

# Santa Pudenziana



Main entrance of the church.

**Santa Pudenziana** is a palaeo-Christian church dedicated to St Pudenziana, a legendary Roman martyr. It is also a converted 2<sup>nd</sup> century Roman bath-house, and one of the few ancient Roman buildings in Rome that has never been a ruin. It is located on the Viminale hill near Santa Maria Maggiore on today's via Urbana, which corresponds to the old Vicus Patricius. It is now the national church of The Philippines, and is a minor basilica.

## History

The church is one of the *tituli*, the first parish churches in Rome. It was known as the *Titulus Pudenziana*, named after the daughter of the Roman Senator St Pudens. It's mentioned in the *Liber Pontificalis*, and a tombstone from 384 refers to a man named Leopardus as *lector de Pudenziana*, this name refers to St Pudenziana. This latter form is first attested in the 4<sup>th</sup> century apse mosaic; earlier documents and inscriptions use Pudenziana, who was a daughter of St Pudens and sister of St Praxedes (the nearby church of Santa Prassede is dedicated to her). Though the story of the sisters

is somewhat uncertain, it is certain that there was a Christian named Pudens. The house was inherited by his son Novato, who built a bathhouse on the site. Pius I (141-155) later built an oratory in the bathhouse, which was rebuilt in the fourth century.

The first time this interpretation is mentioned in written sources is in a document from 745. The church is built over the house of St Pudens, which after the deaths of Peter and Paul was used as a 'house church'. Archaeologists have dated the first chapel, built in the Roman term, to c. 140. This fits with the tradition that claims that the first chapel, the "Oratorio di San Pastore", was built by Pope Pius I. According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, Pope [Siricius](#) (384-99) reconsecrated and dedicated this oratory to St Peter, who is said to have spent time in the house of Pudens. Dedicatory inscriptions have been preserved, naming «Illiceus, Leopardus and the Presbyter Maximus» as the persons who financed work. However, a synod of 499 still refers to the Titulus Pudentis. (1) (8) (h)

The work carried out between the papacies of Pope Siricius and Innocent I (401-417) resulted in the transformation of the baths into an early Christian basilica. The apsidal bowl-shaped vault was built and 12 grey marble columns were placed to hold up the lateral arches. Sometime during this period or soon after the apse vault was decorated with the mosaics that are still to be seen today. (h)

The east exedra was later demolished and replaced with what is essentially the present façade, and this is thought to have happened under Pope Hadrian I (772-95). A lost mosaic inscription on the arch above the apse recorded a restoration ordered by him, although it is unclear just how much work was done. The nave columns were apparently encased in pillars in this restoration. (1) (h)

Another inscription mentioned a further restoration under Pope [Gregory VII](#) (1073-85). About this time the Oratorio Mariano in Via Cesare Balbo was decorated with frescoes. The building of the campanile is undocumented, although this was probably provided in the reign of Pope [Innocent III](#) in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. At about the same time a schola cantorum in the Cosmatesque style was provided like that at San Clemente, although later tragically destroyed in the great 16<sup>th</sup> century restoration. (1) (8)

In 1130 the church was granted to the Canons Regular of Santa Maria del Reno in Bologna, who established a monastery here. Pope Pius V (1566-72) granted the complex to the Dominican penitentiaries of Santa Maria Maggiore, but they were not in possession for long. In 1587, Pope [Sixtus V](#) granted the church to the new reformed Cistercian monastic congregation of the Feuillants. As a result, a new monastery was built to the north. (1)

As part of the project, the church was drastically altered in 1588 by **Francesco da Volterra**, on orders from Cardinal Enrico Caetani. The work was completed after da Volterra's death by **Carlo Maderno**. Some of the changes were very unfortunate, such as the partial mutilation of the mosaics from c. 390 and the demolition of the ancient St Pastor's Chapel to make way for the present Caetani Chapel. The simple flat wooden nave ceiling was replaced with a barrel vault, the nave pillars were opened up to reveal the ancient columns within and the ceiling of the transept was replaced by an elliptical dome. This latter was one of the first in Rome. Also the aisles were sectioned by blocking walls to create a series of side chapels; the left aisle had three arches left open, but the right aisle was completely blocked. Also the flooring was completely renewed. (1) (h)

The Cappella di San Pietro was embellished in 1595, and the old altar was replaced in 1711. In 1803 Cardinal Lorenzo Litta provided a new neo-Classical main altar, and transferred the relics of St Pudenziana to it. These used to be in a small side-chapel in the left aisle, which was then walled up. (1) (8) (h)

