

# San Gioacchino in Prati



**San Gioacchino in Prati** is a late 19th century parish and titular church in the rione Prati. The main entrance is on Via Pompeo Magno just to the east. The Lepanto metro station is close by. Despite its high prestige ("chiesa pontificia") and magnificent architecture, this is not a minor basilica. The dedication is to St Joachim, the father of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

## History

Until the later 19th century, the rione Prati was mostly meadows, but after the annexation of Rome by Italy in 1870 it was quickly developed into a closely-packed suburb. To provide for this three parish churches were to be built, which were San Gioacchino, Santa Maria del Rosario in Prati and Sacro Cuore del Suffragio.

The original impetus for building San Gioacchino came from a French priest of Lyons named Antoine Brugidou. He wished to found an international pious sodality for the purpose of reparative adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, in order to make amends for acts of profanation in France and other countries during the French Revolution and afterwards. This Opera Internazionale dell'Adorazione Riparatrice was to have its headquarters in Rome at a new church in Prati, paid for by the faithful of various countries.

The church was to be dedicated to St Joachim, in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of the ordination to the priesthood of Pope Leo XIII in 1887. Abbé Brugidou wrote a book about his proposed institute in that year, and in 1890 obtained permission to begin the building project. The pope imposed a maximum limit for the amount of money to be spent, and requested that the church be finished in 1893.

The edifice was designed and built by the architect Raffaele Ingami (1838-1908) of the Fabbrica of St Peter's, who also worked on Santa Brigida delle Suore Brigidine. He was assisted by Lorenzo De Rossi. Construction began on 1 October, 1891, and the crypt was finished in 1892.

Unfortunately, the Abbé Brugidou proved an incompetent project manager. He seemed to have relied upon Divine Providence to take care of financial matters, when the Church was setting up many new institutions. As a result, the costs spiralled completely out of control and the completion date was seriously delayed. An inundation of the Tiber in 1896 caused serious damage by flooding out the newly completed crypt.

Very unfortunately, the Abbé resorted to raising funds by inviting Mass intentions which he had no likelihood of fulfilling. He had accumulated the astounding total of 260 000 when the pope relieved him of responsibility for the project, after the scandal had become public in 1897. The pope then told him to leave Rome and return to Lyons, with the result that his proposed Opera faded away.

The building of the church had to be continued despite the budgetary over-run, and it finally opened to the public on August 20, 1898. However, the interior decoration was incomplete especially as regards the side chapels. An idea of the Abbé was followed through, in that Catholics from specific countries around the world were invited to contribute to the project in honor of the pope. Those countries forwarding major contributions were to have their own chapels. The idea worked, so the construction debts were cleared fairly quickly and the church was fit to be consecrated on 6 June, 1911 by Cardinal Pietro Respighi.

The plan for a detached tower campanile, to the right of the church, had to be abandoned. A sort of little hut containing the bells was provided by Carlo Maria Busiri Vici in 1903, on top of the near end of the left hand side aisle. This had to be removed at some stage, and replaced by an open iron framework at the end of the same aisle.

The parish has been administered by the Redemptorist order since 1905, when it was given charge of the church.

The interior decoration of the side chapels was only completed in 1940, with contributions from the faithful of twenty-four countries. The Redemptorists oversaw the installation of the stained glass windows, obtained from the Bavarian firm of Zettler.

The church was made titular in 1960.

## **Exterior**

This is a large basilical church, on the plan of a Latin cross inserted into a rectangle with very short, wide projections enclosing the arms of the cross. The external fabric is in carefully laid stone ashlar blocks. The style could be described as neo-Baroque.

The Latin cross consists of a central nave of five bays, a transept with a dome over the crossing and a sanctuary of one bay with a semi-circular apse. The nave has side aisles with galleries over them, so their roofs are as high as the side rooflines of the central nave. At the same level are two half-domes at the ends of the transept. Flanking the sanctuary and behind it are sacristies and priests' accommodation, with the latter having a frontage on the Via degli Scipione behind the church.

