

Santa Maria del Rosario e San Pietro Chanel



Santa Maria del Rosario e San Pietro Chanel was a 19th century convent church, now a chapel, in the parish of Sacro Cuore di Gesù a Castro Pretorio. It is in the rione Castro Pretorio. The dedication is now jointly to the Blessed Virgin Mary under her aspect of Our Lady of the Rosary, and St Peter Chanel. The former name was Santa Maria del Rosario di Pompei.

History

The church was built to serve the Provincial Curia at Rome of the Marist Fathers, who also ran an international college which was adjacent. It was also a center of devotion to Our Lady of Pompeii, the main shrine to whom is close to the famous ruined city near Naples. This dedication was because there used to be a little shrine to her in the nearby street of Via Palestro, which had been erected when the suburban area was first laid out after 1870.

The architect was **Pio Piacentini**, who used an original design executed by a French Marist called L. Desroziers in 1886. The result is in a monumental neo-Baroque style, and was completed in 1898.

According to the Diocese the church was closed (*soppressa*) in 2006, and has been deleted from the diocesan website. It is now the chapel of the Domus Australia.

Domus Australia

The former convent has been restored as a "boutique guest house" (actually, a very grand hotel) principally for Australian pilgrims and visitors to Rome. The work involved the complete and meticulous restoration of the church, which has been cleaned outside and had its décor inside restored. Artworks appealing to Australian and Oceanic devotional interests have been added, and on re-consecration the dedication was changed to Our Lady of the Rosary and St Peter Chanel (the protomartyr of Oceania).

Mons Charles Portelli PP from the Melbourne Archdiocese advised on the extensive renovation work in the Chapel, which includes a new design of the altar, the sanctuary and the sacristy. The parietal decorations, marble walls and pillars, plaster work and wooden items have all been restored to their former glory by Bartoli Restauro e Ricerca SRL, with the floor completely replaced. Other works include the installation of heating, cooling, lighting, audio amplification, and new sanctuary furniture, including the ambo and the chairs for the celebrants. The new altar was consecrated on Sunday 16 October 2011 at the Ad Limina Mass celebrated by Cardinal George Pell, who sponsored the renovation.

The organ has also been fully restored by Ars Organi SRL of the Pinchi family, the same family that built the organ.

The refurbished chapel (no longer a church, apparently) was re-opened in 2011. The project was undertaken by the dioceses of Australia, and is owned by the Church there. The cost was thirty million Australian dollars.

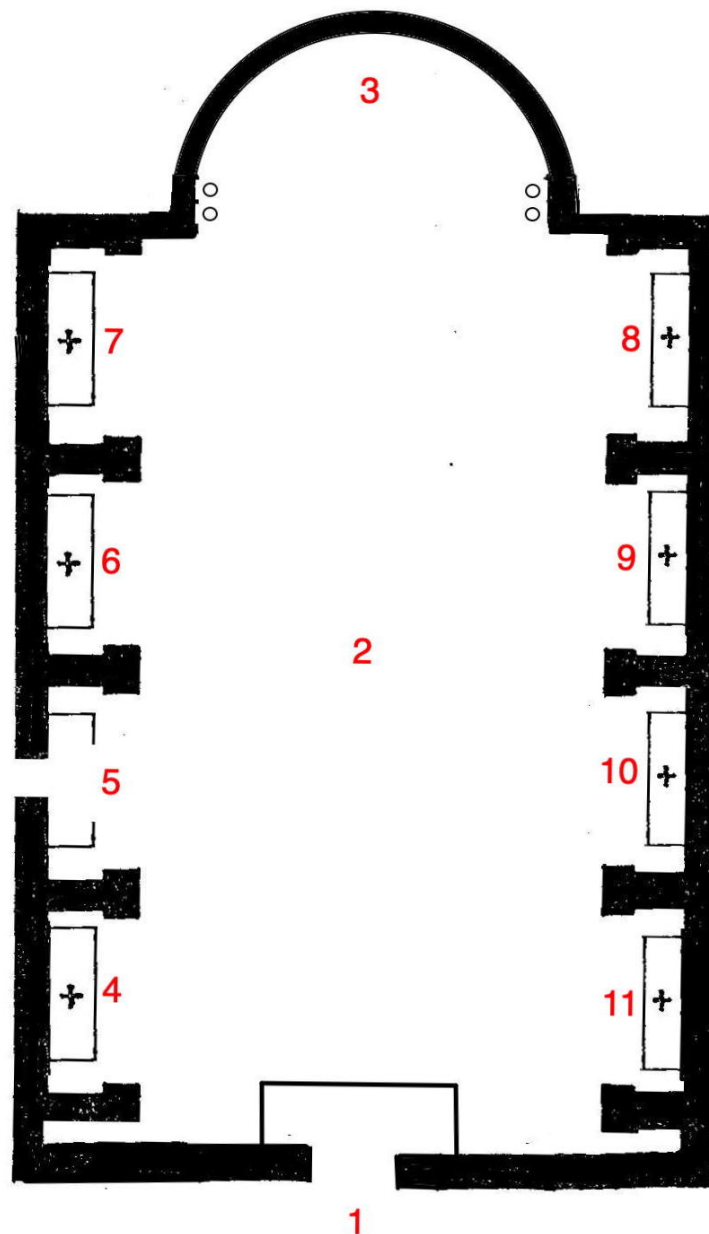
Exterior

The impressive, hulking and now clean pink brick edifice is on a corner site, and is on a rectangular plan. Structurally it amounts to a nave with side aisles, and no external apse.

