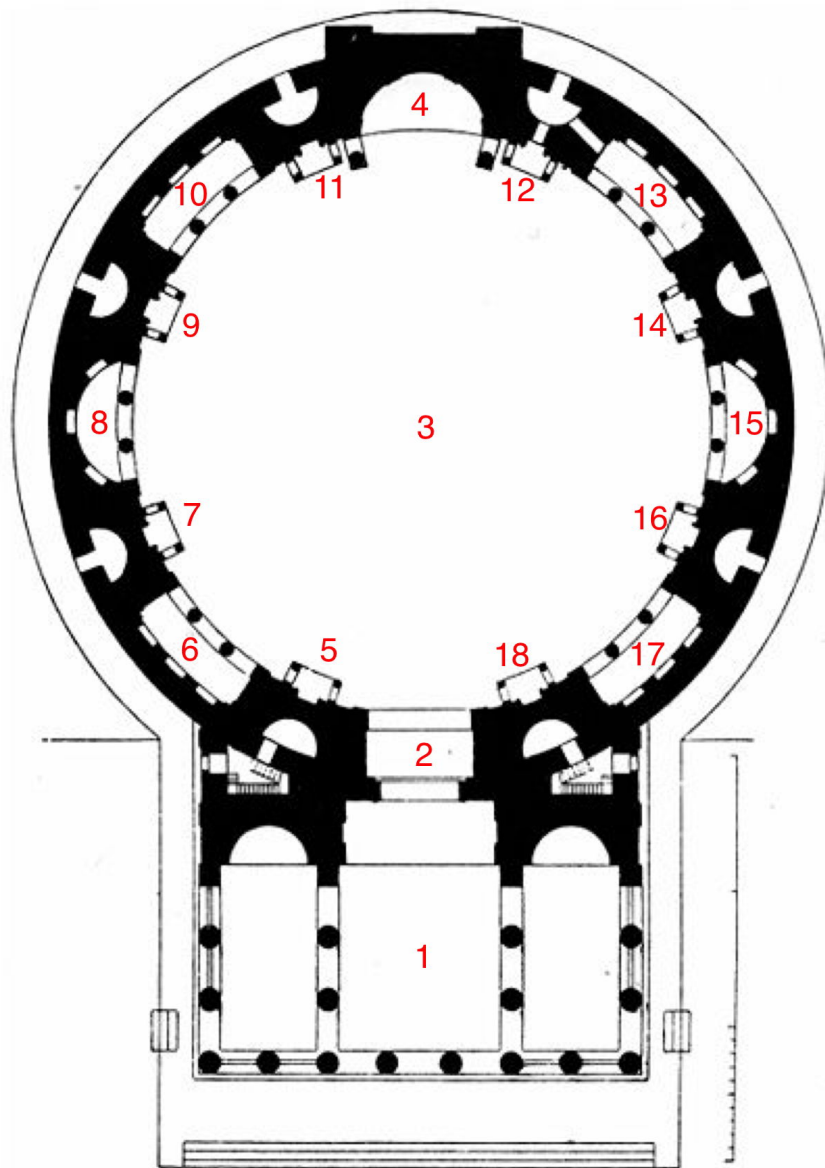
Another design feature intended to avoid stress cracking was that the aggregate in the concrete gets lighter with height, and the same feature applies to the dome. The lower walls have fist-sized chunks of tufa and travertine limestone, but grades into brick before becoming small bits of tufa and pumice in the upper part of the dome. [1] [c]

Dome

The dome is meant to be appreciated from the inside. Externally, it does not feature on the city's skyline because it appears as a shallow saucer despite being hemispherical. The reason for this is that it needed to be buttressed externally. The springing of the dome starts at the level of the second string course or two-thirds of the way up the wall. The upper third of the wall supports a series of seven concentric brick rings resting on the dome. [1]

