

Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri



Our Lady of the Angels and the Martyrs usually known only as **Santa Maria degli Angeli**, is a titular basilica church in Rome, built inside the *frigidarium* of the Baths of Diocletian, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to the angels and to the Christian slaves who died building the Baths of Diocletian. It is on the Piazza della Repubblica, and near the Termini train station. The church is also a personal monument of Pope Pius IV, whose tomb is in the apsidal tribune.

History

The church was built in the remains of the Baths of Diocletian by orders of Pope Pius IV (1559-1565), after a Sicilian priest, Fr. [Antonio Del Duca](#), had a vision of angels in the ruins in 1541. The church was born as a result of the papal bull of Pope Pius IV of 27 July 1561 and took the name of “Beatissimae Virgini et omnium Angelorum et Martyrum”. **Michelangelo** designed it and started the work in 1563, and after his death in 1564 (incidentally the same year that Fr. Del Duca died) his design was completed by **Jacopo Del Duca**, nephew of Fr. Antonio and pupil of Michelangelo. Although the interior has changed considerably and the floor has been raised a few feet, this is one of the places where you can best appreciate the size and splendor of the imperial baths. ⁽¹⁾ ⁽²⁾ ^(a)

The church was granted to the Carthusians, who moved from their former monastery at Santa Croce in Gerusalemme. They had a monastery built adjacent to it, possibly to a design by Michelangelo. The great cloister, around which are arranged the individual cells of the hermit monks, was built to the north-east of the church and did not respect the surviving ruins. To the south of this, next to the church, was built a much smaller cloister which also survives. However, adjacent ancient chambers to the north-east and the north-west of the eastern palaestra were incorporated into the monastic complex and are now part of the [Museo Nazionale Romano](#). ⁽¹⁾

In 1702, Pope Clement XI inaugurated a sundial on the floor of the church, the so-called Linea Clementina. It was designed by **Francesco Bianchini**, and its function was to check the validity of the new Gregorian calendar. This was especially important as regards the date of the Spring Equinox, since the date of Easter depended on it. ⁽¹⁾

In 1749, major alterations were carried out by **Luigi Vanvitelli** in preparation for the Holy Year of 1750. Beforehand, the main entrance was on the short south-east side, which was hence the nave. Vanvitelli transferred the entrance to the long south-west side, turning the subsidiary side entrance into the main entrance. The two entrance vestibules were turned into side chapels (this part of the

scheme slightly pre-dated Vanvitelli's work), and the entrances blocked up by the new chapel altars. He then demolished Michelangelo's blocking wall opposite the new main entrance, and made a presbyterium out of the passageway to the nautilus. Finally, he knocked a hole in the ancient screen wall on the south-west side of the nautilus in order to add an apsidal choir which intruded into the nautilus and touched the small cloister. ⁽¹⁾

After the unification of Italy in 1870, the Carthusians were evicted from the buildings, which for some time was used as a military barracks. Then it housed the major collection of the Museo Nazionale Romano, but this has now been moved to the Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, leaving behind an enormous collection of epigraphs which is housed in modern halls as part of the Museo Nazionale delle Terme. Visitors to this are also able to view the monastic cloisters. ⁽¹⁾

It was eventually handed over to the Franciscan Order of Minims, and finally to the diocesan clergy. ⁽¹⁾ ⁽²⁾

In 1896, the wedding of the Prince of Naples, later King [Victor Emmanuel III](#), raised the status of the church. It has since been the scene of religious ceremonies promoted by the Italian State. The church became titular in 1906, and was given the status of minor basilica by Pope Benedict XV in 1920. Later it had a restoration which entailed the demolition of Vanvitelli's façade in order to reveal the surviving fabric of the caldarium. Today it is served by diocesan clergy, and remains a parish church. ⁽¹⁾ ^(a)

A very good organ was inaugurated in 2000, and there is a noted schola cantorum or choir. ⁽¹⁾

Exterior

The exterior is unique for a church, as the outer walls of the Baths of Diocletian are partially preserved. The 16th century façade was demolished in the 20th century to expose these walls.

If you walk over to Via Parigi, you can look down into the remains of the *Certosa*, the monastery where you can see cells used by Carthusian hermits when Santa Maria degli Angeli was part of their chapterhouse. The Museo Nazionale delle Terme, an excellent archaeological museum, is located in another part of the baths.

There is a campanile, not easily visible from the street. It is just to the left of the far left hand corner of the main apse, and has an unusual L-shaped plan formed of two slab walls with Baroque scrolling on top. Each wall has two round-headed bell apertures, one above the other. ⁽¹⁾

