

Santa Croce a Via Flaminia



Santa Croce a Via Flaminia is an early 20th century parish and titular church in the Flaminio quarter. It has the dignity of a Minor Basilica. The dedication is to the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

History

The church was founded in 1913, when Pope Pius X erected the parish of Santa Croce in celebration of the 16th centenary of the Edict of Milan, the edict of tolerance by Emperor Constantine in 313 which legalised the Christian religion in the Roman Empire. It was built in the style of a Roman basilica by Aristide Leonori, and papal patronage ensured a building of the highest quality.

Since its completion on 12 July 1914, the church with its parish have been administered by the Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata (Stigmatines). The consecration Mass was celebrated by Msgr. Giuseppe Pallica, Archbishop of Filippi, in 1918.

In 1954, Pope Pius XII declared it an alternative station church for Friday after the Fifth Sunday of Lent. Pope Paul VI elevated it to the status of Minor Basilica in 1964, and made it titular in 1965.

Exterior

The church has a central nave with side aisles, fronted by a narthex or portico which is the full width of the church. The sanctuary is a large semi-circular apse which is the same width as the central nave.

The fabric is in red brick. The aisles have seven round-headed windows each in their external walls, matched by seven more in each upper wall of the central nave. The ends of the aisles are occupied by a pair of side chapels, which have no windows.

The central nave roof is pitched and tiled, and also hipped at its near end so that the façade has a horizontal roofline above the portico. The side aisles have single pitches, as does the portico and these three roofing elements are combined into one structural roof.

Façade

The portico has six thin monolithic Bavarian grey granite Ionic columns, which have high plinths and support a horizontal entablature. The frieze of this bears a mosaic epigraph, in white lettering on blue, commemorating Pope Pius X and the Edict of Milan in 313: An[no] Chr[isto] MCMXIII Pius X P[ontifex] M[aximus] in memor[ia] pacis a Constantino eccl[esi]ae datae Cruci S[anctissimi] D[omi]ni ab edicto a[b] anno CCCXIII. The corners of the portico have two brick piers with blocked capitals carved in a diaper pattern, and these piers are matched by a pair of pilasters on the other sides of two side portals to the portico. The entablature, with its epigraph, wraps round the corners to these pilasters.

The actual church frontage above the portico has an arcade of five large brick-arched windows with decorative stone mullions, which stand at the top of the pitched roof of the portico. They are separated by small engaged marble Corinthian columns which support the archivolt. Just below the central nave roofline is a cavetto cornice (looking rather ancient Egyptian) which is decorated by a rich mosaic designed by Biagio Biagetti. The curve of the cornice means that anyone viewing the mosaic from just in front of the entrance will not see it foreshortened. Santa Maria in Trastevere has a good example of this.

The mosaic is centred on the Cross in glory, accompanied by Roman soldiers in period costume together with sheep, angels and a group of five worshippers to the left. These are not saints, since they have no haloes (which the angels have). The event commemorated is the original Exaltation of the holy relic of the True Cross, after its having been looted by the Persians and then returned to Jerusalem by the emperor Heraclius in 631. The predominant figure of the five, dressed as a bishop, is Modestus, Patriarch of Jerusalem. The Cross itself is depicted in its jewelled case in which it was kept at Jerusalem, and which was never opened. The mosaic wraps around the corners of the roofline, and has two side panels each depicting The Anchor of Hope.

Campanile

To the right of the church is a richly decorated red brick campanile with seven storeys, in an authentic mediaeval Romanesque style with blind or open arches in each storey. The storeys is also separated by dentillated cornices, and have inset plaques of what look like porphyry and verde antico (but are almost certainly not). Some of these plaques are round, and some rectangular. The bell-chamber has an arcade of three arches on each side, with the columns and their cushion capitals in white stone.

Interior

Nave

The central nave of has side aisles, being on a basilical plan without a transept. The aisles are separated by arcades with six Ionic columns of Bavarian granite on each side, the archivolt springing from imposts on the capitals. The first seven bays each have a large window in side aisle walls, but the eighth bay has a side chapel at the end of each aisle. Halfway along the right hand aisle is the entrance to the baptistery, a little octagonal building designed by Carlo Stopponi and added in 1961.

There is a trussed timber roof to the central nave, without a ceiling.

On the counterfaçade is a copy painting of a depiction of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in fresco in the Sala di Costantino at the Vatican Museums. The mosaic Stations of the Cross are by Biagio Biagetti, the same artist as executed the façade mosaic, and were created in the 1940's. The Cosmatesque style pulpit is by Pio Leonori, younger brother of the more famous Aristide.

Sanctuary

The apse has five windows, and also a fresco in the conch. The stained glass in three of the windows and the fresco are all by Giuseppe Moroni. The windows depict St Helen discovering the True Cross, the emperor Heraclius taking it back to Jerusalem and the resurrected Christ before his Cross. The conch fresco depicts the Last Judgment.

The free-standing altar is situated below a massive baldacchino, having four Corinthian columns in the same Bavarian granite which features in the other columns in the church. These four columns support a square entablature in white marble, with a red marble frieze. Above there is a rather top-heavy register for the baldacchino, having an arcade of five little arches on each face, with a pier having a tall pyramidal cap at each corner and with a shallow pyramidal vault supporting a central lantern.

Access

The opening times of the church are not being advertised, but they will involve the usual early-afternoon break.

Liturgy

According to the Diocese, Mass is celebrated:

Weekdays 9:00, 10:30, 18:30;

Sundays and Solemnities 8:00, 9:00 (not summer), 10:30, 12:00 (not summer), 19:00.

The feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is celebrated on 14 September.

This is an alternative station church for Friday after the Fifth Sunday of Lent, and is the only modern station church so far.

Location:

Address: Via Guido Reni 2d

Coord: [41°55′43.3″N 12°28′04.3″E](#)

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