

Santissime Stimmate di San Francesco

Most Holy Stigmata of Saint Francis



Santissime Stimmate di San Francesco is an 18th century confraternity church in the rione Pigna (IX). The dedication is to the Stigmata of St Francis of Assisi.

History

The first church on the site was consecrated in 1297 as recorded by a plaque kept in the sacristy. However, it is already mentioned by sources in 1192. It was dedicated to *The Forty Martyrs* of the "Calcarario", a group of Roman soldiers martyred at Sebaste (now Sivas in Turkey) in 320 by Licinus, the patrons of the lime makers who worked their kilns in the area. [1] [3]

To Classicists, the lime kilns are one of the tragedies of medieval Rome; a great number of marble statues and architectural elements were burnt to provide lime for construction. In the 16th century there is a reference to the church with the name of Santi Quaranta de Lenis, after a local noble family. [1]

In 1597, Pope Clement VIII (Aldobrandini) gave the old church to the Confraternita delle Santissime Stimmate ("Confraternity of the Stigmata of St Francis"), which had been founded three years earlier in San Pietro in Montorio by one Federico Pizzi, who was a surgeon. [1] [3]

In 1713, the archconfraternity (as it had become in the previous century) decided to rebuild the church. The approval of Pope Clement XI (Albani) was obtained, and work started the following year. The architect was Giovan Battista Contini, of the school of Bernini, who finished the main edifice in 1717. Antonio Canevari took over in 1719, and added the façade and campanile. In 1721

the completed church was consecrated to the Stigmata of St Francis, but a chapel was reserved for the Forty Martyrs. The church has remained in the possession of the archconfraternity ever since. [1] [3]

There was a major restoration in 1869 by **Andrea Busiri Vici**, who was a member. For a period until the end of the 20th century it was served by Franciscan Capuchins, but it is now under the charge of a priest of the diocese of Sessa-Aurunca, who is the chaplain of the archconfraternity. [1] [5]

Exterior

The church is set back at a small piazza across from Largo di Torre Argentina.

Façade. (1)

The façade was designed by **Antonio Canevari**, and is rendered in creamy white with two storeys. The first storey fronts the internal loggia and has three entrances, the central one of which is much larger and has an arch with a molded archivolt. These entrances are separated by two twin pairs of Composite pilasters with rather stylized capitals, doubletted along their outer edges. A pair of tripletted pilasters occupy the outer corners. These pilasters support an entablature separating the storeys, the frieze of which has a dedicatory inscription: [1]

S[ancti] Francisci sacris stigmatibus Xri[sti] insignito d[icatum].

The side entrances are simple rectangular portals, over which is a pair of almost square window apertures. [1]

The second storey is the same width as the first, and is on an attic plinth which has a pair of windows. It has the same arrangement of pilasters as the storey below, except that these have swags on their capitals instead of stylized acanthus leaves. Over the two inner pilaster pairs is a small triangular pediment, and in between them is a large rectangular window with a dished frame. The sides of the dish comprise another pair of pilasters, on the diagonal, and the on these is a dished and molded archivolt occupying almost all of the tympanum of the pediment. This creates its own tympanum between the archivolt and window, which contains a six-winged (that is, seraphic) putto's head in a stucco glory. This is the emblem of the archconfraternity. A pair of three-winged side-on putto's heads are in the upper corners of the window. [1]

Between the inner pilaster pairs and the outer corner pilasters is a pair of smaller rectangular windows with segmental pediments broken at the top. Into the breaks are inserted two more windows, round-headed with floating omega cornices. This is an unusual design feature. [1]

So far, the façade has been unremarkable. The really interesting bit is in front of the attic plinth over the entablature above the pilaster pairs flanking the main entrance. A broken segmental pediment with curlicues on the breaks contains a large stucco statue of *St Francis Receiving the Stigmata* by **Bernardino Cametti**, which partly obscures the central window. [1] [3]

The central finial on the tip of the crowning pediment has the usual metal cross, but below it is a pair of crossed arms in sheet metal. This is the emblem of the Franciscan order. [1]

Campanile

The campanile has a very interesting design, but unfortunately is almost invisible. It cannot be seen from the street. The location is over the top right hand corner of the nave. It has the plan of a chamfered square, with each face having a large arched soundhole. The cut-off corners are occupied by three-sided Ionic pilasters, each with four volutes connected by swags and hugged by semi-columns in the same style. These pilasters and semi-columns support posts which in turn support an omega cornice (Ω) on each side, the semi-circular curve of each passing over a six-winged putto's head between it and the soundhole below. There is a lead cupola in the shape of an incurved pyramid, with a flared cornice a third of the way up. [1]

