

Santa Teresa d'Avila



Santa Teresa d'Avila is an early 20th century minor basilica, parish, conventual and titular church which is in the Pinciano quarter, just east of the Villa Borghese and facing the ancient city walls. The dedication is to St Teresa of Jesus (1515-1582), founder of the Discalced Carmelite (OCD) nuns and a Doctor of the Church. The church is also known as **Santa Teresa in Corso d'Italia**. [1] [b]

History

In the imperial era, the vast adjacent area was occupied by the Sallustiani Gardens, where Saints Ciriaco, Largo and Smaragdo were beheaded. [a]

The foundation stone of the church was laid by Cardinal Girolamo Gotti OCD in 1901, commissioned by Fr Bernardino of S. Teresa, 75 Superior general of the Order. It was designed in the Romanesque-Lombard style by Tullio Passarelli, and completed remarkably quickly. The church was consecrated on April 20, 1902, by Cardinal Girolamo Gotti, as a plaque to the left of the main entrance recalls. It was made a parochial church by Pope Pius X in 1906, and at the same time the new parish was entrusted to the Discalced Carmelite friars. They still serve the parish, and have their Generalate in the convent next door. [1] [3] [4] [a]

On January 13, 1915, the church was damaged by an earthquake. The church was restored in 1936, at which time the floor of the side aisles, which were raised above the central nave, is lowered to create a single floor level. [4]

Pope Pius XII elevated the church to the dignity of a Minor Basilica in 1951. [1] [3]

In 1962 Pope St John XXIII made the church titular, with the title of Santa Teresa in Corso d'Italia. The first cardinal priest was Giovanni Cardinal Panico. László Cardinal Paskai OFM was appointed in 1985, but died in 2015 and was succeeded by Maurice Piat in the following year. [1] [3]

Exterior

This is a substantial building in red brick, with a few architectural details in limestone. The plan is basilical, in the form of a Latin cross. There is a central nave with side aisles of three bays, followed by a transept of the same width as the nave with its aisles and having a depth equivalent to a nave bay. Then comes a sanctuary of one bay, with a high semi-circular apse. This sanctuary bay is flanked by a pair of side chapels, each of which has its own little apse. [1]

The side walls of the central nave have the bays delineated by a pair of blind brick pilaster-buttresses, which are taken over the single-pitched side aisle roofs and down the blank side aisle walls. These support the internal vault. In the central side walls, separated by these buttresses, are three large shallow round-headed recesses each of which contains a pair of tall round-headed windows. The aisle side walls each have a pair of little round-headed windows in each bay. [1]

The rooflines of the walls are embellished with hanging or pendant arches in relief as part of the brickwork, which are supported by brick corbels. These hanging arcades are a design feature of the church. [1]

The transepts each have a pair of wheel windows in the side walls (matching that in the façade), and the left hand end has a large three-light window in the end wall. The sanctuary bay has a single tall window on each side, and the central apse has five of these separated by tall, thin pilasters. [1]

The central nave has a pitched and tiled roof, which runs over the transept and the sanctuary bay. The transept ends have their own pitched and tiled roofs, slightly lower. The central apse has a roof of five triangular sectors, the same height as the transept ends. [1]

Convent

The left hand transept end has an end wall facing a side street, but the right hand one joins seamlessly onto a very tall six-story convent block which shares the roof. This block is in the same style as the church, but is extended by lower wings to the right and also parallel to the church on the right hand side. These were built later in first half of the 20th century, and do not match. [1]

These wings of the convent face onto a cloister garden, which has a two-story brick block containing shops between it and the street. This range looks original; the shop frontages are within an arcade of fifteen arches separated by engaged piers with stone imposts and bases. [1]

About the 1960's the friars added two large blocks in modernist style, one to the north of the north cloister range and the other facing the cloister garth to the east. [1]

Campanile

There is a 40-meter tall brick campanile inserted into the corner between the far end of the right aisle and the right hand end of the transept. Each side has a wide sunken panel, topped by four little arches springing from stone corbels. Below these arches is a clock-face. The bell-chamber is above a projecting molded stone cornice, and has an arcade of three open arches on each side separated by a pair of little stone columns with block capitals. These arches are within a similar sunken panel in the brickwork, topped by four more decorative hanging arches. The crowning cornice is embellished with modillions (little brackets), and there is a slightly overhanging tiled pyramidal cap. [1] [3]

Façade (1)

The church's entrance façade, in Lombard Romanesque-Gothic style, is of two orders. The central nave frontage of the first order is blank brickwork, except for the impressive entrance which is approached by a flight of six steps. This has a gabled entrance porch, the roofline of which has a stone cornice. The actual entrance is a semi-circular arch supported by a pair of grey marble columns, the capitals of which are elaborately carved in basketwork. Within this arch are nested two others, with the archivolts receding and supported by four more columns. These nested arches

enclose the actual doorway, over which is a tympanum with a carved relief depicting *Christ Blessing St Teresa*. [1] [a]