The two-storey entrance narthex or loggia is a separate architectural element, attached to the full width of the nave.

The roofs of the central nave, sanctuary and transept are pitched and tiled, with decorative fleur-de-lys finial tiles on the central ridge of the nave roof and along the rooflines. The gable ends of the central nave and transepts have triangular pediments, with quatrefoil windows in the tympani. These have little rays in the angles between the lobes, a Gothic feature.

The narthex or loggia has a separate flat roof, while the wide side aisles (including the chapels) share a flat roof with the sacristy and presbyterate accommodation enclosing the sanctuary. The side aisle rooflines have parapets of metal railings separated by stone piers, and these run round the back over

the roofline of the presbytery. Flanking the apse is a pair of little hemispherical cupolas which top internal spiral staircases.

The nave side walls are two-storey, because of the galleries over the side aisles. The first storey has a row of round windows in dished frames, each of which lights a side chapel. Above, the galleries each have a row of arched windows with Corinthian impost, one in each bay.

There is no proper campanile, which is a witness to the financial problems involved in building the church. The bells are housed in a functional metal cage on the flat roof at the far left hand end.

### Dome

The ribbed octagonal dome, erected in 1897, is a very early use of aluminium in architecture. It is thought to be the earliest known employment of the metal for the purpose of roofing, and the oldest known application still in service. It is pierced with six-pointed stars made of crystal glass, twenty-one in each sector arranged in alternate rows of four and three.

The rendered octagonal brick drum of the dome has a quatrefoil window in each side, in the same vaguely Gothic idiom as those in the pediments. It has a projecting cornice with modillions (little brackets), and is crowned by an attic plinth on which the actual dome sits. This attic has an oculus (round window) on each side, and a cornice molding which arcs over the windows. Each corner is occupied by an angel whose outspread wings reach back to the windows on each side.

There is a tall lantern on top of the dome, with eight arched openings separated by Corinthian half-columns. These support an entablature with putto's head finials and an ogee cupola. Uniquely, the cupola ends in a large metal finial in the form of a monstrance holding the Blessed Sacrament.

### Façade

The two-storey entrance façade is extremely impressive. The open narthex or loggia has six red granite columns with Corinthian capitals, and a pair of matching piers at the corners. These support an entablature with a dedicatory inscription on its frieze, which mentions the jubilee of Pope Leo, and a protruding cornice with both dentillations and modillions.

Above the entablature is a large mosaic depicting allegorical figures representing the five continents, venerating the Blessed Sacrament exposed in a monstrance on an altar. There are two popes shown here, Pope Leo to the right and Pope Clement VIII to the left. Below is an epigraph title to the work: *Orbis catholicae Romae divinis pro iuribus reparandis adoratio* ("Adoration for the reparation of divine justice at Rome by the Catholic world"), which indicates the original motivation for building the church.

On either side of the mosaic are two mosaics of saints, each round-headed mosaic in its own aedicule with a pair of Corinthian columns in bubblegum-pink and white marble supporting a triangular pediment. The marble is rare in Rome, and the consignment was a gift of Tsar Alexander III of Russia. The saints depicted are SS Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, Clare and Juliana Falconieri. The mosaic work was by Virgilio Monti.

On the flat roofline of the narthex is a plinth with set of three coats-of-arms, carved in relief. These are of Pope Leo, and two cardinals. The plinth bears a bronze statue of St Joachim with Our Lady as a little girl.

A further two aedicules are around the corner in the side frontages, and these frame windows which light the end rooms in the second storey (the central chamber, behind the large mosaic, houses the church organ).

The background surfaces overall are rendered in a cream color.

The actual frontage of the nave towers above the narthex, and is also rendered in a cream color. Four Corinthian pilasters support an entablature without an architrave, but with square coffers containing rosettes as a sub-frieze in between the capitals. Above is a triangular pediment, and in its tympanum is a recessed motif of a cross with the Sacred Initials (IHS) in a frame formed geometrically from a square superimposed on a circle. On either side of this in the tympanum is a

venerating angel in mosaic. Between the inner pair of pilasters is a large round window in a dished and molded frame, and between the inner and outer pilasters is a pair of arched recesses with ribbed conchs having their archivolt supported by Corinthian pilasters and crowned with acanthus finials. These two recesses look as if they were intended to contain statues.