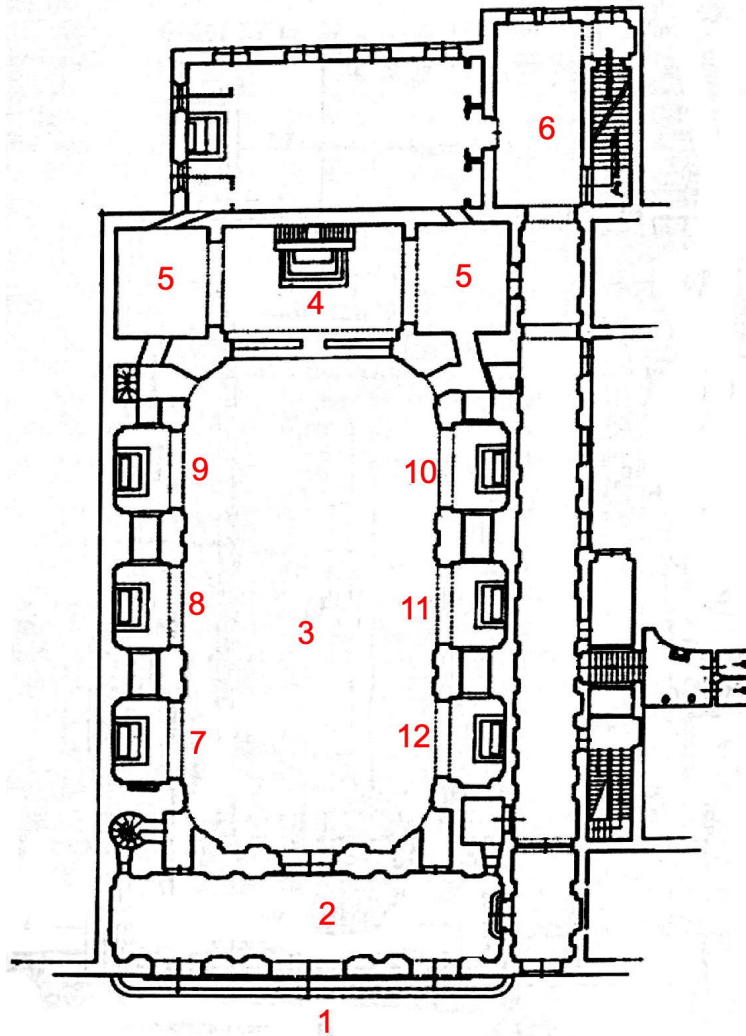
Loggia. (2)

Beyond the portals is an entrance loggia, which contains a very good neo-Classical monument to

Palmira Pulieri Petracchi and her son Enrico Pulieri by Adamo Tadolini (1844), a pupil of Canova.

On the nave frontage are two tablets with red marble frames, one commemorating a benefaction to the church in 1673 and the other its rebuilding in 1715. The door in the right wall leads to a corridor that runs along the right side of the nave to the oratory behind the apse. The church itself has the one entrance doorway. [1] [3]

Plan



Interior

The brick edifice is on a simple rectangular plan, of five bays. First comes an internal loggia, with the confraternity offices above and behind the second storey of the façade. Then there is a nave of three bays, with narrow side aisles divided into side chapels by blocking walls. Then there is the shallow rectangular sanctuary, which has two lower side-chambers as structural continuations of the side aisles. There is no apse. [1] [2]

Nave. (3)

The single nave has three chapels on each side, and the plan of a rectangle with rounded corners. The chapels are entered through arched openings with molded archivolts springing from Doric impost pilasters. The two wide piers separating the chapels on each side have each a pair of gigantic ribbed Corinthian pilasters which support an entablature running round the interior. The four curved corners are identically treated. Each has a pair of pilasters flanking a doorway with a segmental pediment. Over this in turn is a stucco relief panel with the crossed arms of the Franciscans, then a round-headed balustraded niche which looks like a cantoria for a solo musician. [1] [2]

The ceiling is barrel-vaulted, with lunette windows over the chapel arches, and has a central fresco panel depicting *The Apotheosis of St Francis* (1721) by **Luigi Garzi**. [1] [4]

The decorative scheme is by **Giuseppe Valadier**, executed from 1828 to 1829. It is restrained, in creamy white with gilded details such as the pilaster capitals and with light and dark grey touches. [1] [2]

The pretty little organ is in a gallery over the entrance, and was very highly regarded when it was originally installed in 1858 by **Adeodato Ubaldo Rossi** of Bologna. The confessionals, in walnut wood, are a product of Roman cabinetry of the beginning of the eighteenth century. Over the entrance, below the organ gallery is the papal crest of Pope Clement XI, who authorized the rebuilding of the church. [1] [3]

In the floor there are numerous tombstones.

