

Santa Maria del Rosario in Prati



Santa Maria del Rosario in Prati is an early 20th century parish and convent church with its postal address at Via Germanico 94 in the rione Prati, just south of the Ottaviani metro station. This is the convent -the main entrance of the church is at Via degli Scipioni 94 to the north.

The parish is administered by the Dominicans , and the dedication is hence to the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title of Our Lady of the Rosary (they instigated the Rosary devotion).

History

Antecedents

The remote ancestor of the parish is the little church of San Lazzaro on the slopes of Monte Mario, which had an enormous but thinly populated parish at the start of the 19th century. This included what is now the rione Prati, then nothing but countryside (the name means "meadows", which is what you had here).

The church was wrecked in a storm at the start of the 19th century, and in 1828 the parish was transferred to the Dominican convent church of Santa Maria del Rosario a Monte Mario. However, after 1870 the Prati district was rapidly urbanised and the location of this church became very inconvenient. As a result, the Dominicans instigated a project to build a new parish church in Prati to replace the convent church, but with the same dedication.

First church

There were actually two churches built on this site, one after the other, and this causes confusion.

The first church was a small one, on the corner of the Via Ottaviano and Via degli Scipioni and facing the former street. The foundation stone of this was laid in 1898, and it was consecrated in 1901. The architect was Carlo Del Pelo Pardi.

This had a three-bay nave with structural side aisles divided by internal blocking walls into six side chapels. There was a large external semi-circular apse the same width as the church, and a

colonnaded façade with a triangular pediment.

The chapels had arched portals, separated by engaged piers with shallow Corinthian pilasters applied. These supported a deep entablature which ran around the interior, and which itself supported a barrel-vaulted ceiling with a pair of window lunettes in each nave bay. A high triumphal arch was fitted under the end of this vault, having a pair of square Corinthian piers and with the archivolt springing from a pair of posts in the entablature supported by the pier capitals.

The altar was by Giovanni Lugari, and its altarpiece was a copy by Tito Troja of the famous painting at Santa Sabina of Our Lady of the Rosary by Giovanni Battista Salvi da Sassoferrato. The conch vault was painted by Alessandro Pigna, and depicted St Dominic having a vision of Our Lady handing him the Rosary.

Second church

The first church could only seat four hundred people, and the friars quickly realised that they had made a serious mistake in providing such a small edifice. Remarkably, it was decided to demolish it and replace it with a much larger building just to the east.

The first architect chosen was Giuseppe Reibaldi, but he quickly resigned and passed on the responsibility to Guglielmo Palombi. The foundation stone was laid in 1911, the edifice was structurally complete in 1912.

In that year, the Monte Mario parish territory was divided and half went to the new church of San Giuseppe al Trionfale. The southern portion was reserved for the new Dominican parish church, which was consecrated in 1916 after the interior was fitted out.

The church is in an interesting Gothic Revival version of the neo-Romanesque style which is more familiar in Rome -here, round arches are replaced with pointed ones. This was in commemoration of the former Dominican headquarters in Rome, Santa Maria sopra Minerva which was "The Only Gothic Church in Rome" before the 19th century (a statement that then ceased to be true with new churches like the one here, although it is still asserted).

Exterior

Layout

This is an impressive church, but unfortunately it occupies the central section of a city block and is flanked by tall buildings which compromise its civic identity. It is worthwhile looking at both the front and the back, but to view the latter you have to walk some way down the Via Catone from the Via Germanico.

The plan is basilical, with a central nave of five and a half bays having side aisles. The half bay is at the entrance end. There follows the sanctuary, which is a five-sided apse of the same width as the central nave. There is no apse.

A tower campanile is adjacent to the right hand side of the apse. Behind the latter is the convent, which is a single block on the Via Germanico of the same width as the nave with its aisles.

Fabric

The fabric is in brick, with much limestone used. The side aisles are flat-roofed, and because of adjacent buildings are completely blank-walled. The central nave walls rise high above the aisles, and are rendered in a dull red (which in 2016 was peeling to reveal the pink undercoat). The nave bays are separated by buttress pilasters which do not reach the roofline, but terminate in little tiled pitches. Each bay has a single-light Gothic window in each of its side walls, as well as a tiny Gothic window just below the roofline which lights the space above the vault.

The apse has a tall Gothic window in each of its far three sides, as well as a tiny Gothic window like those in the nave. The apse walls were also rendered in the same red colour, but they have weathered and are now almost all pink.

The main roof is gable-pitched and tiled, and covers both nave and apse. The latter has three sector

pitches.

Campanile

The campanile to the right of the apse can be viewed from the Via Catone. It is a square red brick tower of two storeys above the level of the aisle roof, with a tiled pyramidal cap. The cap projects strongly, over a cornice with widely spaced modillions. There is another cornice separating the two storeys, much less prominent. The corners of both storeys are occupied by wide blind pilasters in white, which meld with a frieze below the cornice. This frieze has five pendant Gothic arches.

The three free faces of the first storey each have a large unglazed single-light Gothic aperture. The bell-chamber storey above has a two-light Gothic aperture in each face, with wheel tracery in the point. All these apertures are framed in flush brickwork, but the keystone is in limestone.

Façade

The church's façade is in naked red brick, with architectural details in white limestone.

The gabled single-storey central nave frontage is framed by two blind limestone pilasters (without capitals) rising from ground to roofline. Where the sloping aisle rooflines meet these, is a pair of mosaic heraldic shields in molded square frames. These are of Pope St Pius X (left) and the Dominicans (right). The pilasters meld with a frieze below the gable roofline, which has pendant Gothic arches on tiny corbels and is below a cornice with modillions.