The bronze door was provided in 1983. It is by **Fra Serafino Melchiorre** OCD, and the reliefs depicts *Episodes from the life of Saint Teresa*. Also they partially depict the extraordinary Jubilee of that year. [1] [3] [b]

The aisle ends of the first order show their sloping rooflines, which are decorated with little pendant brick arches set on stone corbels. A pair of blind pilasters occupies the corners. Each of these subsidiary zones has a round-headed window with a projecting floating arc or eyebrow cornice above. [1]

At the top of the first order is a narrow stone cornice, and above this is a loggia passage set into the façade with eleven little arches separated by small columns with derivative Ionic capitals. Over this is a projecting cornice, and at each end of this is a carved marble lion by **Armando Brasini**. [1] [2]

The second order is gabled, but without a pediment. There is a large central stone wheel window in a wide frame, and three small rectangular stone tablets arranged in a triangle around it. These bear heraldry carved in relief. Above the window is a stone-framed air-hole shaped like a Greek cross. The roofline has a stone cornice, and pendant arches like those below the aisle rooflines. [1]

Interior

The central nave (2) of three bays is cross-vaulted, with the bays defined by two large structural piers in the side arcades. Each bay is divided into two sub-piers by a pair of thinner piers in between these. The piers have clustered columns, in a Gothic idiom. [1]

The church is decorated with works by early 20th century Roman artists. The wheel window over the entrance has stained glass showing *Christ and the Apostles*. [1]

The nave side aisles contain three side altars each (there are no external chapels off the aisles), and these are located in the far sub-bays of each bay. The near sub-bay of the middle bay on the left has a side entrance. [1]

Also important are the confessionals of the cabinetmaker **O. Alfonsi**. The church is equipped with a marble pulpit (1), with carved *scenes from the life of Jesus*, sculpted by **Pietro Piraino**, who also carved the Holy Water. [1] [a]

The capitals of the pillars and columns, and the bronze candelabra are by **Armando Brasini**. [4]

Chancel

The transept is counted as part of the chancel, and is raised on a short flight of steps. The main altar (4) is free-standing and is in the far side of the transept crossing, with a choir behind it in the apse. The modern altar is in front of the main altar with a frontal of a modern painting, in a Neo-Byzantine style, of *The Trinity, flanked by the eleven Apostles and St. Paul*. There is a pair of apsidal side-chapels flanking the sanctuary. [1]

The choir (5) is walled off by a solid screen of carved limestone, a pulpitem. On top of this is a shrine-aedicule with four corner columns, containing a life-sized statue of *St Teresa* by **Giuseppe Trabacchi**, which dominates the interior. [1] [2]

The wooden choir stalls are early 18th century. They came from Santa Maria in Campo Marzio. [1] [3]

The eight side altars, mostly designed by **Passarelli**, with various bas-reliefs by **Piraino**, are dedicated to Carmelite saints. The polychrome marble altar frontals were rescued from the demolished church of Santa Maria in Macello Martyrum. [1] [b]

Left aisle altars and monuments

Baptistry (6)

In the first bay of the left aisle, protected by a wrought iron screen and gate, is the intricately carved marble baptismal font with a bronze cover. Behind the font is a large, carved marble aedicule, in the center of which is a bas-relief of the *Baptism of Christ by St. John the Baptist*. Next to the baptismal font is the papal cassock of St. Pope Pius X in a large brass and plastic display case. [3] [a]

Altar of St. Anthony of Padua (7)

The next bay has an aedicule-altar in marble (1928). In the middle is a large statue of *St. Anthony*, with smaller statues on either side, St Francis (left) and Peter of Alcántara (right). At the ends of the altar are bas-relief bronze sculptures of *Miracles of St. Anthony*. [a]

Side entrance. (8)

Altar of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus (9)

In the bay following the side entrance is the elaborate altar dedicated to St. Thérèse of Lisieux. The altar installation dates from 1925, the year Pope Pius XI canonized her. On either side of the altar are the portraits of important in her life and canonization. On the left are Pius X and Pius XI; on the right are Benedict XV and Pius XII. The ornate carved aedicule-altar is by **Leone Tommasi** and the center painting of *St. Teresa* is by **Ettore Ballerini**. Below that are five small painting of *Scenes in the life of St. Teresa*. In the arch above the altar is a painting of the *Apotheosis of St. Teresa*. Below the altar, in a glass front case, is a sculpted image of *St. Teresa in Death* (with relics?). [a]

Altar of the Holy Infant of Prague (10)

The next bay, just before the sanctuary steps is an an aedicule-altar dedicated to the Holy Child of Prague, particularly venerated by the Carmelites. The marble triptych is by Ottavio Decimioni (1908). The statue of the Holy Child is in wood. The two marble figures on the sides are *Mary* and *Joseph*. [a] [b]

Monuments of Cardinals (11)

