

San Salvatore in Lauro



San Salvatore in Lauro is a late 17th century parish, regional and titular church of medieval foundation, located in the rione Ponte. The dedication is to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. This is the regional church for expatriates from the Marches, and is now also the Roman shrine of Our Lady of Loreto. [1]

History

The first church was apparently built in the 12th century, since a bull of Pope Urban III of 1186 describes it as dependent on San Lorenzo in Damaso. It was already dedicated to our Savior by 1192, and was most likely called "in lauro" because of a nearby garden which had a laurel tree growing over its wall. [1]

It was rebuilt c. 1450 by Cardinal Latino Orsini, who took it over as the chapel of a convent of Augustinian Canons Regular which he had founded next door. Since he came from Venice, he did not introduce Canons of the Lateran, as might be expected, but those from the Venetian congregation of San Giorgio in Alga. The new convent was dedicated to St George. The church originally had a nave with side aisles, but the new building had a single nave only. [1]

The church was burned out in 1591, but the monastery was unaffected. The latter survived until 1668, when Pope Clement IX suppressed the congregation so that the Republic of Venice could convert its resources into cash for its war against the Ottoman Turks. [1]

The church was destroyed in the fire of 1591 and rebuilt starting in 1594 from the foundations after the design of **Ottaviano Mascherini**. However, there were only funds for him to complete the nave and this was done in 1600. The interior decoration was left uncompleted until finished by **Ludovico Rusconi Sassi** and **Nicola Salvi** in 1736. [1]

The vacated Augustinian monastery was initially intended for the Discalced Carmelites, but in 1669 were given by Clement X to the *Confraternity of the Piceni*, inhabitants of the Marche region who were traditionally employed as papal soldiers and tax-collectors, who made it their "national" church and entitled it after Madonna di Loreto. It paid a large sum of money for the complex, and then converted the convent into a college for the study of law and medicine. Since then, the church has been the regional one for expatriates from Ascoli Piceno in particular and the Marches generally. [1]

The confraternity waited thirty years to do anything with the unfinished church. Then, in 1697 it employed **Francesco Fontana** to build a transept (he was a nephew of Carlo Fontana). The work only went on for a year, then there was a long pause. [1]

In 1727, the confraternity finally had the funds to finish the church and restore the convent. **Ludovico Sassi** was employed to build the dome, sanctuary and campanile, and **Nicola Salvi** was put in charge of the proposed sacristy. The consecration was in 1731, although the work had not been completed. [1]

Sassi left in 1734, so **Salvi** finished the work off and presented the completed church in 1736. There was no façade, and the confraternity decided to do without one. [1]

Camillo Rusconi was in charge of the convent restoration, which he completed in 1734. [1]

The present high altar dates from 1792. [1]

In 1824 the church was made parochial, taking over the parish which used to belong to San Simone Profeta (as a result, the latter building eventually fell into ruin). [1]

The façade with a relief *Traslazione della S.Casa di Loreto*, by **Rinaldo Rinaldi**, was created in neoclassic forms, by **Camillo Guglielmetti** in 1857-1862.

The convent buildings were taken over by the Italian government after 1870, having been used as barracks during the French occupation (1808-1814). They are now used for exhibitions, as well as for activities associated with the surviving confraternity (now known as a Pious Sodality). [1] [2]

In 1939, the city block to the south-west of the church was demolished. This made the piazza much larger, and joined it to the Via dei Coronari. [1]

In 1963, the Sodality changed its status from a charity to that of an academic institution. At the end of the 20th century, the former convent was restored in order to become the Complesso Monumentale di San Salvatore in Lauro, a conference and exhibition center especially devoted to the arts. [1]

The church was a titular church from 1587 until 1670. Pope Benedict XVI reestablished it as a deanery in 2007. The current cardinal deacon is Cardinal [Angelo Comastri](#). [1]

Exterior

There is a central dome over the crossing of the transept, slightly elliptical, of lead with eight ribs. It sits on an octagonal drum with recessed sides, each with a window, and has a lantern with a ball finial. The roofs of the transepts and short rectangular presbyterium are much lower than that of the nave, and oddly the ridge line of the latter is actually higher than the drum of the dome. [1]

The fabric is in brick, with some details in travertine limestone. The façade is entirely faced in travertine. [1]

Campanile

The campanile, designed by Nicola Salvi, was added in the 18th century. It is on the far side of the left hand transept, and is a chamfered square tower with a single arched sound hole on each side and an attractive ogee-curved tiled cap. Again there is a ball finial, matching that of the dome. [1]