Sanctuary (4)

The triumphal arch has a high, dished archivolt fitting into the nave vault, and springing from the interior entablature over the far rounded corners of the nave. It is embellished with vine scrolls. The sanctuary has a cross-vault, in the center of which is the six-winged putto emblem in a stucco glory. [1]

There is no apse, and the high altar occupies the far wall. The altar itself is a beautiful work in verde antico marble and red Sicilian jasper. [1]

It has two and two-half pilasters in the same style as the ones in the nave, supporting the entablature over which is a triangular pediment. On this sits stucco angels adoring a cross, which are by **Pietro Bracci**. The altarpiece is a masterpiece by **Francesco Trevisani**, 1719, and depicts *St Francis Receiving the Stigmata*. Also depicted is a companion friar, Fra Leone, reading a book and apparently not noticing what is going on. The painting was commissioned by Prince Francesco Maria Marescotti Ruspoli in 1714. [1] [3] [4]

The sanctuary is flanked by two side chambers. The left hand one contains a wall monument to Ladislas Constantine Wasa, an illegitimate son of King Ladislas IV of Poland and papal chamberlain before he died in 1698. It is a polychrome marble work by **Lorenzo Ottoni**, commissioned by Cardinal Francesco Albani (future Clement XI). The monument is an attractive piece in pink, white, green, black and yellow marbles. The monument was transferred from the former church. [1] [3]

A processional standard kept next to it was made by **Ignatius Hugford** in 1750, and depicts *St Francis Receiving the Stigmata* on the front and *The Madonna and Child* on the back. [1] [2]

Side Chapels

The chapels are structurally identical, each with a short barrel vault and with communicating portals to the neighboring chapels. The latter allow priests and servers to access chapels for private Masses without disturbing liturgies in the main body of the church. [1]

The side chapels are described clockwise, starting from the left side of the entrance.

Chapel of the Forty Martyrs (7)

The first chapel on the left is dedicated to the [Forty Martyrs of Sebaste](#), to whom the older church was dedicated. The altarpiece is *The Martyrdom of Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebaste*, by **Giacinto Brandi**. The skeleton of one of them, called St Justus, is in a niche. [1] [2] [3]

Here is a good neo-Classical memorial to Michele and Domenico Lavaggi, 1837, a family of Roman bankers. It has two cameo portrait medallions, and a bas-relief of *Our Lady with angels*. The sculptor was **Vincenzo Luccardi**. [1] [4]

In the vault is the Chi-Rho Christogram surrounded by a wreath, in gilded stucco.

Chapel of the Immaculate Conception (8)

The second chapel on the left is the Pecci Chapel, dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady. Between 1884 and 1887 it was completely refitted for Pope Leo XIII and the members of his family, the Pecci. The architect was **Federico Mannucci**, the frescoes were by **Domenico Torti**, the stucco work was by **Emilio Cantoni**, the gilding by **Germano Anfossi** and the new altar in the Baroque style was by the Medici brothers. [1] [3] [4] [6]

The aedicule is a straightforward piece having a pair of Corinthian columns in grey marble, supporting a triangular pediment with a recessed central section and a blank tympanum. The altarpiece showing *The Immaculate Conception* is by **Domenico Torti**, a Roman artist. The Pecci coat of arms is on the pedestals of the columns. [1] [3]

Torti also executed *The Birth of Our Lady* and *The Presentation of Our Lady* on the side walls. The lunette behind the aedicule pediment has angels in monochrome. The central fresco panel in the vault has the *Dove of the Holy Spirit*, and the monochrome side panels show *The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise* and *The Nativity*. [1] [3]

The pope's mother has a memorial slab in the floor outside the chapel. [1]

Chapel of St Anthony of Padua (9)

