

Santi Quirico e Giulitta



Santi Quirico e Giulitta is an 18th century convent and titular church on ancient foundation in the rione Monti (I), tucked away next to the Hotel Forum just south of the Piazza del Grillo and facing over the remains of the Forum of Nerva and Augustus. [1]

The dedication is to SS Quiricus and Julitta. According to the unreliable legend, the saints were a mother and very young son who were martyred at Tarsus in Asia Minor in the persecution of Diocletian, about 304. The present Roman martyrology lists them merely as martyrs of Asia Minor at an unknown date. They are celebrated in the church on June 16th. [1] [2] [c]

History

The first church on the site may have stood here as early as the 4th century, but we do not have definite statements about it. On the other hand, it is known from an old inscription, which was found in the 16th century but which has unfortunately been lost later, that in the period 535-545, Pope Vigilius consecrated an altar dedicated to Saints Lorenzo and Stefano in the church at this place. [2]

The orientation of this first church was the reverse to what it is now, with the apse separated by a short space from the temenos wall of the Forum of Augustus, while the entrance was from the Subura district behind. Also, it has been noticed that the floor level was the same as that of the Temple of Mars Ultor in the Forum. Both of these facts hint that the Forum was still clear of the massive amount of debris about to bury the Roman and Imperial Fora in subsequent centuries, and further that the Forum was still perhaps functioning as a civic space. [1] [2]

The earliest known reference is in the 8th century "Einsiedeln Itinerary", where the church appears as 'Sci. Cyriaci.' It is again mentioned in 12th- and 13th century guides. [b]

In the church's long history there have been several major restorations, beginning with that under Pope Paschal II (1099-1118) who provided the present campanile at the start of the 12th century. Many members of the large Roman families were buried in the church, such as the Sinibaldi family and the Conti family, who owned many houses and towers in this area. The old tombstones have unfortunately been lost during the various restorations and rebuilds. [1] [2]

In 1475, Pope Sixtus IV found the building in ruins and had it restored in connection with the Jubilee Year and remains of it can possibly be seen in today's portal, which was previously thought to have been made by Baccio Pontelli but as recent studies show may have been replaced with a newer one in 1750. The restoration in 1475 is also mentioned on an inscription stone set up on the façade. [1] [2] [b]

The church was heavily restored by Cardinal Alessandro de' Medici in 1584, when the orientation was reversed so that the main entrance was transferred to what had been the apse, which was demolished. At that time a very ancient altar which had been consecrated by Pope Vigilius 555 was discovered. This was attested by an inscription then found, which has been subsequently lost. The event was commemorated in a new inscription. [1] [b]

The old portico was replaced by the present sanctuary. The reason for the change in the church's orientation was that the former rural, deserted and swampy Forum area in the years 1566-1572 had been drained, artificially raised and rehabilitated by Pope Pius V's nephew Cardinal Michele Bonelli and that new streets had been laid out (including Via Alessandrina and Via Bonella) and emerged a brand new and populous residential neighborhood on top of the old Emperor Forums. [1] [2] [b]

In 1587 the old title of Sancti Ciriaci in Thermen was formally transferred to this church as Sancti Quirici et Iulittae. The first titular priest was the future Pope Leo XI, who as Alessandro de' Medici had been made a cardinal three years earlier and had been informally attached to this church. It was he who oversaw the restoration. [1]

The final transformation into the new church took place in the years 1606-1608, when Pope Paul V in connection with a new restoration had the floor raised 4 meters. At the same time, the church got a new facade and a new interior painting decoration. The old church was now partly forgotten under a brand new church, until it was rediscovered and excavated in 1930. [2] [b]

In the reign of Pope Urban VIII (1623-44) the interior was restored, and new altarpiece paintings provided. [1]

Unfortunately, in 1716 the church was gutted by fire. Pope Innocent XIII ordered it to be rebuilt, but this did not happen immediately. In 1722, the ruin was granted to the Dominicans of San Marco in Florence, who founded a convent here. Work on rebuilding the church began in 1728, to a design by **Filippo Raguzzini** (much of the previous fabric was re-used), and it was re-consecrated in 1734. The nave was vaulted. The pavement was again changed to remedy dampness, and fourteen vaulted burial places were arranged beneath it. While this was being done, the foundations of the old apse were discovered underneath the steps outside the west doorway. [1] [b]