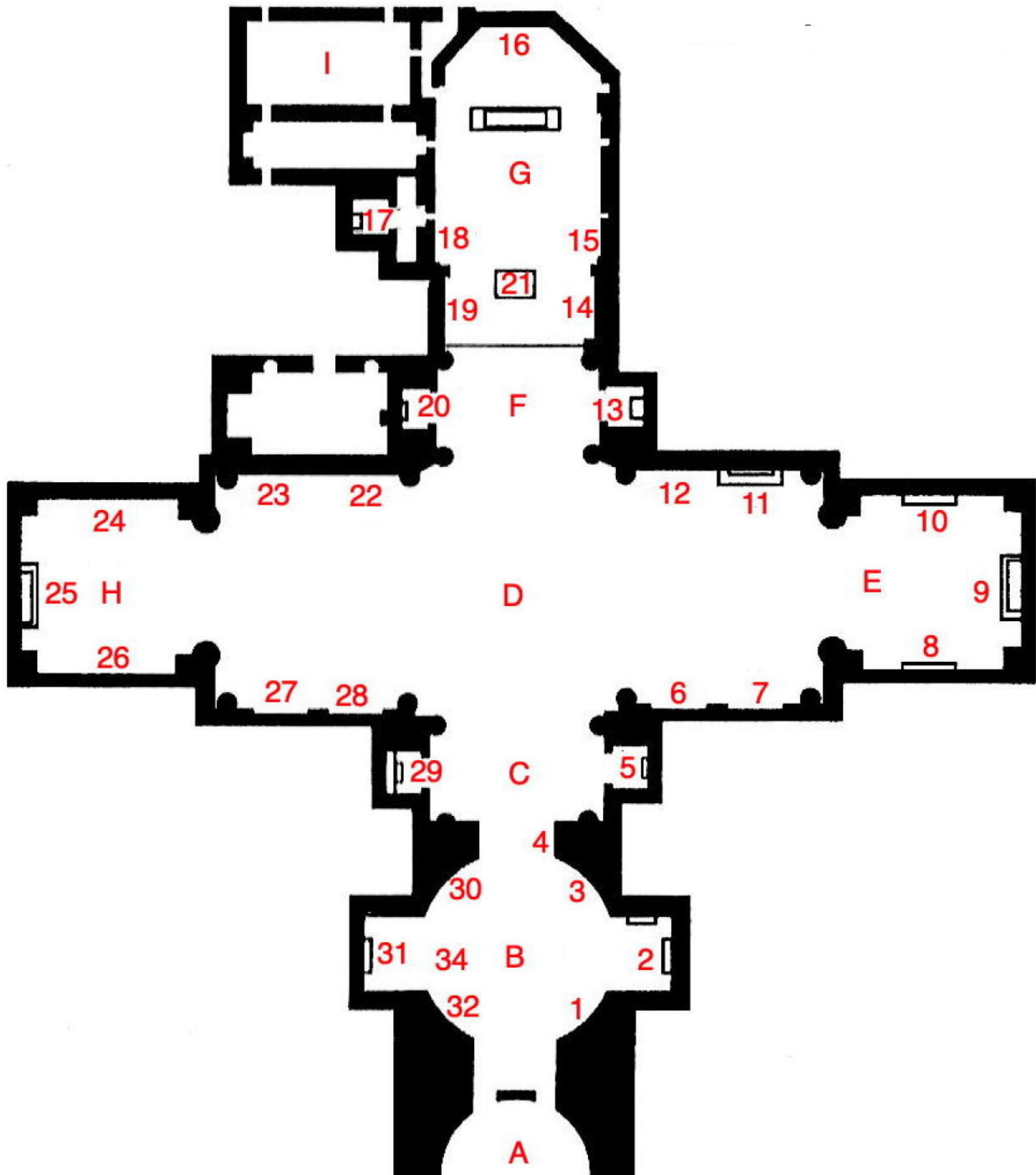
Façade (A)

What now passes for the façade is a concave fragment of wall of the former caldarium. A modern skin of brick covers the central part of this, and this contains two identical round-headed portals separated by a round-headed niche which looks as if it should have a statue but only contains a worn antique column capital. The church's name is above the portal. ⁽¹⁾

Bronze doors

The two bronze entrance doors are important works of modern sculpture by the Polish artist **Igor Mitoraj**, and were completed in 2005. The doors were mounted on the entrance, replacing wooden doors, on February 28, 2006. The left hand one depicts the *Resurrection*, and the right hand one the *Annunciation*. Most of the surfaces of both doors are blank, showing textured and patinated metal, but out of the surfaces emerge dismembered figures and heads as if they were floating in water. The three figures of Christ, Our Lady and the Archangel Gabriel have arms amputated, and this detail is an allusion to the damaged Classical statues that used to be displayed in the adjacent museum. The figure of Christ is further divided into four by two slashes in the form of a cross. On the insides of both doors are large figures of Archangels. ⁽¹⁾ ^(a)

Plan



Interior

Circular Vestibule (B)

The first room you enter was a passage hall in the Baths, between the calidarium (hot bath, now lost) and the tepidarium (luke-warm bath). The latter is now the vestibule, although Michelangelo had it as a side annexe with a subsidiary entrance. It is circular, with a projecting chapel on each side. To the left is the Chapel of St Mary Magdalene, which is also the baptistery, and to the right is the

The dome is coffered with rosettes, and its oculus contains an important modern piece of stained glass entitled *Light and Time* by **Narcissus Quagliata** and inaugurated in 1999 (33). Both Michelangelo and Vanvitelli had installed lanterns for the dome, but both failed structurally and the 20th century skylight that replaced it also let in the rain. The present work has the shape of a segment of a sphere about 3 metres across, and has a sunburst motif in white, black, yellow and several shades of blue. The design is divided into eight sectors by black radii, and these radiate from a central yellow disc representing the sun through a white zone to an outer blue zone. The glasswork contains three prismatic lenses designed by the Mexican astronomer **Salvador Cuervas**, and these focus an image of the sun on the floor below on the days of the equinoxes (together) and the two solstices. The glass cupola is not attached to the ancient roof fabric, but rests on three gilded steel spheres and thus leaves a narrow gap all round for ventilation. (1)

Michelangelo added four pedimented niches to the walls between the chapels and main passageways, and these are all now occupied by funerary monuments. The description below is anticlockwise from the entrance. (1)