The dome was originally covered with gilded tiles, thought to be bronze although the original documentation does not specify this. This covering was looted by Emperor Constans II in 663. However, the oculus keeps its original bronze lining. [1]

Plan



Interior

The interior never fails to have an impact on visitors. On entering, you find yourself in a large circular space dominated by the dome. The wall has two architectural orders or storeys, separated by a deep first entablature while a second narrower entablature runs underneath the dome. The attic between the entablatures was the part of the interior re-ordered in the 18th century. [1]

Facing the entrance is a large semi-circular exedra or apse, which is higher than the first entablature and so has this running round its inside. It is preceded by a pair of Corinthian columns in pavonazzetto marble. To each side are three other exedrae, the two central ones being semicircular also but the four diagonally placed ones being rectangular. The first entablature runs over the top of these exedrae, being supported by a pair of ribbed Corinthian columns in each and with a pair of engaged square pilasters in the same style at the corners. The semicircular exedrae have these in pavonazzetto marble like the main apse, while the rectangular ones have giallo antico from what is now Tunisia. The semicircular ones contain one statue niche each, while the rectangular ones have three. This indicates that the semicircular ones were for higher status gods. [1]

In between the exedrae are a total of eight aedicules or shrines built against the wall, comparable in

style to the altars of Baroque churches. Each has a pair of small columns in giallo antico, porphyry or granite supporting a pediment that is either triangular or segmental. The triangular ones flank the entrance and apse. The design of the polychrome marble wall cladding surrounding these is original, being in opus sectile (geometric patterns of large colored marble tiles in different shapes and sizes). However, many of the tiles are replacements; it is estimated about half. [1]

There used to be a total of fourteen side altars and chapels in here, one in each of the aedicules and exedrae, but two were ejected to make way for royal tombs. [1]

The small niches in the exedrae obviously once held statues of gods. After the 18th century restoration some of them held memorial portrait busts, mainly of the members of the Virtuosi. This tradition started in 1766, but was brought to an end by Pope Pius VII who moved the busts to the Protomoteca Capitolina, which he had founded in 1820. [1]

Above the first entablature, the attic contains large rectangular apertures lighting the internal corridor within the wall. The 18th century restoration left these with small floating triangular pediments, and separated them by blank square panels with decorated stucco frames. The original décor was known from illustrations, and has been replicated in a section of the attic. It can be seen that the original scheme was much more fiddly, involving an attic plinth on which little porphyry Corinthian pilasters in shallow relief stood, four between each aperture. The wall surface between these had polychrome marble cladding similar in style to that around the aedicules. [1]

A modern set of Stations of the Cross in bronze has been provided, sculpted by **Federico Severino**. [1]

Dome

The magnificent dome, a monument to the Roman invention of concrete and architectural skill, creates a unique sense of space in the building, and the simple decorative scheme emphasizes the architectural perfection. This coffered dome has a diameter of 43.30 meters (142 ft), exactly the same as the height from the floor to the middle of the dome. It is the largest unreinforced masonry dome ever built, in fact wider than the dome at St Peter's, but not as big in volume. No matter what its size is relative to other domes, the fact that it covers the entire hall gives it more impact than domes that cover only part of a larger building. [1]

The cassettes of the coffering number twenty-eight in each of five concentric circles, obviously getting smaller as they approach the oculus. Each cassette or coffer recesses in three steps, and the central panel is thought to have been originally painted blue with a bronze star. [1] [4]

The oculus, which provides the only natural light and air for the church once the door is shut, is 30 ft in diameter. [1] [4]

Floor

The floor can be regarded as original; although heavily restored in 1873, the design and materials were faithfully reproduced. It has 89 squares, ordered from the entrance in one row of three, one of seven, two of nine, three of eleven, two of nine, one of seven and one of three. The pattern consists of alternate smaller squares and circles within the squares, focusing on a circle right at the center under the oculus which is actually a drain for rainwater falling down. The floor slopes slightly towards this so as to avoid puddles. The stones used are granite, porphyry, pavonazzetto and giallo antico to match the wall claddings and columns. [1]