The façade is today attributed to **Raguzzini**, who must have completed it in 1735. However, some scholars believe that it should be attributed to **Gabriele Valvassori**, who in the years 1750-1753 was responsible for the construction of the adjacent Monastery, which is located on the right side of the church to Via della Madonna dei Monti, where you can see a beautiful portal from **Valvassori's** hand. [1] [2]

In the 19th century, Dominicans of the Roman Province took over from their brethren of Florence and oversaw a restoration of the interior in 1856. [1]

On the right choir is the pipe organ, built in 1859 by **Pietro Pantanella** and restored in 2006 by the Inzoli company. [4]

The convent was secularized in 1873. The friars continued with the administration of the church itself until 1921, when diocesan priests took over. Meanwhile, the parish was suppressed in 1910 as being too small. In 1930 there were archaeological excavations under the church, following an initial exploration in 1910. [1]

Since 1951, the church has been served by Regular Tertiaries of St Francis (Terz' Ordine Regolare di San Francesco) or TOR. The latest restoration was carried out by them in 1965 to 1970, the same period when the old convent became the Hotel Forum which it remains. [1]

The titular of the church from 2007 has been Cardinal Seán Brady of Ireland. [1]

Exterior

Façade

The façade is slightly back from the street, on a tiny piazza. It is rendered in a sort of pale grayish green with white architectural details, and as a Baroque piece of architecture has less regard than usual for Classical forms. [1]

There are two levels, separated by a floating entablature with a dedicatory inscription on the frieze referring to the saints (SS MM Quirico et Julittae dicatum). The first level has two pairs of pilasters in a debased Doric style, which do not reach the main entablature but support two separate cornices either side of the entrance pediment (the left hand pilaster is obscured by the building next door). The horizontal zone between these cornices and the entablature has three identical blind archivolt, decorated with an acanthus and curlicue motif at their keystones and with the central one over the entrance. [1]

In between each pair of pilasters is a large blank rectangular panel with a raised border and with the border also passing around a trapezoidal device on top. [1]

The doorway has been dated to the 1475 restoration, and attributed to **Baccio Pontelli**. It has a very tall doorcase, the lintel of which is decorated with a wreath and ribbon motif. Above this and below a projecting cornice is an inscription recording the restoration by Pope Sixtus IV. Neither the doorcase nor the inscription are in their original places, and they do not necessarily belong together. Indeed, the inscription seems to have been trimmed away a little, to make it fit the frame. [1] [b]

Above the cornice is another inscription on a rectangular tablet commemorating the restoration by Pope Paul V, which has a Baroque frame flanked by a pair of volutes and crowned by a spilt segmental pediment in two sections. [1]

The second level has a central large curve-topped window directly above the entablature, with a molded frame and a floating arc cornice. This is flanked by a pair of raised square panels with quarter-circles chamfered out of their corners. Above these is a pair of small vertical rectangular windows with floating horizontal cornices and balustrades, and above the large window is another large window, this time rectangular, also with a balustrade. This window extends well into the gable, for there is no pediment. The roofline has a projecting molded cornice. [1]