In 1870 a restoration by **Antonio Manno** was ordered by Cardinal Luciano Bonaparte, great-nephew of Napoleon and titular of the church. The façade was heavily restored and a courtyard and a stairway giving access from via Urbana were built. In the process remains of Domus Romana were found beneath the church and neighbouring buildings. It is possible that one of these houses was the original house-church belonging to Pudens, mentioned above. Unfortunately, this restoration involved the loss of Mannerist frescoes painted on the façade by Pomerancio in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which had almost completely disappeared. Their replacements, by **Pietro Gagliardi**, were very poor quality, and have decayed badly. (1) (8) (h)

The monastery was secularized by the Italian government two years later, and cleared for redevelopment. (1)

The last restoration was between 1960 and 1964, when the campanile was restored and the underground structures were cleared of rubble and consolidated. At the same time, the lateral parts of the church were restructured and the central aisle refloored. (1) (h)

The church was granted to the Filipino community by the Italian hierarchy, making it the national church of the Philippines. It is served by diocesan clergy, helped by Filipina religious sisters. Next door a refuge has been set up for vulnerable and disturbed teenage girls. (1)

## Exterior

When visitors first see the church from the Via Urbana, it looks as if it is in a hole. However it is actually the street that has been raised, as part of works ordered by Pope Sixtus V to improve access to Santa Maria Maggiore. The next street to the north, the Via Cesare Balbo, is nearer the original level and visitors are recommended to take the trouble to go round the block to see the interesting back elevation of the church there. It actually sticks out into the street. There is a small separate chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary located here, which sits on top of the ambulatory round the back of the apse. You can enter from the street, or you can ask the sacristan to take you in through the church. Street level here corresponds to the roof of the ambulatory. (1) (h)

The frontage is approached from the street via a gate in a screen made of decorative iron railings, a formal set of two transverse staircases and a small courtyard. These amenities were provided in 1870. (1)

The church itself is on a rectangular plan; from outside it looks as if it has transepts, but these are ancillary rooms (the sacristy is on the right hand side). The dome is octagonal with a pitched and tiled roof above a projecting dentillate cornice and crowned by a large torch finial. Every other side of the drum has a vertical elliptical window. The back frontage has four unadorned brick arches on the street. The Caetani Chapel is a separate but attached building on the left side, under its own pitched and tiled roof. (1)

### Façade

The simple, dignified but artistically very important façade dates from the 1870 restoration. Apparently it was more or less rebuilt, although the previous form was preserved. There are two storeys, rendered in well worn yellow ochre. The bottom storey is plain walling bounded by a pair of triply stacked rectangular pilasters without capitals. (1)

The entrance doorway was reconstructed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century using medieval materials. It has a finely carved marble doorcase, and is protected by a prothyrum consisting of a pair of spirally fluted Doric columns supporting an entablature and triangular pediment. The sculptured frieze of the entablature is a spectacular carving from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, described below. The mural fresco in the tympanum of the pediment, by **Antonio Manno**, is from the 1870 restoration and depicts *Our Lady enthroned with the Child Jesus* on her lap. (1) (h)

The entablature separating the two storeys is a delightful piece of work. The architrave is a continuous barley-sugar twist, and above it the frieze is decorated in Cosmatesque style with alternate purple roundels and green squares. The projecting cornice is intricately carved with foliage and putto's heads. (1) (h)

The upper of the two storeys is framed by a pair of triply stacked pilasters like those below, except these are presented as framed recessed panels. They support another highly decorated entablature; the architrave has egg and dart ornamentation, the frieze has patterned polychrome roundels with the chi-rho symbol in the center and the cornice is doubly dentillated. The crowning triangular pediment has a damaged fresco of *Christ in glory* enclosed in a tondo and venerated by angels. There used to be a large coat-of-arms here before the 1870 restoration. (1) (h)

The upper storey used to have a large arched Baroque window, which can be seen in the surviving Vasi engraving of the 18th century (see "Romeartlover" external link below). The 1870 restoration

replaced this with a pair of round-headed windows with narrow twisted frames; each window has two narrow arches separated by a column with a rather debased derivative Corinthian capital. Above each pair of arches is a tympanum containing a bust; the two busts face each other and look like SS Peter and Paul. (1) (h)

The wall of the upper storey has seriously damaged and faded frescoes by **Pietro Gagliardi** depicting *St Peter between SS Pudenziana and Pudens*. The latter is dressed as a Roman senator. On the other side of the windows are *SS Gregory the Great and Pius I*. These frescoes replaced those by **Pomerancio**. (1) (h)