In the left wall of the transept are two memorials of Discalced Carmelite cardinals buried in the church. On the left is the tomb of Adeodato Giovanni Cardinal Piazza, O.C.D., (1884-1957). On the right is the memorial for Raffaele Carlo Cardinal Rossi, O.C.D., (1876-1948). His bust is by **Natale Lecci**, 1950. [a]

Chapel of the Madonna del Carmine (12)

The altar in the left side apse chapel. The statue of the Virgin is by **Amalia Dupre**, as are the statues of the Choir of the Discalced Carmelites of Concesa. [a]

Triptych depicting the *Last Supper*, on the left side transept, by **Eugenio Cisterna** (1900). [4]

Right aisle altars

Chapel of St. Joseph (13)

The altar in the right side apse chapel, from 1905. The statue of *St. Joseph with the Child Jesus*, is by **Alberto Galli**. [a] [b]

Above the entrance to the access corridor to the Sacristy (14): resin reproduction of the bronze portal made by **Bro. Serafino Melchiorre** for the Latin Parish of Haifa (Israel) of the Discalced Carmelites, depicting the *Holy Family gathered in the shadow of the Holy Spirit*. On the sides, panel with *Episodes from the life of St. Joseph* (1993). [a]

Altar of St. Charles Borromeo (15)

In the first bay, just after the sanctuary steps, is an an aedicule-altar, a gift of Bianca Ameglio in 1904. In the center is a bas-relief of *Saint Charles gives communion to a Plague Victim*. [a]

Altar of the Sacred Heart (16)

In the next bay has an aedicule-altar dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In the center is a statue of *The Sacred Heart* by **Cesare Aureli** (1919). The smaller base-relief figures on either side are by **Enrico Arrighini** (1952). On the left is *St. Teresa Margherita*, and on the right is *St. Alberto*. The bas-relief sculpture on the altar frontal appears to have had the central figure removed. [a]

Our Lady of Mount Carmel (17)

In the next bay is a polychrome wooden statue of the Madonna of Mt. Carmel, who is the patroness of the Carmelite Order. The statue reproduces the one venerated on Mount Carmel. [a]

Altar of St. John of the Cross (18)

The aedicule-altar in the next bay is from 1927. The paintings, by **Ettore Ballerini**, are, St. John of the Cross (center), St. Teresa (right) and St. Brocardo (left). The bas-reliefs in bronze (1931) show *scenes from the life of St. John*. [a]

Crucifix (19)

On the back wall of the right aisle is a bronze crucifix. It is a copy of an early 17th century work of **Pietro Tacca** (executed by Lera, from Lucca). [1] [a]

Artists and Architects:

Alberto Galli (1840–1920), Italian sculptor
Amalia Ciardi **Dupré** (born 1934), Italian sculptor and painter [also see [here](#)]
Armando **Brasini** (1879-1965), Italian architect
Cesare **Aureli** (1844-1923), Italian sculptor
Enrico Arrighini (20th cent), Italian sculptor
Ettore Ballerini (1868-1942), Italian painter
Eugenio **Cisterna** (1862-1933), Italian painter & mosaic designer
Giuseppe **Trabacchi** (1839-1909), Italian sculptor
Leone **Tommasi** (1903-1965), Italian sculptor
Natale Lecci (20th cent), Italian sculptor
O. Alfonsi, Italian cabinet maker
Ottavio Decimioni (20th cent.), Italian artist
Pietro Piraino (1878-1950), Italian sculptor
Pietro **Tacca** (1577-1650), Italian sculptor
Tullio **Passarelli** (1869-1941), Italian architect
Fra Serafino Melchiorre OCD (20th cent), Italian sculptor

Burials:

Raffaele Carlo Cardinal **ROSSI**, O.C.D., (1876-1948) [also see [here](#)]
Adeodato Giovanni Cardinal **PIAZZA**, O.C.D., (1884-1957) [also see [here](#)]

Location:

Coord: [41°54'40.9"N 12°29'42.1"E](#)

Address:

Corso d'Italia 37

Access

Opening times are:

Weekdays 7:00 -12:00, 16:15 -19:15.

Sundays 8:00 -13:00, 16:15 -19:30.

Liturgy

Mass times have been revised recently. They now are:

Weekdays 7:30, 8:30, 18:30.

Sundays 9:30, 10:30, 12:00, 18:30.

The feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel is celebrated with solemnity on 16 July, and that of St

Links and References

1. [Roman Churches Wiki](#)
 2. [ROMAPEDIA blog](#)
 3. [Italian Wikipedia page](#)
 4. [Info.roma web-page](#)
 5. [Carmelite web-page](#)
- a. Info plaques in church
 - b. Rendina, Claudio; LA GRANDE BELLEZZA DI ROMA ATTRAVERSO I SUOI MONUMENTI, STORIA, ARTE, SEGRETI, LEGGENDE, CURIOSITÀ; Newton Compton editori s.r.l. Rome; 2014