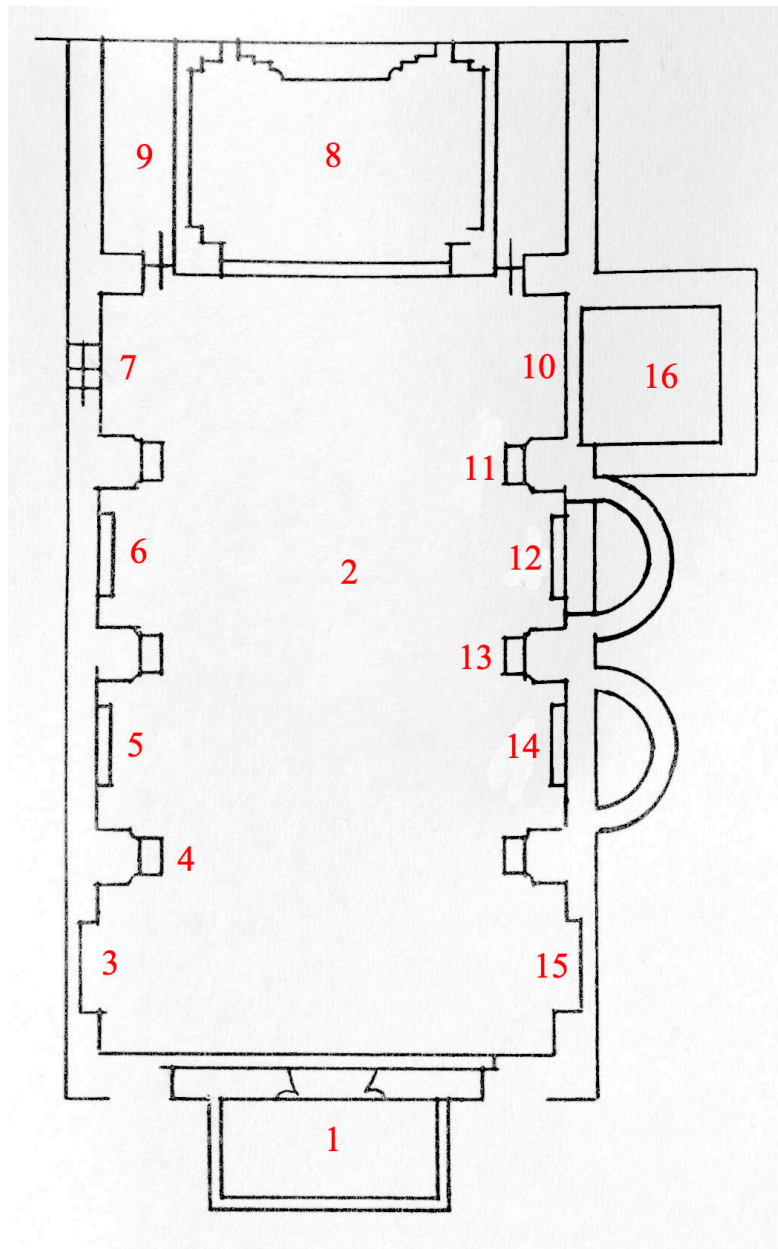
Campanile

The early mediaeval (12th century) campanile is not easily visible from the ground, as the former convent has been built up to and around it on the three sides not occupied by the church. The visible bell chamber is of simple form, a rather squat cube with two well separated narrow arched sound-holes on the west face and a pair separated by a little marble column on the south face. There is a string course between these and the roofline of the tiled pyramidal cap. [1] [a]

Hotel Forum

The Hotel Forum (the old convent) are rightly proud of the views from their roof-terrace restaurant. From the hotel restaurant there is a good close-up view of the campanile. You do not need to be a guest to do this, the food is good (although expensive) and the view of the Forum is stunning. The hotel has an impressive original Baroque entrance doorway at the far end of its frontage on the Via della Madonna dei Monti. [1]

Plan



Interior

Nave (2)

The architect of the 18th century interior was **Filippo Raguzzini**, who provided a very simple decorative scheme. [1]

There is a single nave of four bays, which since 1730 has been covered by a barrel vault. There are four arched niches on each side, the archivolts springing from Doric imposts and the piers having very shallow blind pilasters running up to an entablature that runs round the interior. This has a strongly projecting and molded cornice. The spandrels of the arches have frescoes of putti, now rather faded. The walls are all in a creamy white which now looks grayish. [1]

The middle two arches on each side are occupied by altars, and the far one by what looks like an opera box (cantoria) intended for choral events. These two timber cantorie are identical, and are cantilevered out on brackets with baluster pins in yellow and the rest in white. Note the fretwork screens running along the tops of their balustrades, which were to protect the anonymity of the musicians. The right hand cantoria is now occupied by the organ, and so the screen has been partly dismantled. [1]