#### Prothyrum frieze above the door

The sculptured frieze of the prothyrum is probably from the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It is undocumented, and scholars have also suggested 8<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century dates. As it exists, the work is an architectural palimpsest. There are five tondi separated by the scrollwork; the central one depicts the Lamb of God and the two flanking ones depict St Pudens' daughters carrying liturgical oil lamps. St Pudenziana is on the left, and St Praxedes on the right. The outermost pair of tondi depicts their father on the left, and St Pastor on the right. Before the 16<sup>th</sup> century restoration, the carving probably occupied a whole doorframe. (1) (h)

The frieze has six inscriptions, one around each tondo and one along the upper edge. They are as follows: (1) (h)

Around the Lamb of God:

MORTUUS ET VIVUS IDEM SUM PASTOR ED AGNUS +  
HIC AGNUS MUNDU[M] RESTAURAT SANGUINE LAPSUM  
(Dead and alive, I am both shepherd and lamb.  
This lamb restores with [its] blood the fallen world).

Around St Pastor:

SA[N]C[T]E PRECOR PASTOR P[R]O NOBIS ESTO ROGATOR +  
HIC CUNCTIS VITE (sic) PASTOR DAT DOGMATE [S]A[N]C[T]E  
(O Saint Pastor, I pray that you be [my] intercessor;  
this shepherd gives life to all by holy doctrine; read "Vita" for "Vite").

Around St Pudenziana:

P[RO]T[E]GE PRAECLARA NOS VIRGO PUDENQ[U]ETIANA +  
VIRGO PUDENQ[U]ETIANA CORA[M] STAT LA[M]PADE PLENA  
(Protect us, illustrious virgin Pudenziana;  
the virgin Pudenziana stands [before God?] with a full lamp).

Around St Praxedis:

NOS PIA PRAXEDIS PRECE S[AN]C[T]A S[AN]C[T]IS FER AD [A]JEDIS +  
OCCURRIT SPONSO PRAXEDIS LUMINE CLARO  
(Pious St Praxedis, make us [go] to the holy temples [of heaven?] by your prayer.  
Praxedis meets the bridegroom with a bright light).

Around St Pudens:

TE ROGO PUDENS [S]A[N]C[T]E NOS PURGA CRIMINA TRUDENS +  
ALMUS ET ISTE DOCET PUDENS AD SIDERA CA[E]LES  
(I ask you holy Pudens, you who pushes [inspires?], purge our offences.  
This kind and modest [note pun] one teaches [the way] to the heavenly stars).

Along the top edge:

AD REQUIEM VITAE CUPIS O TU QUOQUE VENIRE ET IANITOR  
IDEM GAVIDIA PROMITTENS ET CRIMINA QUAEQUAE REMITTENS  
(To those desiring the rest [after death] of life: O you also come, and the same  
gatekeeper [will] produce joys and remit any sort of offence).