The impressive brick construction of the nave is visible from the piazza on the right hand side. The first story has an entablature with dentillate cornice of which has a very deep overhang. Above this, massive pilaster buttresses rise to an equally deep cornice on the roofline, and this cornice follows the tops of the buttresses to give a powerful crenellated impression. [1]

Façade

The façade was rebuilt entirely in white limestone by Camillo Guglielmetti in a faithful Neoclassical style, 1857-1862. Two Corinthian columns, in the round and detached, support a high, horizontal and shallow monumental porch with a deep entablature. The first story cornice mentioned above runs around the top of this, and on top is an elaborate papal coat-of-arms of Bl. Pope Pius IX (1846-1878). Either side of the entrance on the first story frontage is a pair of recessed blank panels, a narrow horizontal rectangular one over a large vertical rectangular one. The second story bears the main feature of the façade, a sculpture by Rinaldo Rinaldi in another rectangular panel of the *Madonna of Loreto riding through the sky on the Holy House of Nazareth*. A further pair of blank panels flanks this sculpture. The second story entablature bears a blank triangular pediment, and the frieze of this has a dedicatory inscription

Mariae Lauretanae Piceni Patronae.

This means "To Mary of Loreto, Patroness of the Picenese" and contains a pun on the name of the church. [1]

Cloister

A 15th century cloister, among the finest Renaissance cloisters at Rome, can be entered through the sacristy (please ask the custodian) or directly from the street. It was built c. 1450 on orders from Cardinal Orsini as the center of his monastery, and has arcades for both first and second stories. The former has delicate arches with Ionic columns, all in grey marble. The second story arcade has pilasters instead, and is of the following century. The arches, however, match in size to give a pleasing effect. Beyond the cloister is a peaceful courtyard with some fine sculptures, including one of *St Peter being set free from prison*, placed over the doorway that you enter through; it was originally in the 12th century church at the site. As the cloisters and refectory are at times used for art exhibitions, you may need to pay to get in. [1]

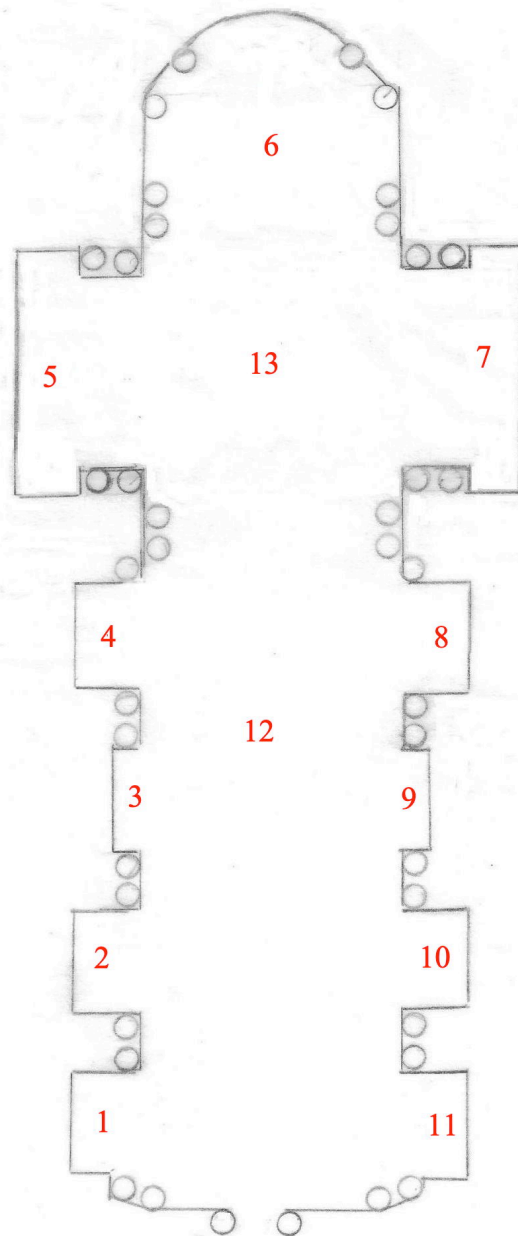
The cloister contains the tomb of Pope [Eugenius IV](#) (R. 1431-1447). The tomb was originally installed in old St. Peter's Basilica, but was removed and reassembled here, with some later additions, when the old basilica was demolished. Its inscription records the proceedings of the council of Bale, by which he had been deposed, and his triumph over John Palaeologus, emperor of Greece, after the council of Florence. The tomb has been attributed to Isaia da Pisa.