The first niche. (1) The artist Carlo Maratta (1625-1713), responsible for the Chapel of St Bruno and the painting of "The Baptism of Jesus", is buried here. He designed the funerary monument himself, and it may have been erected by **Francesco Maratti**, his son. Maratti definitely made the marble bust on the monument, which is just to the right as you enter the vestibule. (1) (2) (a)

The Chapel of the Crucifix (2) was built in 1575 for the Roman banker Girolamo Ceuli. The altarpiece, depicting *The Crucifixion*, is attributed to **Giacomo della Rocca**, a pupil of Daniele da Volterra. The same artist decorated parts of the walls and vault with frecoes, which unfortunately were badly restored in 1838. The sculptor Pietro Tenerani (died 1838) is buried on the left side of the chapel. The monument is a 'gabled niches,' supported by Ionic columns and with a bust of the artist, and a door which symbolizes the entrance to Hades, the Land of the Dead. A small funerary monument to his wife, Lilla Montebbio, is placed in the opposite wall. (1) (4) (a)

The second niche. The tomb of Cardinal Francesco Alciati (3) (died 1580) was erected in 1583 and is to the left of the Chapel of the Crucifix. It was made by **Giovanni Battista della Porta**. Cardinal Alciati was a scholar and jurist of Milan, and protector of the Carthusian order. The monks honored him by burying him in their Roman church even though he was from Milan. The memorial consists of a sarcophagus resting on a pedestal with a bust and a coat of arms in the center, the whole is supported by four pilasters. (1) (2) (5) (a)

The third niche. The tomb of Cardinal Pietro Paulo Parisi (30) was erected in 1604 by the Cardinal's nephew, Bishop Flaminio of Bitonto. (1)

The Magdalene Chapel (31) is the baptistery of the church. It was constructed in 1579, and paid for by Consalvo Alvaro di Giovanni. The altarpiece with "*Noli Me Tangere*" is attributed by most scholars to Arrigo Fiammingo. It depicts the meeting of Jesus Christ and St Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection, when he asked her not to touch him ("*Noli me tangere*"; John 20,1). (1) (a)

The fourth niche. (32) The artist Salvator Rosa (1615-1673) is interred in a monument constructed by his son in 1673 and sculpted by **Bernardino Fioriti**. The monument depicts the painter coming out of the coffin placed on a base on which there are two putti symbolizing painting and poetry (1) (2) (a)

In general, the background decorative elements of the vestibule and passageways are by **Vanvitelli**. (1)

In 2000 a new bronze sculpture by **Ernesto Lamagna** was placed in the vestibule. It depicts the *Angel of Light*, (34) and is described as "futuristic Baroque". A rather etiolated, insectile angel in patinated bronze is shown flying over a black stone pyramid; the artist used corrosive acids to produce the patina. He was inspired by the practice of Michelangelo of burying his bronze sculpture in fresh excreta and leaving them to stew for months, in order to have them ending up looking antique and

hence having added value. It is the last Angel to be added to the Basilica. (1) (a)

Passage (pronaos) from vestibule (C)

In Michelangelo's design, this was the right arm of the transept. It was rearranged by Vanvitelli, who made an opening with four columns in false granite. On one wall is the painting *The Banishment from Earthly Paradise* by Francesco Trevisani. This is the last painting made by the artist, who died in 1746. The roof has a short and shallow barrel vault, which looks as if it is coffered in octagons and small squares, with rosettes. (1)

The holy water font on the right, in the shape of a beautiful angel, is attributed to Giambattista Rossi, a pupil of Bernini. The matching one on the left is by Vanvitelli, of course. It was provided when the main entrance was moved to here.

There is a statue (4) of *St Bruno of Cologne* (1035-1101), founder of the Carthusians. It was made by Jean Antoine Houdon between 1766 and 1768. The saint is depicted with his habit, his arms folded and his head bowed in reflective pose. Pope Clement XIV is reputed to have said that the statue was so lifelike that it would have spoken if the order had not forbidden it (the Carthusians take a vow of silence). His head is bowed in humility and thoughtfulness, and the statue is placed so that the saint is turned towards the center of the apse. (1) (2) (a)

The Chapel of St Brunone (5) was built in 1620 for the Polish Monsignor Bartolomeo Puvinski. The altarpiece, by an unknown artist, depicts the saint. Vanvitelli added the monumental entrance, imitating the style of Michelangelo. (1) (a)

The Chapel of St Peter (29) (the full dedication is to God the Father and St Peter) was constructed in 1635 at the expense of Pietro Alfonso Avignonese. The façade is by Vanvitelli again. The altarpiece is *The Delivery of the Keys* by Girolamo Muziano, and is an extremely fine work as is the altar frontal in pietra dura. He is also thought to be responsible for the fresco on the vault, showing *God the Father*. On the left wall is a painting *St Peter Freed by an Angel*, and on the right wall *Sts Peter and Paul*; both of these are by Marco Carloni, who was a local Roman artist of the 18th century. (1) (a)

In the center of the chapel is a modern sculpture of the *Head of John the Baptist* in Carrara marble by Igor Mitoraj. Donated by the artist, this is a naturalistic neo-Classical work showing the saint's head after his beheading. (1) (2) (a)

Transept – general (D)