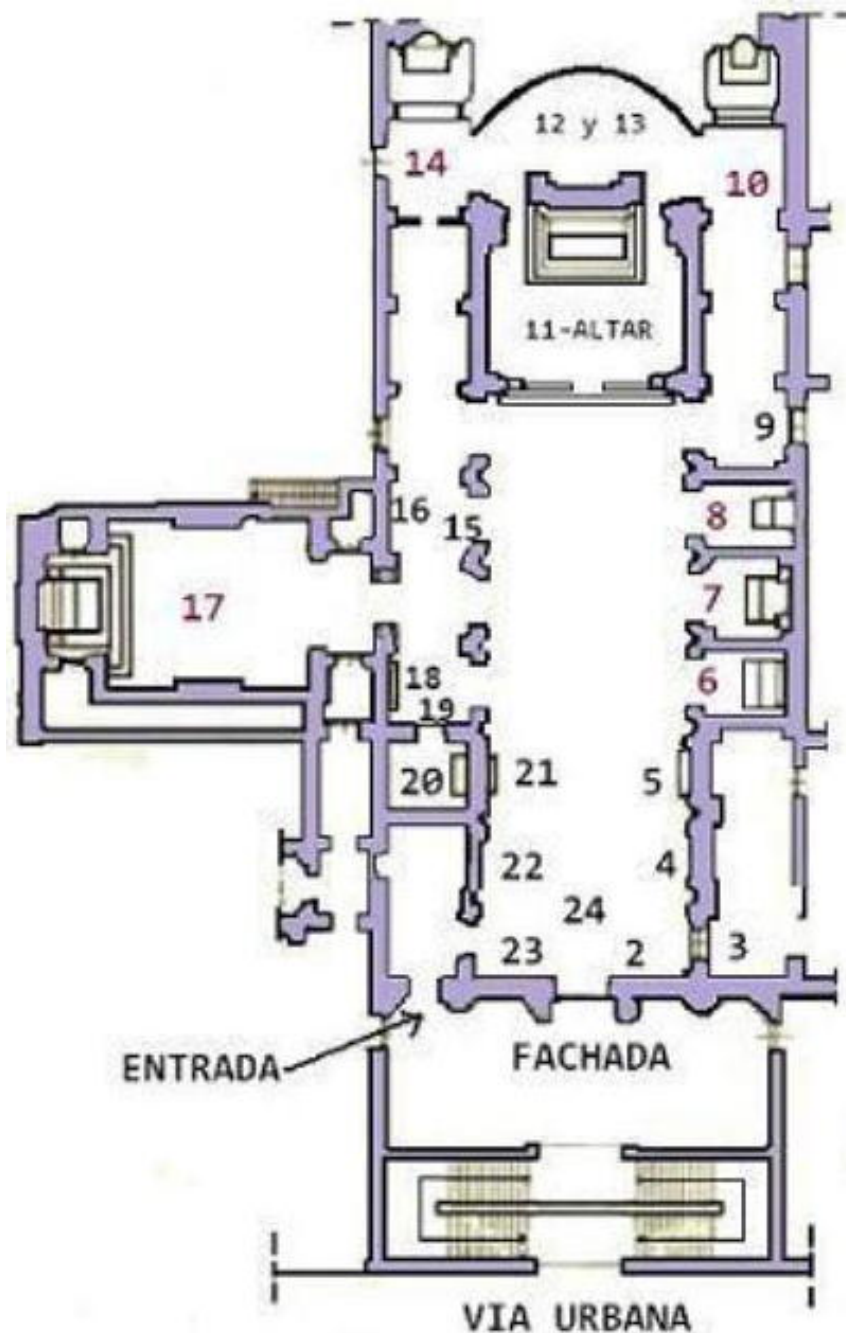
#### Campanile

The campanile is tucked into the near corner between church and chapel, and is from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. (some sources say 1160). It is a fine Romanesque work in brick, with five storeys. The

bottom storey has two open arches on each face, but the others have arcades of three arches each. The top three storeys have these arches separated by rather spindly marble columns with imposts but no capitals. The top storey is embellished by discs of green stone. The campanile was restored in 1964. (1) (h)

### Plan and layout:

The church has a basilical plan, with two aisles. However, the latter have been obscured by having side-chapels built into them. The nave has seven bays, and discerning visitors may notice that the first pair of arcade pillars are further apart than the rest because the left hand pillar is set back slightly. Each pillar has a T-shaped plan, with the crossbar facing into the nave, and within each is embedded one of the ancient grey marble Corinthian arcade columns -rather like the sausage in a hot-dog. The nave ceiling is barrel-vaulted, and the large semi-circular triumphal arch is supported by a pair of Doric columns in black-veined white marble. (1)



## Interior

The restorations in 1588 by **da Volterra** give the basilica a large part of its present-day appearance. (h)

At present, entry to the church for visitors is not through the main door but through a side door in the far left hand side of the courtyard. This leads into a rectangular entrance hall occupying two bays, and the church's custodian is usually on duty here. (If it is one of the sisters, she usually speaks English.) The right hand wall of this is not parallel to the left hand, exterior wall because of the irregularity in the left hand arcade mentioned above. The church is entered through a door immediately on the right. (1)

The right hand arcade is completely taken up by side-chapels. The first three bays are occupied by the Chapel of St Augustine, which is completely walled in. The next three bays have three chapels open to the nave but separated by blocking walls. The left hand aisle has the entrance hall mentioned, and the bay next to it is occupied by a walled-in chapel which used to contain the relics of St Pudenziana. The rest of this aisle is open.

In the floor near the entrance is the coat-of-arms (24) of Cardinal Alberto di Jorio, titular of Santa Pudenziana between 1967 and 1979. (9)

Remains of the original bath-house windows, blocked up when it was converted into a church, are visible on the nave walls, which have had the plaster scraped off them to reveal the ancient masonry. On the floor are marks that indicate the plan of the older buildings beneath the church. (1)

### Nave and Dome

The elliptical dome (13) was designed by **Francesco da Volterra**. It is decorated with a fresco by **Pomerancio** depicting *Angels and Saints before the Savior*. Some of the angels are playing musical instruments. The pendentives also show angels by the same artist. (1) (h)

On the counterfaçade above the main entrance are two paintings: to the right (23) is *St Augustine of Hippo* by **Giacinto Gimignani**, and to the left (2) is *The Baptism of St Pudens* by **Avanzino Nucci**. This painting comes from the Cappella di San Pudente, at the end of the right-side aisle, which Nucci originally decorated with frescoes. Also the remains of an inscription "SALVO BEAT. PAPA Silverio HILARVS PB fecit" and a frieze with braid, which may be from the initial portal. (1) (8) (h)

