

Stato della Città del Vaticano

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## Teutonic Cemetery



The Teutonic Cemetery is found in the Vatican between St. Peter's Basilica and the Paul VI Audience Hall. It is the oldest German establishment in Rome. The entire area is surrounded by a high wall and does not immediately draw one's attention. However, even a rushed visitor will quickly be drawn by the charm of this plot of land so rich in history. In ancient Roman times Nero's circus was found here and it was the site where many Christians were martyred. In 799 a Schola Francorum was spoken of for the first time. For this reason, on the wall of the building there is a ceramic depiction of Charlemagne as the founder. A clearer idea of its history came only in the mid-15th century when the Holy Year 1450 brought many pilgrims to Rome.

The cemetery and the church were in bad shape at that time, but both were soon rebuilt. In 1454 the German members of the Curia gathered together as a special as a confraternity which still exists today in a different form and is owner of the foundation. In the last quarter of the 15th century the current structure of the church was built according to a style widely used in Germany at the time. In 1597 the confraternity was promoted to the "Archconfraternity of Our Lady" at the German Cemetery next to St. Peter's. In 1876 a residence was built for priests studying Christian archaeology, church history and other similar fields. In 1888 the Roman Institute of the Goerres Society took up residence there with a library of around 35,000 books.

Access to the church is by way of the cemetery and was completely renovated in restoration work from 1972-1975. The entryway was designed by Elmar Hillebrand (Cologne, Germany) and donated in 1957 by the President of the Republic of Germany Theodor Heuss. On the left door is a Madonna and Child underneath the Archconfraternity's coat of arms, a mix of a two-headed eagle with the Pietà. The Resurrection is depicted on the right side. The pictorial sides of the main altar by Macrino d'Alba show the theme of the Pietà at the centre and sides - from left to right Saint Paul with Saint John the Baptist, Saint Anne with Mary, Jesus and the apostles Peter and James. The stone slab at the front part of the main altar is a typical example of a late archaic medieval style and most likely was originally part of an altar barrier.

The Swiss Chapel served as a burial place for the fallen guards after the Sack of Rome. The frescoed walls were painted by Polidor Caldara, a disciple of Raffaello, and are of very high quality.

Given its special location, the Teutonic Cemetery has always received many requests for burial. According to the statutes, those who have a right to be buried here include members of the Archconfraternity, members of many religious houses of German origin and members of the two German colleges in Rome (the Anima and the Germanico). Prayer is open to all although visitors most often come to find the graves of famous people of ecclesiastical, artistic, political or diplomatic backgrounds:

Josef Anton Koch, landscape painter (+ 1839)

Ludwig Curtius, archaeologist (+ 1954)

Johann Baptist Anzer, first missionary bishop of the Divine Word Missionaries (+ 1903)

Joseph Spithöver, key promoter of German culture in Rome during the 19th century (+ 1870)

Stefan Andrei, writer (+ 1970)

Johann Martin von Wagner, archaeologist and artist (+ 1858)

Anton de Waal, first rector of the College (+ 1917)

Engelbert Kirschbaum, S.J., Archaeologist, key colleague in the discovery of Peter's tomb (+ 1970)

Card. Gustavo von Hohenlohe (+ 1896)

Augustin Theiner, Prefect of the Vatican Secret Archives (+ 1874).

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