The floor opposite this monument opens into the large private oratory of the college, in which are good frescos of the *Creation of Eve*, the *eating of the forbidden fruit* etc., on the ceiling, by Camillo Rusconi; and on the wall at the extremity is *Marriage of Cana*, by Cecchino Salviati of Florence.

If you ask the custodian, you can see the sacristy and the refectory of the monastery. In the refectory is a fresco by Francesco de' Rossi (Il Salviati), painted in 1550, of the *Wedding Feast of Cana*.

Layout and Plan

The church has the plan of a Latin cross, having a single nave of four bays. Each bay has a pair of side chapels. Then comes a transept, slightly wider than the nave with chapels, and then a sanctuary with a polygonal apse. [1]



Interior

Nave

The nave (12) is the work of **Mascherino**, and immediately recalls the designs of [Palladio](#). There are aisles, but these are divided into chapel niches, four on each side, by blocking walls. Two of these niches are occupied by entrances, leaving three actual chapels on each side. The piers of the arcades are very wide, and in front of each is a pair of monumental grey travertine Corinthian columns which hold up protruding sections of the internal entablature. The latter has a strongly projecting dentillate cornice, and there are 34 of these matching columns throughout the church. [1]

The ceiling is barrel-vaulted, and has window lunettes. It is divided into sections by wide doubled transverse arches springing from above the column pairs on either side. The decoration is very simple. [1]

The counter-façade has a large dedicatory inscription over the door, dating to the 1731 consecration and giving a short history of the edifice. A portrait in oils of the martyred bishop St Emygdus of

Ascoli Piceno is in the ceiling vault lunette above. [1]

The entrance is flanked by a pair of good 19th century memorials in Renaissance style. To the left is one to Cardinal Antonio Mateucci (1868), with a mosaic of him with the *Madonna and Child* by **Prosperi**, and to the right one to Cardinal Gaspare Pianetti (1872) with a little portrait in a tondo and a lunette relief of the *Madonna and Child*. [1]

Crossing

The nave entablature runs around the transept and sanctuary. The transept's triumphal arch springs from this, and its piers have a cluster of four columns each. This arch is one of four forming the pendentives of the dome, the other three being over the transept side chapels and the sanctuary. [1]

The dome itself is simply decorated, like the nave vault, with the *Dove of the Holy Spirit* in the oculus. Eight large windows in the drum are separated by tripletted Doric pilasters, from the capitals of which spring the dome rays focusing on the oculus. The pendentives have frescoes of prophets by **Luigi Fontana** (1862). [1]

Sanctuary (6)

The sanctuary has a single bay, with a barrel vault cut by two window lunettes throwing light onto the altar. In between these is a fresco of the *Dove of the Holy Spirit*. [1]

The triumphal arch has four columns on either side, and a further two columns occupy the far corners of the sanctuary. [1]

The altar aedicule dates from 1792, and is by **Antonio Asprucci**. Two massive Corinthian columns with gilded capitals, apparently of verde antico marble (but which look painted) support a slightly coved triangular pediment. On this sits two stucco angels. A crowd of such angels also occupy the spectacular and large gilded glory, which focuses on a little blue niche containing a statue of *Our Lady of Loreto*. The artist of the stucco work was **Pier Paolo Campi**. The statue of Our Lady was originally by **François Duquesnoy**, and was crowned by the Vatican Chapter in 1644, but since 1921 has been replaced by a copy. [1]

The tabernacle is built of rare marbles, and adorned with four small columns of alabaster. In the beautiful urn of rosso antico, under the altar, repose the bodies of the martyrs Quirinus, Ursus, and Valerius.

The side chapels will be described in a clockwise order, beginning with the chapel to the left of the entrance.

Left side chapels:

Chapel of St. Peter (1)

In the first chapel on the left, dedicated to St Peter. The altarpiece, in a red marble frame with a segmental pediment, is a *Liberation of St Peter* by **Antiveduto Grammatica** (1624). The lateral paintings, *S. Peter being liberated from prison by the angel*, to the right, and opposite, *S. Peter administering baptism*, are by **G. Odazzi**. This chapel also contains a portrait of St [Josemaría Escrivá](#) by the famous contemporary British figurative artist **Ulisse Sartini** in 2009. [1]

Chapel of St Joseph (2)

The second chapel is dedicated to St Joseph, and has an aedicule with two black marble Corinthian columns supporting a horizontal entablature with posts. The altarpiece is *SS Joseph, Joachim and Anne* by **Pier Leone Ghezzi** from 1731. [1] [2]

Here are displayed several relics pertaining to [St Pio of Pietrelcina](#). Above the altar is a silver reliquary in his image. [1]

The next bay (3) has no chapel, but contains an exit to the cloister which matches the side entrance opposite.