The door on the right-side wall near the back leads to the large enclosed chapel in the lower right hand corner (3) dedicated to St Augustine. It has its own entrance to the outside, and is very rarely found open. It contains another depiction of *St Augustine*, of the school of **Pietro da Cortona** from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as well as an *Assumption* by **Ludovico Gimignani** which used to be the main altarpiece of Santa Rita da Cascia alle Vergini. (1) (h)

On the wall separating this chapel from the nave is a canvas (4) showing *The Baptism of St Pudens* again, this one by Biagio Betti from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century (has been completely repainted), and the memorial to Cardinal Włodzimierz Czacki (5) by **Pius Welonski**. (1) (9) (h)

Then come the three side chapels to the right.

The presbyterium with its ambulatory occupies three bays. The latter is part of the ancient bath-house, and here can be seen some ancient walling and flooring together with the original vault. In the far corners of the ambulatory are two chapels in niches. Three smaller niches are in the far wall of the transverse corridor of the ambulatory between these. Above the ambulatory and behind the apse is the Marian Oratory, the existence of which is not obvious from inside the church. Its entrance is actually in the left aisle, just on the far side of the Caetani chapel. (1)

### Sanctuary

On top of the triumphal arch is the coat-of-arms of Cardinal Enrico Caetani, supported by two angels. The same heraldry is in the center of the nave vault, which is otherwise undecorated. (1)

The Neo-Classical high altar (11), from 1803, is attached to the wall of the apse, and has two Ionic columns in pavonetto marble supporting a projecting trabeation. It is decorated with three paintings by Bernardino Nocchi, made in 1803, depicting *The Glory of St Pudenziana* in the center and *St Timotheus* and *St Novatus* to each side. (1) (8) (h)

### Apse mosaic

The apse mosaic (12) is the oldest in Rome and is of the first importance. They probably date from the pontificate of Innocent I (402-417), and commemorates the escape of the church building from the destruction of the sack of Rome in 410 and therefore is to be dated to the period of 410-417. (1) (b)

However there is documentary evidence for restorations up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and this is a slight worry to art historians involved in analysis. The lower part of the mosaic was destroyed in the 1588 or 1598 restoration. It is dimly lit, as it must have been when it was made. If you wish to see more of the details, insert a coin in the machine to the right of the sanctuary to turn on more light for a few minutes. (1)

The theme is *Christ presiding over His Apostles* in an arcaded courtyard. Two figures of the apostles have been destroyed; the two nearest Christ are St Peter on the left, and St Paul (replacing Judas) on the right. Only Christ wears a halo, as is expected in mosaics of such an early date. He holds a book inscribed:

**Dominus Conservator Ecclesiae Pudentianae**  
"The Lord, Preserver of the Church of Pudentiana"

A comparison of the naturalistic style of the figures with the iconographic tradition of the Byzantine style is instructive. Here we have a precious survival of the more ancient Classical style of painting familiar from the catacomb frescoes; the faces (except for Christ) do not directly face the viewer and the gestures are natural instead of posed. The magisterial figure of Christ, seated on a gilded throne embossed with jewels and cushioned with purple fabric, recalls ancient representations of Jupiter. The apostles are dressed in togas, like Roman senators. (1)

There has been some disagreement about the two female figures behind SS Peter and Paul. Traditionally they were regarded as being SS Pudentiana and Praxedes, but this is certainly false because they are crowning the two foremost apostles with wreaths. Rather they seem to represent Ecclesia and Synagoga, the Gentile and Jewish elements of early Christianity. The former figure is crowning Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles, and the latter is crowning St Peter, the Apostle to the Circumcision according to his own statement at the Council of Jerusalem. (1)

The buildings in the background may be the churches built by emperor Constantine at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem rather than a depiction of the Heavenly Jerusalem from the Apocalypse as is also claimed. An indication of this is the gemmed cross, which is probably a depiction of the precious reliquary case containing the True Cross. This was kept in Jerusalem until it was lost by the Crusaders at the [Battle of the Horns of Hattin](#). If this interpretation is correct, the round building to the left is the Anastasis which corresponds to the present rotunda at the Holy Sepulchre, and the square building to the right is the Martyrion or the enormous lost basilica to the east of Golgotha. The cross itself is placed on a mount, Golgotha, which Constantine left open to the sky. (1)

Next to the cross on either side are symbols of the Evangelists on a background of a cloud-stippled sky. This Symbology is known as *tetramorph* (the four evangelists together, considered as one). This is the oldest preserved example of these symbols occurring together. The symbols are: (1) (h)