The tip of the pediment gable support a bronze finial of a cross on a globe. You can see two box plinths at the ends of the tympanum, which once had statues of standing angels.

Inside the narthex there are three entrance doorways with archivolt tympani containing mosaics. The central one features the Sacred Heart, the right hand one two birds drinking from a chalice and the left hand one, a dolphin supporting a cup. The side doors lead directly into the nave side aisles.

The central doorway is flanked by a pair of Corinthian columns in the pink and white Russian marble. They support a posted entablature bearing the dished and molded tympanum archivolt, while the simpler archivolts of the side tympani are on floating cornices. In between the doors are four round-headed recesses, which are empty but again look as if they were meant to contain statues.

A mosaic frieze below the ceiling displays the names of the nations contributing to the cost of the church, in blue medallions on a gold background with fringed ornament. The ceiling itself is coffered.

## **Interior**

The impressive interior is lavishly decorated with fresco and polychrome marble work. This includes three mosaics by Silvio Galimberti. Other artists contributing to the decoration were Oreste Anfolsi, Cesare Cappabianca, Eugenio Cisterna, Raffaele Gagliardi, Silvio Galimberti, Virginio Monti, Attilio Palombi, Maximilian Schmatz and Michele Tripisciano.

The nave has five bays, with aisles and side chapels. The transept has an apsidal chapel in each end. Beyond the transept there are three chapels and the sacristy, entered through antechambers in the sides of the sanctuary bay. The sanctuary itself is also apsidal.

### Nave

The central nave is separated from the aisles by arcades, which have pinkish-grey granite Corinthian columns with bronze capitals. The arcade arches have coffered intradoses, and in the spandrels are tondi containing sculptured busts of the Apostles by Michele Tripisciano. Above each arcade is an entablature resting on the arch keystones, which has rosettes in relief and a dentillate cornice.

Above this entablature in turn are the gallery arches. Each side of each bay has two arches separated by a Corinthian column bearing a square impost, and containing gallery balustrades fronted in a diaper pattern. Each pair of arches is separated by a square pier. Above these gallery arches is a second entablature, from which the ceiling vault springs.

The vault is irregular, having two large sections spanning two bays at the front and back, and a smaller section in the middle spanning one bay. The larger sections are square cross-vaults, with angels frescoed on the side panels and three round windows in each side wall lunette. The central small section has its ribs meeting at the coat-of-arms of Pope Leo. The background of the vault surfaces is frescoed in a tessellated pattern in pale grey and tan with gilded details including rosettes, involving the vaguely Gothic rayed quatrefoil device already met with.

The counterfaçade has four granite Corinthian pilasters, the inner pair of which supports an archivolt over which the first entablature is taken. Above is the organ gallery, with a pair of arches flanked by two singletons separated by a pair of piers. The organ is of very high quality, and was assembled by Jules Annesseens Ruysers of Belgium in 1908. It was restored in 2008.

Above, in the vault lunette, is a large round window containing stained glass representing the twelve Apostles in roundels, with St Peter at the top and St Paul at the bottom. The Dove of the Holy Spirit in glory is depicted in the centre. This window is flanked by a pair of frescoes of angels playing harp and lute.

The side aisles are cross-vaulted as well, each bay having a square section of vaulting.

The free-standing maple-wood pulpit or ambo, on the left before the transept, is by Ferdinand Stuflesser. The back panel shows Christ Preaching to the Crowd, and the panels on the pulpit itself show Christ with St Peter, St Paul, SS Joachim and Anne Teaching Our Lady to Read, St Alphonsus de' Liguori (here because he was the founder of the Redemptorists), Pope St Gregory the Great, St Augustine, St Jerome and St Ambrose.