Sanctuary

The high altar was designed and built by **Alessandro Specchi**, beginning in 1715 during the pontificate of Clement XI (1700-21). It was dedicated exactly ten years later by Benedict XIII (1724-30). In 1934 the altar was dismantled and rebuilt so that it hardly reflects Specchi's design. [2] [b]

In the apse, a copy of an icon of the *Madonna* in the Byzantine style is enshrined. The original, now

in the Chapel of the Canons, has been dated to the 13th century, although tradition claims that it is much older. To the right side of the altar a copy of the icon is displayed. The choir was added in 1840, and was designed by **Luigi Poletti**. [1] [2]

The apse conche has a stucco gold and blue coffering pattern.

In May 2018, a new gilded bronze high altar "pro populo" was consecrated. The sculptor is **Federico Severino**. This is a very impressive high-relief work, depicting a scene from the *Book of Revelation* featuring the *Lamb of God* and the *Martyrs Clothed in White*. The work matches the Stations of the Cross and the ambo, by the same artist. [1]

The altars and chapels are described in a clockwise order, starting from the left of the entrance.

Left side of the hall

Altar of the Assumption

The first aedicule altar (5) on the left hand side had a canvas by **Andrea Camassei**, the *Assumption* from 1638. This is now replaced by a copy for security. The original is now in the sacristy. [1] [2]

Chapel of St Joseph

The first exedra chapel (6) on the left is the Chapel of St Joseph in the Holy Land. The altar in the chapel is covered with false marble. On the altar is a statue of *St Joseph and the Holy Child*, by **Vincenzo de' Rossi**. To the sides are paintings by **Francesco Cozza**, one of the Virtuosi: *The Adoration of the Shepherds* on the left side and *The Adoration of the Magi* on the right. Both were painted in 1661. The stucco relief on the left side, the *Dream of St Joseph*, is by **Paolo Benaglia** (1728), and the one on the right side, *Rest During the Flight from Egypt*, is by **Carlo Monaldi** (1728). Above the altarpiece and paintings are several 17th century canvases, from left to right:

The Cuman Sibyl by **Ludovico Gimignani** (1674);

Moses by **Francesco Rosa** (1674);

The Eternal Father by **Giovanni Peruzzini**;

David by **Luigi Garzi** (1674), and finally

The Eritrean Sibyl (1674) by **Giovanni Andrea Carlone**.

On either side of the chapel are the tombs of painter Perin Del Vaga (1501-47), painter Taddeo Zuccari (1529-66), architect/sculptor Flaminio Vacca (1538-1605), and composer Archangelo Corelli (1633-1713). [1] [2]

This is the chapel of the Confraternity of the Virtuosi at the Pantheon. This refers to the confraternity of artists and musicians that was formed here by a 16th century Canon of the church, Desiderio da Segni, to ensure that worship was maintained in the chapel. The first members were, among others, Antonio da Sangallo the younger, Jacopo Meneghino, Giovanni Mangone, Taddeo Zuccari, Domenico Beccafumi and Flaminio Vacca. The confraternity continued to draw members from the elite of Rome's artists and architects, and among later members we find Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Pietro da Cortona, Alessandro Algardi and many others. The institution still exists, and is now called the *Accademia Ponteficia di Belle Arti* (The Pontifical Academy of Fine Arts), based in the palace of the Cancelleria. [1]

Altar of St Agnes

The second aedicule altar (7) on the left has a statue of *St Agnes*, by **Vincenzo Felice** (1715). The bust on the left is a portrait of Baldassare Peruzzi, derived from a plaster portrait by **Giovanni Duprè**. [1] [2]

Tomb of King Umberto I

The tomb (8) of King Umberto I and his wife Margherita di Savoia is in the second exedra chapel on the left, opposite that of his father. The chapel was originally dedicated to St Michael the Archangel, and then to St Thomas the Apostle. The present design is by **Giuseppe Sacconi**, completed after his death by **Eduardo Rubino**. Tomb of Margaret of Savoy is by **Guido Cirilli**.