- the Angel for St. Matthew
- the Lion for St. Mark
- the Calf for St. Luke
- the Eagle for St. John

### Cappella del Crocifisso

The Chapel of the Crucifix (6), the first, has a bronze *Crucifix* by Achille Tamburini, as well as a *Guardian Angel* a copy of a painting by Antiveduto Grammatica from 1618. (1) (8) (h)

### Cappella della Madonna della Misericordia

The second chapel is dedicated to Our Lady of Mercy (7). The altarpiece is a 16<sup>th</sup> century anonymous painting depicting her. The flanking canvases depicting *The Nativity of the Madonna* and *The Nativity of Christ* are by **Lazzaro Baldi** from 1690, commissioned by Bartolomeo Ansidei. He is also responsible for the wall fresco showing the *Annunciation* and the lunette frescoes showing the prophet *Jeremiah* and the *Erythraean Sibyl*. (1) (h)

### Cappella di San Bernardo

The third chapel is dedicated to St Bernard of Clairvaux (8), and has an anonymous altarpiece showing him. The flanking canvases are by **Michele Cippitelli** from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, and show *The Ecstasy of St Catherine of Siena* and *The Vision of St Benedict*. The high quality stucco decoration is of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The reason for this dedication is that this saint was the founder of the Cistercian monks. In the floor seen a tombstone from 1802 for the Volpato family. (1) (8) (h)

### Sacristy

The entrance to the sacristy (9) is just beyond the Chapel of St Bernard. It has a ceiling fresco depicting *The Conversion of St William of Aquitaine* attributed to **Filippo Napolitano**, and carved wooden panelling of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. (1) (h)

### Chapel of St Pudens

Then comes the right-hand entrance to the ambulatory. Straight ahead, in the corner where the passage turns, is the Chapel of St Pudens (10). It has a modern statue of the saint, and seriously damaged vault frescoes by **Avanzino Nucci**. At the chapel entrance is the tomb of Cardinal Alberto di Jorio with a mosaic which portrays a *Pietà*. (1) (h)

### Cappella di San Pietro

The chapel to the left of the apse (14) was built and decorated in 1595 by the priest Didier Collin de Verdun, who was buried before the altar here. The altarpiece is a celebrated 16<sup>th</sup> century statue of *Christ handing the Keys to St Peter* by **Giacomo della Porta**, which was made in 1594. This chapel contains part of an ancient wooden altar, allegedly used by St Peter. Tradition claims that the chapel replaces an oratory in the same site, built in memory of St Peter in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, but scholars now consider this to have been the Chapel of St Pastor. The vault frescoes, almost completely fallen off, are by **Giovanni Baglione**. In the vestibule numerous fragments of epigraphs are embedded. These were done during Pope Siricio's restoration at the request of the presbyteries Ilicio, Massimo and Leopardo, as the inscription states. (1) (8) (h)

### Caetani chapel

Off the left aisle is the entrance to the chapel of the Caetani family (17). The ancient Roman and palaeo-Christian oratory dedicated to St Pastor was demolished in order to build it. The result is a fine Baroque work. It was designed by **Francesco Volterra**, and after his death in 1601 **Carlo Maderno** completed it. The work was commissioned by Cardinal Enrico Caetani in 1588, and resembles the Sistine Chapel at Santa Maria Maggiore in its polychrome richness. In front of the chapel is a small entrance hall with four pillars of 'giallo antico' marble. The marble work was by **Giovanni Battista della Porta**, and **Valsoldo** executed the angels in the corners, the putti on the window frames and the relief medallions showing scenes from the life of St Pudens. (1) (8) (h)

The sculptured altarpiece, framed by two columns of Lumachella marble, depicting the *Adoration of the Magi* is by **Pier Paolo Olivieri**, although completed by **Camillo Mariani**. The latter artist is responsible for the pair of angels supporting the Caetani family coat-of-arms. The two funerary monuments in the chapel commemorate Cardinal Enrico Caetani (d. 1599) and Count Filippo Caetani (d. 1614). **Paolo Rossetti** executed the mosaic of *SS Praxedes and Pudenziana Collecting the Blood of the Martyrs* in 1621, which is above the entrance. The same artist was also responsible for the panels showing the Evangelist in the ceiling and angels and sibyls in the lunettes; all these were to designs by **Federico Zuccari**. (1) (8) (h)

In four niches at the sides of the monuments are statues allegorically depicting the Cardinal Virtues. *Prudence* is by **Claude Adam**, and is often mistaken for St Pudenziana. *Fortitude* is by **Gian Antonio Mari**, *Justice* by **Vincenzo Felici** and *Temperance* by **Carlo Malavista**. All these were executed around 1650. (1) (h)