The transept is located in the tepidarium (luke-warm bath) of the Baths of Diocletian. It was first adapted by Michelangelo, who found it with its ancient vault substantially intact, and then altered by Del Duca and Vanvitelli. The ancient cross vault is 29 metres high. The eight original granite Corinthian columns are 17.14 metres high, including bases and capitals, and have a diameter of 1.62 metres. They originally had plinths 2 metres high, but these were covered over when Michelangelo raised the floor level. Vanvitelli extended the entablature above these ancient columns to run all round the pronaos just described, and also the corresponding pronaos of the presbyterium. To support the entablature in these two pronaotes, he added eight further columns (four in each place) which look like granite but are imitations in brick covered with stucco. (The granite columns are cold to the touch.) (1)

The walls have pilasters in imitation red marble, a matching red frieze in the entablature, and enormous round-headed panels. These house eight large paintings most of which were originally in San Pietro in Vaticano, and were moved here in the 18th century. There is a large three-light window over each of the two triumphal arches into the end chapels, and these arches themselves have shallow arcs. They are matched by the arches into the entrance pronaos and the presbyterium pronaos, which are the ends of their barrel vaults. Over the two latter are another two three-light windows, and a further pair of single-light windows flank each one of these. The three-light window over the entrance archway is decorated with volutes which incurve attractively at the bottom, and the one over the presbyterium pronaos has angels sitting on the arc. All this decoration is by Vanvitelli.

The floor was laid in the 18th century by Giuseppe Barbieri.

Meridian Line

At the beginning of the 18th century, Pope Clement XI commissioned the astronomer, mathematician, archaeologist, historian and philosopher **Francesco Bianchini** to build a meridian line, a sort of sundial, within the basilica. Completed in 1702 with the assistance of the astronomer **Giacomo Filippo Maraldi**, the object had a threefold purpose: the pope wanted to check the accuracy of the Gregorian reformation of the calendar, to produce a tool to exactly predict Easter, and, not least, to give Rome a meridian line as important as the one Giovanni Domenico Cassini had recently built in Bologna's cathedral, San Petronio.

Bianchini's sundial was built along the meridian that crosses Rome, at longitude 12° 30' E. At solar noon, which varies according to the equation of time from around 10:54 a.m. UTC in late October to 11:24 a.m. UTC in February (11:54 to 12:24 CET), the sun shines through a small hole in the wall to cast its light on this line each day. At the summer solstice, the sun appears highest, and its ray hits the meridian line at the point closest to the wall. At the winter solstice, the ray crosses the line at the point furthest from the wall. At either equinox, the sun touches the line between these two extremes. The longer the meridian line, the more accurately the observer can calculate the length of the year. The meridian line built here is 45 meters long and is composed of bronze, enclosed in yellow-white marble.

In addition to the line to mark the sun, **Bianchini** also added holes in the ceiling to mark the passage of stars. Inside the dark interior, Polaris, Arcturus and Sirius are visible through these holes, even in bright midday. The meridian line was restored in 2002 for the tricentenary of its construction, and it is still operational today. A recent memorial stone indicated that the sundial was used as a solar clock until 1846 when it was replaced by the canon being fired at noon from the Janiculum.

Transept - left arm

Three of the great paintings from San Pietro in Vaticano are here. They are taken in anticlockwise order, right to left when facing the chapel.

The Immaculate (22) was painted by **Pietro Bianchi** in the early 18th century. It was made for the altar in the Chapel of the Choir in San Pietro in Vaticano, and brought here after a mosaic replica was provided. In it, Our Lady surrounded by angels and putti is being pointed out to SS Francis of Assisi and Anthony of Padua by St Gregory Nazianzen. ⁽¹⁾

Placido Costanzi painted *The Resurrection of Tabitha* (23). It was originally made for the altar of Tabitha in San Pietro in Vaticano, where again it has been replaced by a mosaic copy. The painting shows Tabitha of Joppa being brought back for the dead by St Peter (Acts 9, 36). ⁽¹⁾

The Fall of Simon the Sorcerer (27) by **Pompeo Batoni**, painted in 1765, is one of two paintings with this subject in the church. The painting depicts the legend of Simon Magus, who challenged SS Peter and Paul to a contest at Rome to determine who was more powerful. He levitated in front of them, asking them to demonstrate whether their god was as strong in power. The Apostles prayed, and Simon plummeted to his death. The story derives from an apocryphal work called the Acta of SS Peter and Paul. This painting did not come from San Pietro in Vaticano. ⁽¹⁾

The Mass of St Basil (28) by **Pierre-Hubert Subleyras** was painted in 1745 for the altar of St Basil in San Pietro in Vaticano. The Eastern Doctor of the Church is shown celebrating Mass before Emperor Valens, who was an Arian heretic. The saint's devotion was so strong that the Emperor fainted, and later converted to Orthodox Christianity. The event is unhistorical, although it is true that St Basil had such a strong power-base in what is now central Turkey that the emperor did not dare to molest him. ⁽¹⁾

Chapel of St Bruno (H)

The new Chapel of St Bruno was constructed as part of the restoration works for the 1700 Jubilee, and has a roof lower than that of the main transept. The prior of the Carthusian charterhouse, Fr. G.M. Roccaforte, had decided to turn the former back entrance hall of the church into a chapel dedicated to the founder of his order which was much larger and grander than the one already existing. It was designed by **Carlo Maratta**, and apparently contains a magnificent altar canopy

supported by four columns of serpentine. This is a [trompe d'oeil](#), being merely painted on the wall, as are the apparent stucco decorations to each side. ⁽¹⁾

The altar itself was made from bits of an older altar, and was constructed by **Francesco Fontana** in 1864. It contains fine polychrome stonework. ⁽¹⁾