The tomb consists of a slab of alabaster mounted in gilded bronze. On either side are bronze relief allegorical representations of *Generosity*, by **Eugenio Maccagnani**, and *Munificence*, by **Arnaldo Zocchi**, both from 1910. The royal tombs are maintained by the "National Institute of Honor Guards to the Royal Tombs," founded in 1878. They also organize picket guards at the tombs. The altar with the royal arms is by **Cirilli**. [1] [2]

Altar of Our Lady of the Rock, and Tomb of Raphael

The third aedicule altar (9) holds the mortal remains - his Ossa et cineres, "Bones and ashes", as the inscription on the sarcophagus says - of the great artist Raphael. His fiancée, Maria Bibbiena is buried to the right of his sarcophagus; she died before they could marry. [1]

After Raphael's death, in 1520, the artist's body was immediately transferred here. In 1833, during the papacy of Gregory XVI, the grave was opened to verify the body's existence. The ancient marble sarcophagus was given by Pope Gregory XVI after the body was discovered, and its inscription reads ILLE HIC EST RAPHAEL TIMUIT QUO SOSPITE VINCI / RERUM MAGNA PARENS ET MORIENTE MORI, meaning "Here lies Raphael, by whom the mother of all things (Nature) feared to be overcome whilst he was living, and whilst he was dying, herself to die". The epigraph was written by **Pietro Bembo**. The present arrangement is from 1811, designed by **Antonio Muñoz**. The bust of Raphael is by **Giuseppe de Fabris**, made in 1833. The inscription on the right commemorates the painter Annibalde Carracci. [1] [2] [a]

Soon other artists in Rome began to emulate Raphael's example. Baldassare Peruzzi, Raphael's close associate, requested and received inhumation in the same tabernacle after his death in 1536. Others then followed suit. In the following years a series of notable artists were interred at the Pantheon, including Perino del Vaga in 1547, Bartolomeo Baronino in 1554, Taddeo Zuccari in 1566, and Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola in 1573. These later individuals received permission for burial alongside Raphael by joining the confraternity of the Compagnia di San Giuseppe di Terrasanta, better known as the Virtuosi del Pantheon, granted exclusive rights to authorize inhumations at the ancient landmark by Paul III in 1545. Raphael's tomb soon transformed the obscure church of Santa Maria Rotonda into the most desirable place in Rome for an artist to receive burial. [e]

Above the tomb is the statue known as the *Madonna del Sasso*, (*Madonna of the Rock*) named so because she rests one foot on a boulder. It was commissioned by Raphael and made by his pupil **Lorenzetto**, assisted by **Raffaello da Montelupo**, in 1524. The two plaques commemorate Maria Bibbiena and Annibala Carracci, who are buried nearby. [1] [2]

Chapel of the Crucifixion

In the third exedra (10) on the left is the Chapel of the Crucifixion, where you can see the Roman brick wall with three niches for statues of minor gods. Flanking the space are two massive bronze candelabra. The wooden crucifix on the altar is from the 15th century. On the left wall is a canvas by **Pietro Labruzzi**, *Descent of the Holy Ghost*, from 1790. On the right side is the low relief *Cardinal Consalvi presents to Pope Pius VII the five provinces restored to the Holy See*, made by the Danish sculptor **Bertel Thorvaldsen** in 1824. The bust is a portrait of Cardinal Agostino Rivarola (died 1842, but buried in the church of San Marcello). [1] [2] [3]

Altar of St Rasio

The fourth and final aedicule altar (11) on the left side has a statue of *St Rasio*, made in 1727 by **Francesco Moderati**. [a] [b]