There is a very good wooden pulpit on the pier between the second and third arches, also cantilevered out with a separate sounding-board. It was executed in walnut in 1733. [1]

The barrel vaulted ceiling has triangular lunettes over the arches, which on the left contain windows with stained glass. The large central panel has a fresco by **Pietro Gagliardi** of 1856 depicting *The Apotheosis of SS Quiricus and Julitta*. This shows the saints as a little boy with his mother, surrounded by a swarm of angels and putti and with God the Father signaling an enthusiastic welcome at the top. The painted decorations in the rest of the vault are by **Giovanni Luciani**. [1]

The counterfaçade has a stained glass window of *SS Quiricus and Julitta* above the entrance, and inscriptions and funeral memorials on each side.

The marble floor was laid in 1956, after the previous one apparently collapsed. It includes a memorial-slab to the priest who provided the funds for the work, Don Bonaventura Macchiarola. [1]

Sanctuary (3)

The impressive high altar dates from 1600, although the polychrome marble work on it it was restored in 1736. Four alabaster Corinthian columns support four posts, the inner pair being brought forward slightly and supporting a segmental pediment with the central section recessed. The anonymous altarpiece dates from 1631 and depicts *The Martyrdom of Saints Quirico and Giulitta*. [1]

Above the aedicule is a large window with good modern stained glass depicting *The Resurrected Christ*. This is flanked by frescoes depicting *Christ* on the left, and *Moses* on the right. On the right hand side wall is an early 19th century depiction of *St Paschal Baylon*, from the first half of the 19th century. From a corridor to the right of this, there is access to the excavations of the former church below. On the wall to the left of the altar is a memorial inscription about the dedication of the high altar. [1] [2]

The vault has a fresco of *Allegory of the Mystic Lamb*, 1856, by church of Il Gesù. [2]

Altars and memorials on the left side, proceeding from back to front:

The empty recess to the left of the entrance (3).

On the pillar between the first and the second arch (4) is a neo-Classical monument to a parish priest, Gregorio Maria Terenzi from 1826. [1]

Altar of Sts Vincent Ferrer and Nicholas of Bari (5)

The first altar on the left is dedicated to Sts Vincent Ferrer and Nicholas of Bari, and the altarpiece painting of *Sts Vincent and Nicholas adoring the Christ Child* is anonymous (there is an attribution to Agostino Masucci, 1741). St Vincent is shown with angel's wings, an allusion to his nickname of "The Angel of the Final Judgment" (the dominant theme of his preaching). [1] [2] [4]

Altar of Our Lady of the Rosary (6)

The second altar on the left is dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, and has an interesting compound altarpiece within a frame in alabaster and Sicilian jasper. The main depiction by **Ruspi** again shows *Sts Dominic and Catherine of Siena venerating an inset icon of Our Lady*, which is a copy of a 15th century work. Around the main depiction are fifteen miniature depictions of the *Mysteries of the Rosary*, which are anonymous. The overall work is 19th century, but the miniatures are thought to have been commissioned by the Dominicans for their 1728 rebuilding. A possible attribution is to **Michelangelo Catoni**. [1] [3]

The empty recess to the left of the sanctuary. (7)

Sacristy (9)

The sacristy vault has a depiction of *The Martyrdom of SS Quiricus and Julitta* by **Gaetano Papini** 1751. [1]

Altars and memorials on the right side, preceding from front to back:

Next to the sanctuary is an 18th century icon of *Our Lady of Mercy*.