The altarpiece is *The Apparition of the Virgin Mary to St Bruno* (25) by **Giovanni Odazzi**. It was painted for the 1700 Jubilee, and shows the Blessed Virgin handing the Order's Rule to St Bruno. The vault was painted by **Andrea Procaccini** with figures of the *Evangelists*, while the rest of the decorations were painted by **Antonio Bicchierai**. The sculptures to the right of the altar depict *The Meditation* (1874) and *The Prayer* (1875), and are stucco copies of statues at the entrance to the Verano Cemetary near San Lorenzo fuori le Mura, by **Francesco Fabi-Altini**. The former statue used to be on the left hand side of the altar, but was moved when the organ was installed. ⁽¹⁾

On the right wall of the chapel is *The Baptism of Blood* (24), painted on boards by **Francesco Trevisani**. This is one of two paintings of the same subject that used to be a diptych, and refer to the Catholic belief that an unbaptised person who dies for the Faith is baptised through the shedding of his or her blood. When the organ was installed one of the pair was moved to a resources room located behind the right hand wall of the chapel; this space, not accessible directly from the church, used to be the Chapel of St Teresa of Avila. ⁽¹⁾

On the left wall on the chapel is now the monumental organ, built by Bartélémy Formentelli in the 1990's and inaugurated in 2000. It has 77 registers distributed on four keyboards, and is made using cherry, walnut and chestnut wood. There are 5400 hand-made pipes, and the instrument is claimed to be the only one in Europe demonstrating the consolidation of the French and Italian organ-building styles. It is often used for concerts, being one of the best in any parish church in Rome. ⁽¹⁾

Transept - right arm

The artworks are described in clockwise order, starting at the left-hand side when facing the chapel.

The Sermon of St Jerome (12), late 16th century, by **Girolamo Muziano** was left unfinished by the painter at his death in 1592. **Paul Brill** completed it by painting in the background. It was originally made for St Jerome's altar in San Pietro in Vaticano, Basilica but was moved here. ⁽¹⁾

Next is the tomb of General [Armando Diaz](#) (1861-1928) (11), an Italian hero of the First World War. This was made by **Antonio Muñoz** in 1920. The sarcophagus is of red granite from Aswan in Egypt, matching the ancient columns, and is placed in the transept floor. The monument itself rises above that. In the center is a dedication stele flanked by two slabs of African green marble with bronze decorations in the shape of swords with laurel crowns. ⁽¹⁾ ^(a)

Above the monument is a painting showing *A Miracle of St Peter* by **Francesco Mancini**. It was probably first placed in the Quirinal Palace, and shows the healing of a leper. A mosaic copy has been made for San Pietro in Vaticano. ⁽¹⁾

The 18th century painting *The Fall of Simon the Sorcerer* (7), by **Pierre-Charles Trémollière**, is a copy of a 16th century painting by **Francesco Vanni** now over the Altar of the Sacred Heart in San Pietro in Vaticano.

The Crucifixion of St Peter (6) is an oil on canvas painting by **Niccolò Ricciolini**, and is a copy of a work by **Il Passignano**. It comes from San Pietro in Vaticano. ⁽¹⁾ ⁽⁴⁾

Chapel of Bl Niccolò Albergati

The Chapel of Blessed [Niccolò Albergati](#) (E) has the same plan as that of St Bruno on the opposite side, and again is part of the [Vanvitelli](#) restoration. It was designed by **Clemente Orlandi** in 1746 and formed out of the church's former main entrance vestibule. The dedication is to a Carthusian monk who had become a cardinal, and an important Church diplomat in the early 15th century. He had been beatified by Pope Benedict XIV in 1744. ⁽¹⁾

The trompe l'oeil painting of a richly decorated altar canopy matches that in the chapel of St Bruno opposite. The cross vault was decorated by **Antonio Bicchierai** and **Giovanni Mozetti**. In the middle of the vault is the *Holy Spirit* with cherubs, and in the panels are the four Western Doctors of the Church: *Sts Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose and Gregory*. The altarpiece depicts *A Miracle by Blessed Niccolò Albergati* (9), and was painted by **Ercole Graziani** in about 1746. Flanking the altar are two statues by the German sculptor **Friedrich Pettrich**, made in 1834, depicting *The Angels of Peace and Justice*. (1)

The side walls of the chapel have two interesting tombs. The tomb of **Vittorio Emanuele Orlando** (8), on the right side, was made in 1935 by **Pietro Canonica**, a Piemontese sculptor. Orlando is known in Italy as "Presidente della Vittoria" (President of the Victory) in the First World War. The sarcophagus is in yellow Sienese marble with a bronze medallion. There is a relief on the Carrara marble base. An arch stretches above the sarcophagus, symbolizing fame and glory. (1)

Opposite that tomb is the one of Admiral **Paolo Thaon di Revel** (10), known as the "Duca del Mare" (Duke of the Sea). This too was made by **Canonica**, in 1948. The sarcophagus is made in the same type of stone, and the monument is likewise crowned with an arch. The shape is different however, as it is carved to resemble a rostrated ship, fitting for the Admiral. The base is in red Levantine and black Belgian stone. In the center of the base is a relief portrait in a clipeus. (1)

On the sides walls, above the funary monuments, are the two paintings *Baptism of Water* (10) and *Baptism of Desire* (8) by **Francesco Trevisani**, painted in the 18th century. The latter refers to a concept in the Catholic understanding of baptism; catechumens who die before they can be baptised are considered as being baptised through their desire for the Sacrament. (1)

Pronaos of the presbyterium (F)