Chapel of St Lutgard (4)

The next chapel is dedicated to St [Lutgard](#), and the altarpiece shows her swapping hearts with Christ. It is by **Angelo Massarotti** of Cremona, from 1723. **Massarotti** also painted the lateral frescos relating to the same Saint, and those on the ceiling. [1] [2]

On the altar is a small devotional painting of Pope St. John XXIII.

Chapel of the Holy House (5)

The chapel in the left hand end of the transept is dedicated to Our Lady of Loreto. The aedicule has a pair of Corinthian columns in cipollino marble supporting a triangular pediment. The altarpiece depicts *Our Lady sitting on the Holy House while it is being carried from Nazareth to Loreto by angels* (as the legend alleges). It is by **Giovanni Peruzzini**.

The Baroque monument to the right of the altar above the sacristy door is to Cardinal Prospero Marefoschi (d. 1732). Here also are memorials to Pietro Arpi 1870, and Camillo dei Valentini 1757. [1]

Sacristy

The doorway here leads to the sacristy. The altarpiece depicts *St Emygdinus and the Saints of the Marches* by **Ghezzi** (1731), and the *Madonna delle Grazie*, immediately over the altar, is said to be by **Antonio del Pollaiuolo** of Florence, and is much venerated, having remained untouched in the conflagration that consumed the original church. [1]

Right side chapels:

Chapel of the Saints of the Marches (7)

The chapel in the right hand end of the transept is dedicated to the saints of the Italian Marches, and has the same design as that opposite. The altarpiece is a painting of the *Saints of the Marche* by **Pietro Gagliardi** in 1862. [1] [2]

Here is a spectacular Baroque monument, one of a matching pair flanking the sanctuary arch designed by **Girolamo Theodoli** and made by **Carlo Monaldi**, 1751. This one is to Cardinal Raniero Simonetti Simonetti (1675-1749, actually buried in Viterbo). Also here are memorials to Gaspare Fatati 1851, and to Cardinal Nicola Grimaldi 1845 with a bust by **Perucci**. [1] [2]

Chapel of the Nativity (8)

In the third chapel is *Nativity of Jesus* by **Pietro da Cortona** from 1669. [1] [2]

The next bay has no chapel, but instead a former side entrance. This is in polychrome marble, with a gallery above. The entrance is no longer used,

Chapel of the Crucifix (9)

Christ with St Pio

This space was reconfigured during the 2020 COVID pandemic. Originally, this space held a large crucifix, that is a copy of 12th century one venerated at Sirolo. This town is close to Loreto, and it is said that "Whoever goes to Loreto and not to Sirolo, has seen the Mother but not the Son".

During the pandemic closure the sculpture from the Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows, a life-sized modern wooden sculpture of *Christ carrying his cross with the help of St Pio of Pietrelcina*, was moved here.

Chapel of St Charles Borromeo (10)

The second chapel on the right is dedicated to St Charles Borromeo. The aedicule has a pair of black marble Corinthian columns supporting a split segmental pediment into which a window is inserted. The altarpiece is by **Alessandro Turchi**, L'Orbetto, 1669 and shows *Madonna and Child, adored by St. Francis and St. Carlo Borromeo*. The vault is richly decorated in gilded stucco work. Some relics of Pope St John Paul II are kept in this chapel, and there is a picture of him on the altar. [1] [2]

In a small alcove in the left wall is an interesting funeral monument with a large jasper obelisk.

Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows (11)

The chapel in the right of the entrance, also known as the Cappella Pavoni, was designed by **Carlo Francesco Bizzaccheri** in 1694. He did not provide an altar aedicule but instead an ornate round-headed altarpiece frame with an incurved gabled cornice. On this sit two friendly stucco angels giving you a wave, who are by **Camillo Rusconi**. The altarpiece itself is a *Pietà* by **Giuseppe Ghezzi** from 1712. The same artist also executed the *St. Nicholas of Tolentino* to the right, the *St Anthony Abbot of Egypt* to the left, and the *Eternal Father* on the ceiling. Here also is a sculpture of *Christ with St Pio of Pietrelcina*. [1] [2]

During the 2020 COVID pandemic the sculpture was moved to the middle of the right aisle to replace the Crucifix.