The façade (1) has two distinct architectural storeys, separated by an entablature that runs round the building. There are a few stone details. The ornate entrance has a pair of flanking pilasters, an archway with tympanum and a gable, this being inserted into a very high plinth which bears three pairs of Doric pilasters in brick running up to the first entablature. The frieze of this over the entrance bears a dedicatory inscription to Our Lady, and is topped by a projecting cornice supported by corbels. In between the pilasters the brickwork is decorated, notably by a horizontal band bearing a zig-zag.

The second storey of the façade is in the form of a Classical temple, with two pairs of Ionic pilasters breaking through a second entablature to support a third one. The frieze of the latter has another dedicatory inscription, to the Rosary. Above it is a cornice in the same style as before, then a triangular pediment with a relief sculpture in its tympanum. The central part of the nave roof is higher than those on either side, and this third cornice edges it. The second cornice, previously mentioned, runs over the top of a round-headed window in the middle of the second storey of the façade and then forms the roofline along the sides of the church. Either side of the temple motif in the second storey of the façade is a bell chamber with a pair of round pilasters in stone with capitals, matching those flanking the round-headed façade window. The sound-holes of these are keyhole-shaped.

Plan



Interior

Nave

The plan is a nave (2) with aisles, having four bays. The arcades have wide rectangular pillars, and the aisles behind these are divided into four chapels on each side by double parallel blocking walls. These paired walls do not reach the pillars, meaning that there was access between the chapels. The pillars each have a pair of shallow ribbed pilasters on high plinths and with capitals in a "sort-of" Composite style displaying a cross-medallion each. These pilasters support an entablature which runs round the interior, the cornice of which has modillions and the frieze of which has the Marian antiphon *Salve Regina* on a blue background.

The barrel-vaulted ceiling has four lunettes for windows on each side. In between the lunettes are angels, and swags of olive branches. The ceiling vault between the lunettes is in pale blue, and bears a fresco of a large cross in ochre yellow and decorated in a vaguely Celtic style. This bears tondi showing scenes from the Mysteries of the Rosary. This delicate and attractive work was by an artist named Sacco, who also executed the presbyterium vault frescoes.

Sanctuary

The sanctuary (3) is entered through a narrow fifth bay, amounts to a double triumphal arch supported by two pairs of columns in what looks like a flesh-colored marble with capitals imitating those of the nave pilasters. The vault shows God the Father.

The main altar is a miniature arcade with small red marble pillars. Under the arches are small gilt statues of *Christ* in the center, and with *St Peter* and *St Paul* on either side.

There is an apse with a conch, having a blind arcade of three arches separated by more double pilasters. In the central arch is a life-sized, bronze sculpture of the Crucifixion by Louis Laumen. It was commissioned by Cardinal George Pell in 2007 and installed in the Domus Australia chapel in 2011.

The conch shows the Mother and Child in a mandorla, flanked by a pair of venerating saints in between four palm trees. The Dove of the Holy Spirit is in the apex.

The "Ambo of the Apostles" (lectern) to the left of the present high altar is by Nigel Boonham an English sculptor. The Ambo took about twelve months to plan, design and realize. It is assembled from over 35 different cast or machined brass sections. Identification of the figures on the Ambo:

Front panel left to right: *St James, St Andrew, St Peter, St John, St Mathew* and *St Thomas*

Right hand side panel left to right: *Judas, St James the Just, St Philip*

Left hand side panel left to right: *St Jude, St Simon, St Bartholomew*

Back Panel: *St Mathias*

The crucifix is flanked by a pair of pictures in an attractive and refreshing neo-realist style. They are two of a commission of thirty-two works for which the artist **Paul Newton** received a commission when the church was restored. Here, on the left is *Our Lady of the Southern Cross* (superb), and on the right *The First Catholics of Sydney*.

Sacristy

A number of 19th and 20th century artworks originally in the Chapel have been beautifully and faithfully restored by a team of specialist art restorers in Rome. Such is the delicacy and intricacy of the work required, that it took one person approximately three months to restore each painting to its original splendor. Two paintings, *Apparition of Our Lady of Pompei to Pope Pius V*, and *The Holy Family* are by **Luigi Guglielmino**, signed and dated 1916.

Side chapels

For the renovation in the early 21st century, different dioceses have taken care of these chapels and the personages featured in the modern paintings therein by **Newton** can have a special appeal to Australia, Oceania and the Far East. The altars will be described clockwise from the first altar in the left rear.