This architectural space was the right arm of the transept in Michelangelo's design, and was decorated by Vanvitelli in the same way as the corresponding entrance pronaos opposite. Hence, it has four plastered brick columns looking like granite which support a continuation of the entablature of the main transept, and above which is a shallow and short barrel vault with false coffering. Also it has two flanking chapels, that of St Hyacinth on the right and the Saviour on the left. In ancient times these led to two rooms with cold plunge pools. (1)

The Chapel of St Hyacinth (13) (Cappella di San Giacinto), on the right, was founded by Alessandro Litta, a Milanese nobleman, in 1608. He had it dedicated to Our Lady and St Hyacinth. The altarpiece was painted by **Giovanni Baglione**. It depicts *The Virgin with the Child and Angels, Saint Raymond and Saint Hyacinth*. On the right side of the chapel is *Saints Valerian and Cecilia* and on the left *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata*, both by **Baglione**. He also painted the frescoes of *Our Lord and Angels* in the ceiling. (1)

The Chapel of the Savior (20), on the left, is the oldest in the church, founded in 1574 by the De Cinque family. Later, the Catalani family became patrons of the chapels, and a member of that family wrote a book about the construction of the church in the 17th century, providing important information about its history. On the right wall, a marble slab with an inscription informs us about an indulgence granted by Pope Gregory XIII to the followers of the Brotherhood of the Seven Angels. The altarpiece depicts *The Incarnation of Jesus and The Adoration of the Seven Angels*, by **Domenico da Modena**. It is surrounded by 24 small paintings of scenes from the life of Our Saviour, attributed to the 16th century artist **Hendrik van der Brock** (known in Italian as Arrigo Fiammingo). It is certain that van der Brock decorated the ceiling in the chapel with depictions of *Our Lord and St Michael the Archangel*. On the side walls are *The Souls of Purgatory* and *The Praying Pope*, painted in the 16th century by **Giulio Mazzone**. The characters in the latter painting are all connected to the founding of the church; we find Pope **Pius IV**, Cardinal Serbelloni, Emperor Charles V, Antonio Del Duca and many more. (1)

Sanctuary and apse (G)

The presbyterium is entered under a triumphal arch, formed because its barrel vault is lower than

that of its pronaos. Over the arch is an inscription Regina angelorum et martyrum (Queen of angels and martyrs), carved as if on a billowing banner -a very Baroque motif. This arch was previously occupied by a blocking wall built by Michelangelo, which was removed in the Vanvitelli restoration.

(1)

The sanctuary was redesigned by **Clemente Orlandi** on the occasion of the arrival of the paintings from San Pietro in Vaticano. He also designed the chapels at the ends of the transept. The choir stalls and decorations were made by Vanvitelli. He also altered the plan, so that the sanctuary got an polygonal shape, and he made a new high altar which was against the apse wall. The far end of the presbyterium forms a sanctuary which is approached by a flight of four steps. At the top of these is a balustraded screen in veined red marble, which is matched by the stonework of the altar itself just behind it. The apse has three windows separated by large decorative brackets. (1) (a)

The presbytery was altered again in 1867. The Carthusians brought the high altar forward, re-arranged the choir stalls behind it and provided them with an open metal screen in front decorated with the arms of the Carthusian Order, golden stars and harp-shaped gates. This was designed by **Angelo Santini**, with the ornaments designed by **Giuseppe della Riccia**. Just before the altar are two works by Innocenzo Orlandi, dated 1866: *The Angel with an Eagle* and the pulpit, which is placed upon a bull and a lion, the symbols of the four Evangelists. (1) (a)

A new bronze pulpit was inaugurated in 2009. It is an important work of art by **Giuseppe Gallo**, and depicts the crucified Christ taken down from the Cross. The whole pulpit is intended to symbolize the Tomb from which the Resurrection is announced. (1)

On the right wall of the presbyterium in front of the sanctuary is **Giovanni Francesco Romanelli's** *The Presentation of the Virgin Mary at the Temple* (14). The Baroque work recalls the episode when the Blessed Virgin, as a child, was taken to the temple by her parents, St Joachim and St Anne, to be consecrated to the Lord. Mary is shown climbing the steps alone to present herself to the high priest. (1)

Next to this and nearer the sanctuary is *The Martyrdom of St Sebastian* (15) by **Domenichino**. It was made for the altar of St Sebastian in San Pietro in Vaticano. The horseman on the right was damaged when it was transferred here. In the dramatic painting, Jesus Christ is welcoming the saint while an angel comes down with the palm and crown of martyrdom. (1)

Either side of the apse there are two doors surmounted by busts, one on each side of the choir stalls (the right hand one is now blocked). One bust is of *St Charles Borromeo* who briefly owned the ruins, and the other is of *Pope Pius IV*. (1)

In the apse itself are two memorial tablets, to Pope Pius IV and Cardinal Fabrizio Serbelloni, the first titular of the church. In the center in between these is the painting *The Virgin Mary on the Throne between Seven Angels*, (16) by an unknown artist (thought to be Lorenzo Lotto). It was commissioned by Fr Antonio Del Duca in Venice in 1543. The Blessed Virgin is portrayed with the Holy Child suckling at her breast (this representation is known as the Madonna of Milk). She is crowned by the Archangels Michael and Gabriel. The seven angels represent the Angelic Principalities, and each hold a scroll indicating his duties. In the corners are the prophets David and Isaiah. The sculpted surround, featuring angels and cherubs in a gloria, is by **Bernardino Ludovisi**, from 1735. (1) (5)