The pointed-arched main entrance has a tympanum containing a mosaic of Our Lady being crowned by Christ as Queen of Heaven. Note the pair of angel musicians playing on strings. Doorway and tympanum are recessed, and are framed by four Corinthian orders, in turn (outside first): pilaster, column, pilaster, column. A raised string course runs across the entire façade at the level of the tops of the capitals. The outer pair of these pilasters support a stone frame for the arch, which itself has a gable top with a cornice having modillions.

Above the main entrance is a spectacular wheel or rose window containing stained glass, set in a dished frame. The sixteen radial mullions are miniature columns with capitals, and the dished frame is embellished with coloured mosaic in a quatrefoil design. The Dove of the Holy Spirit is in the hub.

The ends of the aisles have Gothic windows over smaller side entrances. The windows are recessed in a similar style to the entrance, and have lancet tracery with four vertical lights each. The pilasters of the windows continue downwards to frame the doors, which is very incorrect in the context of the Gothic style. The string course of the façade intersects the windows at the tops of their pilaster capitals.

Interior

Nave

The rich interior has a high narrow central nave of five bays and two side aisles, the roof of the nave having a Gothic cross-vault with the nave bays divided by transverse ribs. The central nave walls have single-light Gothic windows with stained glass.

The arcades have Gothic arches with clustered columns, horizontally broadly banded in orange and white. The inner sides of these columns are continued up the nave walls to support the vault springers, meaning that the column capitals are split. The vaults and walls have polychrome fresco decoration by Giovanni Battista Conti.

The counterfaçade has a mosaic of the icon of the Madonna of Pompei, over which is a fresco of the Tree of Jesse. The vaults are in blue with golden stars to recall the empyrean, with the central vault displaying symbols from the Litany of Loreto. On the intradoses of the arcades are portraits of saints who promoted the Rosary.

The side aisle vaults have Old Testament symbols taken to refer to Our Lady, and corresponding scriptural texts.

The pulpit or ambo on the far left side of the central nave has Cosmatesque decoration, and amounts to a hexagonal tub in white marble standing on (alarming thin) spiral columns again.

The floor has Cosmatesque work also, by Peluso di Lecce

Nave windows

The church has an important cycle of stained glass windows in a style more familiar in northern Europe. The designs were by Duilio Cambelotti, and the execution by Cesare Picchiarini.

The round window in the counterfaçade has the Holy Spirit as its theme. The central nave side windows depict portraits of ten Old Testament women who are regarded as types of Our Lady. These are (clockwise from right):

Rachel, Hannah (mother of Samuel), Deborah, Abigail, Judith, Esther, Jael, Rebecca, Sarah and Eve.

Side chapels

The side aisles contain altars and devotional shrines, and also the Stations of the Cross by Conti which are on quatrefoil panels.

The baptistery has a font which is a shallow hexagonal marble basin on little spirally twisted columns. On the wall is a depiction of The Baptism of Christ.

On the right near the entrance is a venerated crucifix, in painted wood in a realistic Baroque style. This was acquired by the church in 1906, but its dating and provenance are unknown. Opposite, in the second bay on the left has a venerated statue of Our Lady of the Rosary within an attractive Gothic shrine or baldacchino. This again has thin spirally twisted columns.

Over the shrines in six aisle bay side walls are depictions of Dominican saints: SS Thomas Aquinas, Catherine of Siena, Vincent Ferrer, Rose of Lima; "Blessed" Simon IV de Montfort and St Catherine de' Ricci.

The church has two structural side chapels, at the ends of the aisles and flanking the sanctuary:

The one on the right is dedicated to St Joseph, and the altarpiece by Conti depicts him with the Christ-child and SS Thomas Aquinas (left) and Vincent Ferrer (right).

The one on the left is dedicated to the Sacred Heart, and the altarpiece depicts Christ accompanied by Pope St Pius V and St Antoninus Pierozzi.

Sanctuary

The main altar has a gilded Gothic triptych depicting Our Lady of the Rosary, with side panels depicting St Dominic and St Catherine of Siena. The frontal and altar have Cosmatesque decoration. The paintings are by Raffaele Gagliardi.

In the polygonal apse are three tall lancet windows, with stained glass which depicts the Mysteries of the Rosary. The designs were also by Duilio Cambelotti, and the execution by Cesare Picchiarini.

Sacristy

Over the entrance to the sacristy is a tympanum fresco depicting St Rose of Lima with the Christ-child.

The sacristy contains some interesting paintings:

Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery by Alfred Leduc -a dramatic scene, worth seeing.

Dominican Martyrs of China by Luigi Bartolini.

St Dominic and St Catherine of Siena by one "A. Zoffolino" 1850.

Access

According to the parish website, the church is open:

7:00 to 12:00 (13:00 on Sundays and Solemnities), 16:00 to 20:30.

Liturgy

Mass is celebrated:

Weekdays 7:30, 10:30, 18:00, 19:30;

Sundays and Solemnities 7:30, 9:00, 10:30, 12:00, 18:00, 19:30.

As this is a convent church, the Divine Office is celebrated:

Weekdays, Office of Readings and Lauds 8:00 and Vespers 20:00;

Sundays and Solemnities, Lauds (only) 8:30 and Vespers 18:45.

Rosary is recited daily at 17:30.

There is exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on the first Thursday of the month at 17:00, and on the third Thursday at 21:00.

Location:

Addr: Via Germanico 94, 00192 Roma

Coordinates: [41°54'30"N 12°27'30"E](#)

External links

[Roman Churches Wiki](#)

[Official diocesan webpage](#)

[Italian Wikipedia page](#)

[Parish website](#)

[Info.roma web-page](#)

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