The first chapel on the left rear (4) has an altarpiece showing *Cardinal Francis-Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận in prison in Vietnam*. The three miniature portraits over the altar are:

St Andrew Kim (1821-1846)

Korean born priest and martyr

Patron saint of Korea

St. Paul Miki, S.J. (1562-1597)

Japanese Jesuit seminarian and martyr

St Francis Xavier, S.J. (1506-1552)

Apostle to the Far East

Spanish Jesuit, Patron of Australia

Next (5) is the entrance from the lobby of the hotel. Above the entrance is an icon of the *Apparition of Our Lady of Pompei* within a glory.

The next chapel (6) has a double altarpiece of *St. Patrick* and *St. Brigid of Ireland*. The three miniature portraits over the altar are:

Archbishop Daniel Mannix (1864-1963)
Archbishop of Melbourne 1917-1963
A father of his people

Patrick Francis Cardinal Moran (1830-1911)
3rd Archbishop of Sydney 1884-1911
1st (Irish Born) Australian Cardinal

Archbishop Sir Jaes Dubig KCMG (1871-1965)
Bishop of Rockhampton 1905-1917
Archbishop of Brisbane 1917-1965

The fourth chapel (7) on the left, next to the sanctuary, has an altarpiece showing *Archbishop John Dede Polding*, (1794-1877). He was an English Benedictine Monk of Downside Abbey, Vicar Apostolic of New Holland 1834-1842, and the 1st Catholic Archbishop of Sydney 1842-1877. The three miniature portraits over the altar are:

Fr. John Joseph Therry (1790-1864)
Irish pioneer Archpriest in New South Wales

Archbishop Roger William Bede Vaughan (1834-1883)
English Benedictine Monk of Downside Abbey
2nd Archbishop of Sydney 1877-1883

Caroline Chisholm (1808-1877)
English Humanitarian and Immigration Reformer in New South Wales

The chapel (8) to the right of the the sanctuary has an altarpiece showing *St. Mary of the Cross Mackillop*, (1842-1909). She was the co-founder of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, and the first Australian saint. The three miniature portraits over the altar are:

Mother Mary John Cabill (1793-1864)
1st Mother Superior of the Sisters of Charity in Australia

Father Julian Edmund Tenison-Woods (1832-1889)
Co-founder of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart

Mother Ursula Frayne (1816-1885)
1st Mother Superior of the Sisters of Mercy in Australia

The next chapel (9) on the right has another double altarpiece showing *Saint (Sir) Thomas More*, (1478-1535), and *John Henry Cardinal Newman*, C.O., D.D (1801-1890). A leader in the Oxford Movement of the Anglican Church, an English convert to Catholicism, and outstanding theologian and writer. He will be canonized by Pope Francis on Oct.13, 2019. The three miniature portraits over the altar are:

Venerable Sister Mary Ward, I.B.V.M. (1585-1645)
English Founder of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary
(Sister of Loreto)

St. John Fisher (1469-1535)
English Bishop of Rochester
Theologian and Martyr
Chancellor of the University of Cambridge

St. Edmund Campion, S.J. (1540-1581)
English Jesuit priest and martyr

The third chapel (10) on the right has an altarpiece showing the *Martyrdom of St. Peter Chanel*. The three miniature portraits over the altar are:

Bishop Rosendo Salvado, O.S.B. (1814-1900)
Spanish, Founder and 1st Abbot of New Norcia, WA

St. Carthage of Lismore (553-637)
Founder and 1st Abbot of Lismore, County Waterford, Ireland

Brother William T. O'Malley C.F.C. (1900-1976)
St. Patrick's College Ballarat, 1928-1976
A Tribute to all the Teaching Brothers

The last chapel (11) on the right has another double altarpiece showing *Pope Saint John Paul II*, and *Saint (Mother) Teresa of Calcutta*, M.C. The three miniature portraits over the altar are:

Saint Therese of Lisieux (1873-1897)
French Discalced Carmelite nun
Patron of Australia

St. George Preca (1880-1962)
“Dun Gorg”. The “Second Apostle of Malta”
Founder of The Society of Christian Doctrine

St. Dominic (1170-1221)
Spanish Priest and Founder of the Dominican Order

Artists and Architects:

Pio [Piacentini](#) (1846-1928), Italian architect
Louis [Laumen](#) (b. 1958), Dutch born Australian sculptor
Nigel [Boonham](#) (b.1953), English sculptor
Luigi [Guglielmino](#) (1885-1962), Italian painter
Paul [Newton](#) (b. 1961), Australian painter

Access and liturgy

You can visit the chapel at any reasonable hour. Just go into the foyer of the hotel, and ask directions from reception.

Mass times are:

Weekdays 19:00, in English.
Saturdays 18:00, in Italian.
Sundays 9:00, in English

Location

Address: Via Cernaia 14/B
Coord: [41°54'24.6"N 12°30'01"E](#)

External links

[Roman Churches Wiki](#)

[Italian Wikipedia page](#)

["Domus Australia" website](#)

[Chapel's web-page on above](#)

[Info.roma web-page](#)

[Paul Newton web-page](#)

[Louis Laumen website](#)

[Nigel Boonham website](#)

Personal communication with Fr. Lucas

Information plaques in the church

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