There is a door, now restored, below the painting which gave access to the choir from the monastery after 1867 when the main altar was moved. Directly above the door is an enshrined copy of a small sculpture of *Saint Bruno* by **René-Michel Slodtz**, made for San Pietro in Vaticano in 1744 and moved here. The vaults in the apse and presbyterium were frescoed by **Daniele Seyter**; the motif in the apse is *The Assumption of the Virgin Mary*, and in the main vault is *The Virtues*. Before the altar on the left hand side are two doors; the further one leads to the sacristy, and the nearer one to the Cybo Chapel. To the left of the chapel door is *The Baptism of Jesus* (18) by **Carlo Maratta**, painted in 1697 for San Pietro in Vaticano and moved here after his death in 1713. This was one of the first paintings moved here by Pope Benedict XIII. Jesus Christ and St John the Baptist are shown surrounded by angels in a painting of very high quality. (1)

To the left of the above, at the near end of the left hand side wall of the presbyterium, is *The Death of Anania and Saphira* (19) by **Cristoforo Roncalli**, known as **Il Pomerancio**. This was also painted for San Pietro in Vaticano, in 1604. The painting shows St Peter reprimanding Ananias and Sapphira, who had lied to the early Christian community at Jerusalem in order to keep some of the money they had earned by selling their earthly possessions (Acts of the Apostles). Sapphira is shown as she is dying - God's punishment - while Ananias is being carried to his grave in the background. (1)

Finally, a new high altar (21) was recently placed in the body of the presbyterium, replacing the former altar for parish Masses. Most (but not all) churches in Rome with parochial obligations now have two main altars, to allow for Mass to be said facing the people. This was a liturgical innovation that followed the Second Vatican Council of the Church (although not authorized by that council). On the front of this new altar is a bronze relief panel of *The Deposition from the Cross* by **Umberto Mastroianni** in 1928. (1)

Cybo Chapel

The Chapel of Relics, (17) also known as the Cybo Chapel after the founder Camillo Cardinal Cybo, is accessed to the left of the presbyterium. It has a narrow rectangular transverse antechamber leading into the chapel itself, and was built in 1742 to hold relics of martyrs connected to the building of the Baths of Diocletian. Cardinal Cybo also donated four precious relics of the Western Doctors of the Church: SS Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine and Gregory. Among the martyrs some names have been preserved, such as SS Cyriac, Largus, Smaragdus and Maximus the Centurion. By tradition, there are relics of 730 martyrs here in total. The chapel was decorated by **Niccolò Ricciolini**, a pupil of Maratta. (1)

Card. Cybo was buried in the crypt below the chapel, which had a grill that allowed it to be seen by those who went to the grand chapel of the main altar; he placed in the chapel an altar for the celebration of the mass and left sufficient funds for votive lamps which should burn day and night. (8)

Sacristy and Carthusian Choir or Chapel of the Epiphany (1)

The sacristy has a barrel vault, and sumptuous decorations from the 18th century. It is a long narrow room, and two doors in the right hand wall lead into the former sacristy. This was first designed by Michelangelo, and later altered when Pope Benedict XIII directed that the Carthusian monks should no longer use the Vanvitelli choir in the presbyterium. This was because the latter was too public a place for an enclosed eremitic order of monks. So, in 1727 the former sacristy was consecrated as the Chapel of the Epiphany and functioned as the new Carthusian Choir. The monks used it until 1867, when they moved the choir back to the apse (except for winter, when the church would be too cold). (1)

Just previous to this change of use, the room had been decorated lavishly in a late Baroque style by an artist thought to be **Luigi Garzi** from Pistoia (1653-1721). He decorated the walls with paintings depicting various stories about the founder saint, Brunone di Colonia amongst them: *The meeting of Saint Bruno with the Count Ruggero il Normanno whilst praying in the Woods*; *Confirmation of Pope Vittore III's order*; the *Approval of the Statue (1776) by Pope Alessandro III* and the *Refusal of the Episcopate*. Later were added some scenes from the life of St Bruno; the ceiling fresco shows the *Apotheosis of St Bruno*. (1)

Music

The church is an important musical venue. There are three organists and a schola cantorum or choir, and they are good enough to tour to prestigious events elsewhere. The choir contains boys and adults. At present, musical activities are co-ordinated with ARAMUS or the Associazione Romana Arte Musica, the director of which is Osvaldo Guidotti; see their website for details of events and recordings of their work. (1)

Artists and Architects:

Andrea [Procaccini](#) (1671-1734), Italian painter of the Baroque period

Angelo Santini (20th cent), Italian sculptor
Antonio [Bicchierai](#) (1688-1766), Italian painter
Antonio [Muñoz](#) (1884-1960) Italian architect
Bartélémy [Formentelli](#) (20th cent), French organ maker
Bernardino Fioriti (17th cent), Italian sculptor
Bernardino [Ludovisi](#) (1694-1749), Italian sculptor
Carlo [Maratta](#) (1625-1713), Italian Late Baroque Classical painter
Clemente Orlandi (1694-1775), Italian architect
Cristoforo [Roncalli](#) aka il Pomerancio (c.1552–1626), Italian painter of the Mannerist period
Daniele [Seyter](#) (1642-1705), Italian Baroque painter
Domenico [Cresti](#) aka *Il Passignano* (1559-1638), Italian painter of a late-Renaissance or Contra-Maniera (Counter-Mannerism) style
Domenico da Modena (16th cent), Italian painter
Domenico Zampieri, [aka [Domenichino](#)] (1581-1641), Italian Baroque painter of the Bolognese School, or Carracci School
Ercole [Graziani](#) (1688-1765), Italian painter of the Baroque period
Ernesto [Lamagna](#) (b. 1925), Italian sculptor
Francesco [Bianchini](#) (1662-1729), Italian astronomer
Francesco [Fabi-Altini](#) (1830-1906), Italian sculptor
Francesco Fontana (19th cent), architect
Francesco [Mancini](#) (1679-1758), Italian painter
Francesco [Maratti](#) (1669-1719), Italian sculptor
Francesco [Trevisani](#) (1656-1746), Italian painter of the early Rococo or late Baroque
Francesco [Vanni](#) (1563-1610), Italian painter and engraver from Siena
Friedrich [Pettrich](#) (1798-1872), German sculptor
Giacomo [della Rocca](#) (1592-1605), Italian painter the late-Renaissance or Mannerist period
Giacomo Filippo [Maraldi](#) (1665-1729), French-Italian astronomer and mathematician
Giambattista Rossi (17th cent), Italian sculptor
Giovanni [Baglione](#) aka il Sordo del Barozzo (1566-1643), Italian Late Mannerist and Early Baroque painter
Giovanni Battista [della Porta](#) (ca.1542-1597), Italian sculptor
Giovanni Francesco [Romanelli](#) (1610-1662), Italian Baroque painter
Giovanni Mozetti (18th cent), painter
Giovanni [Odazzi](#) (1663-1731), Italian painter and etcher of the Baroque period
Girolamo [Muziano](#) (1532-1592), Italian painter, active in a late-Renaissance or Mannerism style.
Giulio [Mazzoni](#) (1525-1618), Italian painter and stuccoist of the Renaissance period
Giuseppe [Barbieri](#) (1777-1838), Italian architect
Giuseppe della Riccia, Italian sculptor
Giuseppe [Gallo](#) (21st cent), Italian sculptor
Hendrik [van der Brock](#) di Malines, aka Arrigo Fiammingo (1530-1597), Flemish painter of the late-Renaissance or Mannerist period
Igor [Mitoraj](#) (b. 1944), Polish sculptor
Innocenzo Orlandi (19th cent.), Italina sculptor
Jacopo [Del Duca](#) (1520-1604), Italian sculptor and architect during the late-Renaissance or Mannerist period
Jean-Antoine [Houdon](#) (1741-1828), French neoclassical sculptor
Luigi [Garzi](#) (1638-1721), Italian painter of the Baroque period
Luigi [Vanvitelli](#) (1700-1773), Italian architect of the Late Baroque
Marco Carloni (18th cent), Italian painter from Rome
Michelangelo di Lodovico [Buonarroti](#) Simoni (1475-1564), Italian sculptor, painter, architect, poet, and engineer of the High Renaissance who exerted an unparalleled influence on the development of Western art (also see [here](#))
Narcissus [Quagliata](#) (b. 1942), Italian stained glass window designer
Niccolò [Ricciolini](#) (1687-1763), Italian painter
Paul [Brill](#) (1554-1626), Flemish painter
Pierre-Charles [Tremollière](#) (1703-1739), French painter
Pierre [Subleyras](#) (1699 -1749), French painter
Pietro [Bianchi](#) (1694-1740), Italian painter of the Baroque period
Pietro [Canonica](#) (1869-1959), Italian sculptor

Placido [Costanzi](#) (1702-1759), Italian painter of the late-Baroque period.
Pompeo Girolamo [Batoni](#) (1708-1787), Italian painter of the Rococo/ Neoclassical period
René-Michel [Slodtz](#) aka Michelangelo Slodtz (1705-1764), French sculptor from Paris
Salvador Cuervas (20th cent), Mexican astronomer
Umberto [Mastroianni](#) (1910-1998), Italian sculptor

Burials:

Pope [Pius IV](#) {Giovanni Angelo de' [MEDICI](#) (1499-1565)}

Pierpaolo Cardinal [PARISIO](#), (1473-1545)

His nephew Flamminio Parisio, bishop of Bitonto, erected to his memory an elegant monument with his bust in marble

Ludovico Cardinal [SIMONETA](#), (ca. 1500-1568) (also see [here](#))

Marcantonio Cardinal [BOBBA](#), (?-1575) (also see [here](#))

Francesco Cardinal [ALCIATI](#), (1522-1580) (also see [here](#))

Giovanni Antonio Cardinal [SERBELLONI](#), (1519-1591)

Camillo [CYBO](#), (1681-1743) (also see [here](#))

Ignazio Cardinal [BUSCA](#), (1731-1803) (also see [here](#))

Salvator [Rosa](#) (1615-1673)

<Italian Baroque painter>

Carlo [Maratta](#) (1625-1713)

<Italian painter of the High Baroque>

Pietro [Tenerani](#) (1789-1869), and his wife, Lilla Montebbio

<Italian sculptor>

Lilla Montebbio

<Wife of Pietro Tenerani>

Armando [Diaz](#), 1st Duca della Vittoria (1861-1928)

<Italian general and a Marshal of Italy>

Vittorio Emanuele [Orlando](#) (1860-1952)

<Italian politician>

Paolo Thaon [de Revel](#), 1st Duca del Mare (1859-1948)

<Italian admiral of the Royal Italian Navy>

Location:

9 Via Cernale (Piazza della Repubblica), 00185 Roma

Coordinates: [41°54′11.3″N 12°29′48.9″E](#)

Links and References:

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