The third chapel on the left is dedicated to St [Anthony of Padua](#), and was re-fitted by **Andrea Busiri Vici** in 1870. There is a pair of pink marble pilasters supporting a tympanum in lilac. The coffered vault is attractive with a central blue cross containing the *Dove of the Holy Spirit*. The altarpiece showing the *St Anthony having a vision of the Christ-Child* is by **Francesco Trevisani**. [1] [2]

Chapel of St Joseph Calasanz (10)

The third chapel on the right is dedicated to St [Joseph Calasanz](#). There is no aedicule, and the back wall is mostly occupied by the large round-headed altarpiece showing the *Apparition of the Virgin Mary to St. Joseph Calasanz*. This is by **Marco Caprinuzzi**, a little known pupil of Benefial. [1] [3] [4]

The three fresco panels in the vault show the *Dove of the Holy Spirit in glory* flanked by figures holding the Cross and Eucharist, and are 19th century. [1]

Chapel of St Michael the Archangel (11)

The second chapel on the right is dedicated to St Michael the Archangel, and was completely re-fitted by **Andrea Busiri Vici** in 1869 in an attractive polychrome neo-Classical style. [1]

The altarpiece is a copy of the famous work by **Guido Reni** at Santa Maria della Concezione dei Cappuccini, and is thought to be by **Silverio Capparoni**. It is flanked by a pair of pale orange marble Corinthian pilasters with gilded capitals, with another pair folded into the corners. There is no proper aedicule. The inner pilasters are flanked by a pair of round-headed niches containing little statues; *St Joseph* to the left, and *St Felicity* to the right. [1]

In the lunette above the entablature is a base relief of *Virgin absorbed in the vision of God with Isaiah, David and angels* by **Pietro Galli** (1850). [4]

The inscription on the left side wall, dated 1850, states that one Joseph Borgnana became patron of the chapel. The inscription on the right wall by Pope Pius IX granting indulgencies for praying in the chapel on a certain date.

Chapel of the Redemption (12)

The first chapel on the right is dedicated to the Passion of Christ. Decorated in 1725, it is sumptuously revetted in red Sicilian jasper. The altar has a pair of Corinthian columns in contrasting light green brecciated marble (imitating verde antico), and this supports a bowed segmental pediment with a recessed central section containing winged putto's heads. The frieze, column pedestal panels and altar table backing are in the same light green stone. [1] [2]

The altarpiece is a little ivory crucifix is attributed to **Alessandro Algardi**, which is on an alabaster background and is being venerated by a pair of putti on curlicued strap brackets. The two marble Cherubs by **Bernardino Ludovisi**. These flank an elliptical tondo containing a depiction of *Our Lady of Sorrows* by **Francesco Mancini**. The epigraph reads: [1] [4]

Lacrymae eius in maxillis eius
(her tears are on her cheeks).

The actual altar is a glass-fronted red stone box containing a statue of Christ dead in the tomb. [1]

The right hand side wall has *The Flagellation* by **Marco Benefial**, and the left side has *The Crowning with Thorns* by **Domenico Maria Muratori**. The ceiling has a fresco of *The Triumph of the Cross* (Angels with symbols of passion) by **Giovanni Odazzi**. [1] [2]

The inscription on the right side documents the renovation of the chapel by Aloysius Turre in 1725. In the chapel are two gilt bronze candlesticks.

Sacristy (5)

In the ceiling of the sacristy is a fresco of *The Pardon of Assisi* by **Girolamo Pesci**. It refers to a plenary indulgence granted by Pope Honorius III to those who visit the Chapel of the Porziuncola in Assisi on 2 August. [1] [2]

Two paintings, *Death of St. Francis* and a copy of the *Deposition* by Annibale Carracci. [3]

At the altar is a reliquary of crystal and silver, in which with fragments of cloth and sponge soaked in the blood that flowed from the wounds of St. Francis, collected by Fra Leone, a disciple of the saint. It was donated to the archconfraternity by Cardinal Francesco Barberini in 1633. [3]

Oratory (6)

In the upper storey is the private oratory of the archconfraternity. The ceiling is decorated with a painting of *St Francis in Ecstasy* by **Filippo Lauri**. The altarpiece by **Giacinto Brandi** depicts *St Francis Receives the Stigmata*. [1]

On the entrance wall tempera *Apparition of St. Francis to Gregory IX* about 1720/24, *St. Elizabeth of Hungary* and *Clare* by an unknown artist from the studio of Sebastiano Conca. In a room of the convent but originally intended for the oratory, canvas *St. Francis stigmatized* by **Giacinto Brandi**.