Right side of the hall

Altar of St Anastasius

The first niche to the right of the sanctuary (12) has a statue of *St Anastasius* by **Bernardino Cametti**, made in 1725. [a] [b]

Chapel of Our Lady of the Railing

In the third exedra chapel (13) on the right side is a 15th century painting of the Umbrian school, *The Madonna of Mercy between St Francis and St John the Baptist*. It is also known as the *Madonna of the*

Railing, because it originally hung in the niche on the left-hand side of the portico, where it was protected by a railing. It was moved to the Chapel of the Annunciation, and then to its present position some time after 1837. The bronze epigram commemorates Pope Clement XI's restoration of the sanctuary. [1]

On the right wall is the canvas *Emperor Focas presenting the Pantheon to Pope Boniface IV*, painted in 1750 by an unknown artist. Three memorial plaques are placed in the floor, the one commemorating a Gismonda written in the vernacular. [1]

Altar of St Anne

The third aedicule altar (14) has a sculpture by **Lorenzo Ottoni** of *St Anne and the Blessed Virgin*. [2]

Tomb of King Victor Emmanuel II

In the second exedra chapel (15) is the tomb of King Victor Emmanuel II (died 1878). It was originally dedicated to the Holy Spirit. The tomb was designed by **Manfredo Manfredi** and executed by **Adolfo Laurenti**, and work started in 1885. The tomb consists of a large bronze plaque surmounted by a Roman eagle and the arms of the house of Savoy. The golden lamp above the tomb burns in honor of Victor Emmanuel III, who died in exile in Alexandria, Egypt in 1947. [1] [2]

Altar of Our Lady, Queen of Heaven

The second aedicule altar (16) on the right has a fragment of a 15th century fresco of the Tuscan school, *The Coronation of the Virgin*. [1]

Chapel of the Annunciation

The first exedra chapel in the right side (17) has a fresco of the *Annunciation* attributed to the workshop of **Melozzo da Forlì**. When this was a parish church the baptismal font was placed here. On the left side is a canvas by **Clemente Majoli**, *St Lawrence and St Agnes*, painted 1645-1650. On the right side is the canvas from 1633, *The Incredulity of St Thomas*, by **Pietro Paolo Bonzi**. [1] [2] [4] [a]

Altar of St Nicholas

The first aedicule altar (18) on the right is dedicated to St Nicholas of Bari, and has as its altarpiece a canvas depicting *The Madonna of the Girdle and St Nicholas*, painted in 1686 by an unknown artist.

Special notes

Although it is a church, this is hardly noticed by most visitors. Masses are held on special occasions, such as the Feasts of the Ascension and Assumption which were traditionally celebrated with great solemnity here, but most of the time it is like any other ancient monument. If you go here early in the morning, just after it has opened, you'll be able to enjoy it without the background noise of hundreds of tourists - this makes it easier to appreciate that it is in fact a church.

Artists and Architects:

Adolfo [Laurenti](#) (1858-1944), Italian sculptor
Alessandro [Specchi](#) (1668-1729), Italian architect and engraver
Andrea [Camassei](#) (1602-1649), Italian Baroque painter and engraver
Antonio [Muñoz](#) (1884-1960), Italian architect
[Apollodorus](#) of Damascus (2nd cent AD), Greek architect
Arnaldo [Zocchi](#) (1862-1940), Italian sculptor
Bernardino [Cametti](#) (1682-1736), Italian sculptor of the late [Baroque](#)
Bertel [Thorvaldsen](#) (1770-1844), Danish sculptor
Carlo [Monaldi](#) (1683-1760), Italian sculptor (and also see [here](#))
Clemente [Majoli](#) (Maioli)(17th cent), Italian painter
Eduardo [Rubino](#) (1871-1954), Italian sculptor
Eugenio [Maccagnani](#) (1852-1930), Italian sculptor
Francesco [Cozza](#) (1605-1682), Italian painter of the Baroque period
Francesco Moderati (1680-1721), Italian sculptor