A miracle is said to have occurred in the chapel in 1610. On the altar step it is still possible to see today the melted marble and blood stain left by the priest's Consecrated Host. The host had fallen from the hands of a rather learned priest who doubted the presence of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. (1) (10)

Here, just outside the entrance to the Capella Caetani, there used to be a holy well (15). The legend alleges that the two holy sisters hid the corpses of three thousand martyrs, mopped up their spilt blood and poured what they had collected into the well. This is marked by a square porphyry slab in the floor; obviously, the excavations below the church has ensured that the well is long gone. In this aisle also may be examined some epigraphs found during the archaeological investigations, including that mentioning the three founding clerics Maximus, Leopard and Ilicius. Also here is the funerary monument (16) from 1592 of Onorato Caetani, 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Sermoneta and 6<sup>th</sup> Marquis of Cisterna. Also the memorial for (18) the Contessa Rzewuska-Caetani, mother of Onorato, dated 1842. (1) (8) (9)

On the wall outside of the chapel is an inscription (19) moved here from the demolished Chapel of St. Pastor that recalls the work which Pope Gregory VII had commissioned in the years 1073-1085, and lists the relics the Church possessed. (8) (h)

In between the entrance hall and what is left of the left hand aisle is the little shrine chapel of St Pudenziana (20), which has its entrance on the aisle. It is almost never open. On its wall is the memorial to Cardinal Luciano Bonaparte (21), nephew of Napoleon and responsible for the restoration the church, and a Tuscan canvas (22) showing *SS Pudenziana and Praxedis Burying the Martyrs* attributed to Antonio Tanari from 1635. (1) (4) (9)

#### Marian Oratory

The walls of this small edifice, reached by the doorway in the left aisle and a walk along the side of the church, rest on those of the ambulatory below. It is mediaeval in date, and contains a very interesting cycle of frescoes dating probably from the late 11<sup>th</sup> century. These are now damaged, but fortunately drawings were made in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when they were in better condition, and these are now kept in the Royal Library at Windsor in England. (1) (h)

On the right of the entrance is a *Crucifixion* of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Over the altar is *Our Lady and the Child Jesus with SS Praxedis and Pudenziana*. The left hand wall has *St Paul Preaches, and Baptizes Pudens and his Family*, and the right hand wall has *The Baptism of Novatus and Timothy*. On the wall facing the altar is *An Angel Crowning Valerius, Tiburtius and Pope Urban* and in the vault is an *Agnus Dei* surrounded by the symbols of the Evangelists. (h)

#### Underground

The entrance to the underground domus, about nine meters below the floor of the church, is in the left hand corner of the Caetani chapel. Unfortunately, the clearance work in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century was done without proper archaeological supervision. The original 1<sup>st</sup> century house has left six square rooms measuring about 5 meters each side, and these have non-figurative mosaic floors. One rare and interesting example of these has larger fragments of polychrome marble set into the small white tesserae. Above these rooms are tunnels supporting the foundations of the ancient bath house. These are 1.5 meters below floor level and are each 16 meters long, 4 meters wide and 7 meters high. One contains a 9<sup>th</sup> century fresco showing *St Peter between SS Pudenziana and Praxedis*; interestingly, Pudenziana is spelt "Potentiana".

#### Liturgy and access

The feast of St Pudenziana is celebrated with great solemnity on 19 May (the cult is now confined to this church), as is that of St Praxedis on 21 July.

Mass is celebrated in Filipino languages (Tagalog, Cebuano and English) as well as in Italian. The posted opening hours are 08:00 to 12:00; 16:00 to 18:00. As always with churches in Rome, these are liable to change.