If you ask the custodian, you can see the sacristy and refectory. In the refectory is a fresco by **Francesco Salviati**, painted in 1550, of the *Wedding Feast of Cana*. On the ceiling of the sacristy is the *Madonna di Loreto*, painted, in 1842, by **Gagliardi**. The altarpiece, San Emidio and other Marche Saints, is by **Pier Leone Ghezzi** from 1731. [1] [2] [a]

Artists and Architects:

Alessandro Turchi [aka *L'Orbetto*] (1578-1649), Italian painter of the early Baroque from Verona
Angelo Massarotti (1653-1723), Italian painter of the Baroque period from Cremona
Antiveduto Grammatica (1571-1626), Baroque Italian painter
Antoniazio Romano (1430-1510), Italian Early Renaissance painter
Antonio Asprucci (1723-1808), Italian Neo-Classical architect
Antonio del Pollaiuolo (1433-1498), Italian painter, sculptor, engraver and goldsmith during the Renaissance
Camillo Guglielmetti (d. 1862, Italian architect
Camillo Rusconi (1658-1728), Italian sculptor of the late Baroque
Carlo Francesco Bizzaccheri (1656-1721), Italian architect early Baroque and Rococo style
Carlo Monaldi (1683-1760), Italian sculptor
Cecchino Salviati (1510-1563), Italian painter in the Mannerist period from Florence
Filippo Prosperi (19th cent), Italian painter
Francesco de' Rossi [aka *Il Salviati*] (1510-1563), Italian Mannerist painter and stucco artist
Francesco Fontana (1668-1708), Italian architect
François Duquesnoy [aka *Francesco Fiammingo*] (1597-643), a Flemish Baroque sculptor
Giovanni Odazzi (1663-1731), Italian painter and etcher of the Baroque period
Giovanni Peruzzini (1629-1694), Italian painter of the Baroque
Girolamo Theodoli (1677-1766), Italian architect
Giuseppe Ghezzi (1634-1721), Italian painter of the Baroque period
Isaia da Pisa (1410-1464), Italian sculptor
Ludovico Rusconi Sassi (1678-1736), Italian architect of the Rococo period
Luigi Fontana (1827-1908), Italian **sculptor, painter**, stuccoes and architect
Nicola Salvi (1697-1751), Italian architect
Ottaviano Nonni [aka *Il Mascherino*] (1536-1606), Italian architect, sculptor, and painter from Bologna
Paolo Campi (18th cent), Italian neo-Classical sculptor
Pier Leone Ghezzi (1674-1755), Italian Rococo painter and caricaturist
Pietro Berrettini da Cortona (1597-1669), Italian Baroque painter
Pietro Gagliardi (1809-1890), Italian painter
Rinaldo Rinaldi (1793-1873), Italian sculptor of the Neoclassic period
Ulisse Sartini (21st cent), painter

Relics:

Quirinus, Ursus, and Valerius

Burials:

Pope Eugenius IV {Gabriele CONDULMER, C.R.S.A., (ca. 1383-1447)}

Latino Cardinal [ORSINI](#), (ca. 1410-1477)

Buried in the church which he had rebuilt and endowed

Giovanni Battista Cardinal [ORSINI](#), (ca. 1450-1503)

Francisco Cardinal [DESPRATS](#), (1454-1504)

Prospero Cardinal [MAREFOSCHI](#), (1653-1732)

Nicola Cardinal [GRIMALDI](#), (1768-1845)

Gaspare Bernardo Cardinal [PIANETTI](#), (1780-1862). {also see [here](#)}

Antonio Cardinal [MATTEUCCI](#), (1802-1866)

Maddalena [Orsini](#) (c.1415-1450)

Sister of Card. Latino Orsini

Pier Leone [Ghezzi](#) (1674-1755)

Italian Rococo painter and caricaturist

Giovanni Paolo [Melchiorri](#) (1670-1745)

Italian painter

Camillo dei Valentini (d. 1757)

Location:

Address: Piazza di San Salvatore in Lauro 15, 00186 Roma

Coordinates: [41° 54' 2"N 12° 28' 10"E](#)

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Opening times

Weekdays 4.30pm-7.00pm

Holidays 8.00am-1.00pm 4.30pm-7.00pm

Masses

Weekdays 6.00pm

Holidays 8.30am 10.00am 12.15pm 6.00pm

During the Mass is not allowed to visit the Church

Links and References:

1. [Roman Churches Wiki](#)
2. [Info.Roma Web page](#)
3. [Wikipedia page on Paladian architecture](#)
4. [Padre Pio in Scotland web page](#)
5. [Tourist info on 060608.itweb page](#)
6. [Cardinals of the Catholic Church](#)

[Wikimedi photo catalog](#)

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- b. Davies, Gerald; RENASCENCE, THE SCULPTURED TOMBS OF THE 15TH CENT. IN ROME; 1916