In the arch to the right of the sanctuary (10) is a door that leads to the base of the campanile. Above the door the organ has been built in by means of a projecting wooden balcony. The organ was built in 1859 by **Pietro Pantanella** and restored in 2006 by the Inzoli company. [6]

On the next pier is a memorial to Francesca Merolli. (11) A portrait painting in oil on a round copper plate depicts the young woman who, according to the inscription below, died at the age of 23. The portrait is inserted in an artfully decorated round stone frame, which is again inserted in the tomb itself, which dates from 1858. [2]

Altar of St Dominic (12)

The next recess on the right has a painting by **Ercole Ruspi** 1855, depicting *St Dominic preaching*. At the bottom right you can see the artist's signature and the year 1855. [1] [2]

On the pilaster between the second and the third arch sits the pulpit. (13)

Altar of SS Joseph and Dismas (14)

The first altar on the right is dedicated to St Joseph and St Dismas (the Good Thief). The altarpiece shows *The Holy Family*, and is described as being by **Giuseppe Plumier**, 1749. Jesus, Mary and Joseph are accompanied by an infant St John the Baptist, to the left the Visitation is depicted and in the background the Crucifixion with the stoning of St Stephen. St Thomas Aquinas is depicted in the tondo portrait above the altar, which is also by **Plumier**. An unusual feature is that the tondo is incorporated into the white and black marble frame of the altarpiece, which was hence painted with a bite taken out of it. [1]

On the next pilaster is a painting the *The Devine Mercy*.

Former Baptistry (15)

In the first recess on the right stood the former baptismal font, a very ruined fresco of *The Baptism of Christ* is seen on the wall. The baptismal font was moved to the Church of Santa Elena in Via Casilina in 1914, after Pope Pius X in 1910 had decided that Santi Quirico e Giulitta should no longer function as a parish church. Above the fresco is a text by the Prophet Ezekiel (chapter 36): [2]

"Vi aspergerò con acqua pura ... vi purificherò ... sarete il mio popolo e io
sarò il vostro Dio"

("I will sprinkle you with clean water ... "I will cleanse you ... you shall
be my people and I will be your God").

Crypt

The crypt is accessed from the right hand side of the sanctuary. Excavated in 1930, its three chambers are now occupied by the Museum of Cribs (see below). [1]

Fabric from the original 6th century edifice can be seen here. The apse has remnants of frescoes, in two registers. The lower one has painted draperies and a representation of the Lamb of God, and is 9th century. The upper one has unidentifiable fragments of standing saints, and is of the later Middle Ages. The site of the original altar can be discerned. [1]

Here is the tomb of Cristina Egitta Bonaparte Stuart, a niece of Napoleon who died in 1847. [1]

Museum of Cribs

This crypt is the home of the Angelo Stefanucci International Museum of Cribs, which is a private collection of anything to do with Christmas cribs set up here by the eponymous founder in the 1967. There are thousands of crib-figures from all over the world, made from all sorts of materials some amazingly tiny. [1]

The museum is now administered by the Italian Association of Friends of the Crib , also founded by Stefanucci and recognised by the Church. [1]

Artists and Architects

Baccio [Pontelli](#) (c.1450-1492), Italian architect from Florence
Ercole [Ruspi](#) (19th cent), Italian painter
Filippo [Raguzzini](#) (1690-1771), Italian architect
Gabriele [Valvassori](#) (1683-1761), Italian architect of the late-Baroque period
Gaetano Papini (18th cent), Italian painter
Giuseppe Plumier (18th cent.), painter
Pietro [Gagliardi](#) (1809-1890), Italian painter (also see [here](#))
Pietro Pantanella (1821-1901), Italian organ builder

Location

Address

31a Via Tor dei Conti 00184 Roma
Tel. 06 67 89 263

Coord

[41° 53' 38.5"N 12° 29' 15.2"E](#)

Access

The church is open (tourist website 060608, November 2016):
Daily 8:30 to 12:00, 17:00 to 20:00.

Links and References

[1] [Roman Churches Wiki](#)

[2] [Annas Guide](#) (Danish)

[3] [InfoRoma](#) web page

[4] [Church web site](#)

[5] [Romapedia web site](#)

[6] [Italian Wikipedia page](#)

[a] Priester, Ann; "Bell Towers and Building Workshops in Medieval Rome"; *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Jun., 1993), pp.199-220 (jstor 990786)

[b] Corbett, Spencer; "The Church of SS. Quirico e Giulitta in Rome"; *Papers of the British School at Rome*, Vol. 28 (1960), pp. 33-50 (jstor 40310612)

[c] Watkins, Basil, OSB, [THE BOOK OF SAINTS](#), 2015