#### **Artists and Architects:**

Achille Tamburini, Italian sculptor  
 Antiveduto [Grammatica](#) (1571-1626), Baroque Italian painter  
 Antonio Manno (19<sup>th</sup> century), architect, painter  
 Antonio Tanari (17<sup>th</sup> cent), Italian painter  
 Avanzino [Nucci](#) (1552-1629), Italian painter of the late-Renaissance period  
 Bernardino [Nocchi](#) (1741-1812), Italian painter  
 Biagio [Betti](#) (1535-1605), Italian painter of the Renaissance period, a Theatine monk  
 Camillo [Mariani](#) (1556-1611), Italian sculptor  
 Carlo [Maderno](#) (1556-1629), Swiss-Italian architect [also see [here](#)]  
 Carlo Malavista (17<sup>th</sup> cent), Italian sculptor  
 Claude Adam (17<sup>th</sup> cent), Sculptor  
 Cristoforo [Roncalli](#) [aka *Il Pomerancio*] (1552-1626), Italian Mannerist painter  
 Federico [Zuccari](#) (1541-1609), Italian Mannerist **painter** and architect  
 Filippo [d'Angeli](#) [aka *Il Napoletano*] (1600-1660), Italian painter  
 Francesco [Capriani](#) da Volterra (1535-1594), Italian architect  
 Giacinto [Gimignani](#) (1606-1681), Italian painter of the Baroque period  
 Giacomo [della Porta](#) (c.1533-1602), Italian **sculptor** and architect  
 Giovanni Antonio Mari (17<sup>th</sup> cent.), sculptor  
 Giovanni Antonio [Paracca](#) aka *Il Valsoldo* (1546-1597), 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 Paolo Rossetti († 1621), Italian painter, **mosaicist**  
 Lazzaro [Baldi](#) (c. 1624-1703), Italian painter of the Baroque period  
 Ludovico [Gimignani](#) (1643-1697), Italian painter during the Baroque period  
 Michele Cippitelli (17<sup>th</sup> cent), Italian painter  
 Pietro Berrettini [da Cortona](#) (1597-1669), Italian Baroque painter  
 Pietro [Gagliardi](#) (1809-1890), Italian painter and architect  
 Pier Paolo Olivieri (1551-1599), Italian sculptor and architect  
 Pius [Welonski](#) (1848-1931), Polish sculptor  
 Vincenzo [Felice](#) (1657-1715), Italian sculptor

## Burials:

Renoul Cardinal de [MONTERUC](#), (1351?-1382)  
 Buried next to the door  
 Enrico Cardinal [CAETANI](#), (1550-1599) [also see [here](#)]  
 Bonifazio Cardinal [CAETANI](#), (1567-1617)  
 Buried in his family's chapel  
 Antonio Cardinal [CAETANI](#), (1566-1624)  
 Buried in his family's chapel  
 Luigi Cardinal [CAETANI](#), (1595-1642) [also see [here](#)]  
 Buried in his family's chapel  
 Wodzimierz Cardinal [CZACKI](#) (1834-1888) [also see [here](#)]  
 Buried in the crypt of the Caetani family  
 Alberto Cardinal di [JORIO](#), (1884-1979) [also see [here](#)]  
  
 Fr. Didier Collin de Verdun  
 Buried in the St. Petet's chapel, which he had built  
 Bartolomeo Ansidei  
 Buried in the chapel of Our Lady of Mercy

## Location:

Via Urbana 160, 00184 Roma

Coordinates: [41° 53' 54"N](#) [12° 29' 43"E](#)

## Info:

Telephone: 0039 06 4814622

Fax: 0039 06 4463478

Opening times

Open 08:30am-12:00pm & 03:00pm-06:00pm

Masses:

Holidays:09:30am-10:30am-12:00pm-04:00pm (in Filipino)

Weekdays:07:30am (Mon-Fri in Italian)

Thursday: 05:00pm

During the mass it is not possible to visit the church

### Links and References:

1. [Roman Churches Wiki](#)
2. [Wikipedia page](#)
3. [Tourist information](#)
4. [Info Rome web page](#)
5. <http://www.paradoxplace.com> (no longer online)
6. [Khan Academy](#)
7. [Roma Sotterranea web page](#)
8. [Annas Rome Guide](#) (Danish)
9. [Ratzinger Ganswein web page](#)
10. <http://swordsoftruth.com/> (no longer online)

### [Understanding Rome web page](#)

- a. Spieser, J.-M, "**The Representation of Christ in the Apses of Early Christian Churches**"; *Gesta*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (1998), pp. 63-73 (767213.pdf)
- b. Schlatter, Fredric W.; "**Interpreting the Mosaic of Santa Pudenziana**"; Source: *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Sep., 1992), pp. 276-295 (1584230.pdf)
- c. Schlatter, Fredric W.; "**The Text in the Mosaic of Santa Pudenziana**"; *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (Jun., 1989), pp. 155-165 (1584136.pdf)
- d) Webb, Matilda; **THE CHURCHES AND CATACOMBS OF EARLY CHRISTIAN ROME**; Pg. 65
- e) Sharp. Mary; **A GUIDE TO THE CHURCHES OF ROME**; 1966; pg. 188
- f) Donovan, Jeremiah; **ROME ANCIENT AND MODERN AND ITS ENVIRONS**; 1842; Vol I, pg. 628
- g) Hager, June; **PILGRIMAGE**; 2001; pg. 40
- h) Information booklet available in the church

Links to photo galleries

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/dealvariis/sets/72157619954167636/>

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