[3] [4]

Crypt

Two rooms the first of which has a ceiling decorated with motifs made from the bones of the monks according to the Franciscan tradition [3]

Access

Opening time

Weekdays: 9.30-13.45

Holidays: half an hour before mass

Liturgy

Mass is celebrated (according to church web page):

Weekdays: 1.00 pm (Monday to Friday)

Holidays and solemnities: 11.30 am

The feast of St Francis is celebrated on 4 October.

The feast of the Exaltation of the Cross is celebrated on 14 September, especially important here because the saint received the stigmata in the context of its celebration.

The Feast of the Stigmata of St Francis (the church's patronal feast, and only otherwise celebrated by the Franciscans) is 17 September.

Burials:

Palmira Petrachia and her son Enrico
Ladislaus Constantine Wasa
<son of the King of Poland>

Location:

Addr: Largo delle Stimmate, 1 (off Largo Torre Argentina), 00186 Roma
Zone: Rione Pigna (Torre Argentina) (Roma centro)
Coord: [41° 53' 46.7"N 12° 28' 39.2"E](#)

Info:

Phone #: 0039 06 6783679
email: sacrestimmate@gmail.com
email for guided tours

Artists and Architects

Adamo [Tadolini](#) (1727-1813), Italian sculptor
Adeodato Ubaldo Rossi (19th cent), Italian organ maker from Bologna
Alessandro [Algardi](#) (1598-1654), Italian high- Baroque sculptor, architect (also see [here](#))
Andrea [Busiri Vici](#) (1817-1911), Italian architect
Antonio [Canevari](#) (1681-1764), Italian architect of the Rococo and Neoclassical periods
Bernardino [Ludovisi](#) (1694-1749), Italian sculptor
Bernardino [Cametti](#) (1682-1736), Italian sculptor of the late [Baroque](#)
Domenico Maria [Muratori](#) (1661-1742), Italian painter of the Baroque period
Domenico [Torti](#) (1830-90), Italian painter
Emilio Cantoni (19th cent), Italian sculptor and stucco artist
Federico [Mannucci](#) (1848-1935), Italian Architect, Engineer, Photographer, Mathematician
Filippo [Lauri](#) (1623-1694), Italian painter of the Baroque period
Francesco [Mancini](#) (1679-1758), Italian painter
Francesco [Trevisani](#) (1656-1746), Italian painter of the early Rococo or late Baroque
Germano Anfossi (19th cent), Italian gilder
Giacinto [Brandi](#) (1621-1691), Italian painter of the Baroque period
Giovanni Battista [Contini](#) (1641-1723), Italian architect of the Late Baroque period
Giovanni [Odazzi](#) [aka *Il Passignano*] (1663-1731), Italian painter and etcher of the Baroque period
Giorlamo [Pesci](#) (1679-1759), Italian painter
Giuseppe [Valadier](#) (1762-1839), Italian architect and designer, sculptor, urban planner and archeologist, a chief exponent of Neoclassicism in Italy
Ignatius [Hugford](#) (1703-1778), Italian painter in an early Neoclassic style
Lorenzo [Ottoni](#) [aka *Il Lorenzone*] (1658-1736), Italian sculptor
Luigi [Garzi](#) (1638-1721), Italian painter of the Baroque period
Marco [Benefial](#) (1684-1764), Italian proto-Neoclassical painter
Marco Caprinuzzi [aka *Marco del Raspoli da Civita Castellana*] (1711-1778), Italian Baroque painter
Pietro [Bracci](#) (1700-1773), Italian sculptor of the Late Baroque (also see [here](#))
Pietro [Galli](#) (1804-1877), Italian sculptor
Silverio [Capparoni](#) (1831-1907), Italian painter
Vincenzo [Luccardi](#) (1808-1876) Italian sculptor

Links and References:

1. [Roman Churches Wiki](#)
2. [Church Web pages](#)
3. [Romapedia blog](#)
4. [Info.roma web-page](#)

5. [Official diocesan web-page](#)
6. [Istituto Matteucci page on Torti](#)

[Tourist info page](#)

[Official diocesan web-page](#)

[Italian Wikipedia page](#)

[Interactive Nolli Map Website](#)

["De Alvariis" gallery on Flickr](#)

[Roma SPQR web-page with gallery](#)

["Romeartlover" web-page](#)

["Roma Segreta" web-page](#)