Francesco [Rosa](#) (1638-1687), Italian painter from Genova
 Federico [Severino](#) (b. 1953), Italian sculptor
 Giacomo [della Porta](#) (c.1533-1602), Italian sculptor and architect
 Gian Lorenzo [Bernini](#) (1598-1680), Italian Baroque sculptor and architect [also see [here](#)]
 Giovanni Andrea [Carlone](#) (1639-1697), Swiss-Italian painter
 Giovanni [Duprè](#) (1817-1882), Italian sculptor
 Giovanni [Peruzzini](#) (1629-1694), Italian painter of the Baroque
 Giuseppe [de Fabris](#) (1790-1860), Italian sculptor of the Neoclassic period
 Giuseppe [Sacconi](#) (1854-1905), Italian architect
 Guido [Cirilli](#) (1871-1954), Italian architect
 Lorenzo Lotti [aka [Lorenzetto](#)] (1490-1541), Italian Renaissance sculptor
 Luigi [Garzi](#) (1638-1721), Italian painter of the Baroque period
 Luigi [Poletti](#) (1792-1869), Italian neoclassical architect
 Ludovico [Gimignani](#) (1643-1697), Italian painter during the Baroque period
 Manfredo [Manfredi](#) (1859-1927), Italian architect
 Melozzo [da Forlì](#) (1438-1494), Italian Renaissance painter
 Raffaello [da Montelupo](#) (1505-1567), Italian Renaissance sculptor and architect
 Paolo [Benaglia](#) (d. 1739), Italian sculptor
 Paolo [Posi](#) (1708-1776), Italian architect from Siena
 Pietro [Bembo](#) (1470-1547) Italian scholar, poet, literary theorist, member of the Knights
 Hospitalier and a cardinal
 Pietro [Labruzzi](#) (1739-1805), Italian painter
 Pietro Paolo [Bonzi](#) [aka *il Gobbo dei Carracci* (hunchback of the Carracci)] (1576-1636), Italian
 painter
 Vincenzo [de' Rossi](#) (1525-1587), Italian sculptor from Fiesole
 Vincenzo [Felice](#) (1657-1715), Italian sculptor

Burials:

[Raffaello Santi](#) (1483-1520)
 <Renaissance painter>
[Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola](#) (1507-1573)
 < Italian Mannerist architect>
[Arcangelo Corelli](#) (1653-1713)
 <Composer and violinist>
[Victor Emmanuel II Savoy](#) (1820-1878)
 <Italian Monarch. The Royal House of Savoy. First King of united Italy>
[Umberto I Savoy](#) (1844-1900)
 <Italian Monarch. The Royal House of Savoy. Second King of united Italy>
[Margherita di Savoia](#)
 <wife of King Umberto I>
 Maria Bibbiena
 <Raphael fiancée>
 Dr. Gibbs (d. 1677)
 <Scottish physician and poet>
[Annibale Carracci](#)
 <Italian painter of the Baroque from Bologna>
[Flaminio Vacco](#) (1538-1605)
 <Italian sculptor/architect>
[Taddeo Zucceri](#) (1529-66)
 <Italian painter of the Roman mannerist school>
[Perin Del Vaga](#) (1501-47)
 <Italian painter and draughtsman of the Late Renaissance/Mannerism>
[Baldassare Croce](#) (1558-1628)
 <Italian painter of the late-Mannerist period>
[Bartolomeo Baronino](#) (1511-1554)
 <Italian architect>

Location:

Address: Piazza della Rotonda, 00186 Roma

Coordinates: [41°53'55"N 12°28'36"E](#)

Links and References

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3. [Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church](#)
4. [Wikiwand.com](#)
5. [SmartHistory web site](#)
6. [Piazza della Rotonda in from Wikipedia](#)
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[Wikimedia Commons photo catalogue](#)

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