### Transept

The transept is accessed by a flight of four stairs from the central nave and the side aisles. It is dominated by the high dome, the interior of which is in dark blue with stars. The pendentives have depictions of angels.

Below the dome is the modern altar pro populo, for Mass celebrated facing the congregation. It is a square mensa on a ribbed cylindrical block, recalling an early practice of using an ancient column drum to support an altar table.

The ends of the transept house spectacular chapels, the Italian to the left and the English to the right. They are described with the other national chapels below.

### Sanctuary

The sanctuary has one bay, and then an apse of the same width with a tiny subsidiary apse containing the tabernacle. It is flanked by the French, American and Spanish chapels as well as the sacristy. The access to these off the sides of the bay is via a serliana in each side, an arch supported on a pair of columns, with narrow rectangular openings on each side. This design feature is replicated in the gallery arch above.

The apse wall is clad in a pale greyish green veined marble, with an orange-red dado. The free-standing altar is entirely in red marble, rosso dei piranei, with a gilt bronze cross on its frontal flanked by coats-of-arms of Pope Leo XIII also in bronze. It is approached by steps in a different red marble, rosso di Levante, and these steps continue on either side of it to the tabernacle niche. The gradino has a row of twenty tondi in green malachite.

The tabernacle is in an apsidal niche, with a spectacular triumphal arch with a molded, gilded and embellished archivolt on tripletted Corinthian pilasters in alabaster with gilded capitals. The conch is in blue glass with angels and a symbol of the Trinity. The neo-Baroque tabernacle is by André Vermare, and is in the form of a globe in pale blue and gold, accompanied by two angels in white marble holding candlesticks and another two kneeling on billowing clouds, with a gilt ribbon epigraph draped across them.

There is a pair of cantorie or opera-boxes for solo musicians flanking the archivolt of the tabernacle niche. Above is the conch entablature, having a deep red architrave and a frieze with an epigraph reading *In omni loco sacrificatur et offeratur nomini meo oblatio munda* ("In every place is offered a sacrifice and pure offering to my name").

The conch is filled with an enormous fresco depicting The Triumph of the Eucharist. Christ enthroned presents his Body and Blood to be worshipped by the apostles. God the Father is above. In the background, to the right is Jerusalem and, to the left, Rome.

### Baptistery

The baptistery has a relief sculpture of The Baptism of Christ by Michele Tripisciano.

The side walls have a matching pair of frescoes each featuring a palm tree with seven streams flowing from its roots symbolizing the Seven Sacraments. This is accompanied by two angels holding items used in the rite of baptism. The symbol of seven streams of water is repeated in the lunettes, when they flow from a cross in each. The vault has coronae painted, of doves, flowers and winged putto's heads. The pendentives feature texts describing the effects of baptism. All this fresco work is by Eugenio Cisterna.

The font is a calyx in white marble.

### National chapels

There are fourteen national chapels, each one named after the country that contributed to its decoration: Brazil, Portugal, Bavaria, Poland, Canada, England, USA, Spain, France, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, Ireland and Argentina.

There was some shuffling of responsibilities in the church's early days, and notably the Austrians gave up their chapel after they lost their empire in the First World War.

The chapels off the nave side aisles are narrow chambers separated by blocking walls, with a little elliptical cupola on pendentives. A round window is fitted into the back curve of the vault (which is a miniature version of the design of the counterfaçade). The archivolts of the entrance arches spring from granite semi-columns on the piers separating the chapels.

The decoration is a treasure-house of depictions of saints, many of whom are unfamiliar in Rome.

### Brazilian Chapel

The chapel sponsored by Brazil was designed by Cesare Cappabianca, with fresco work by Cisterna. The impressive gilded wooden polyptych, by Oreste Anfolzi, rather dominates the little polychrome marble altar which has relief carving of two heraldic shields including that of Brazil. These are within a frontal arcade of three arches, springing from imposts on six little columns in red marble.

The central panel of the polyptych depicts Our Lady of Aparecida, venerated at the most famous Marian shrine in Brazil. She is flanked by SS Sebastian and Paul the Apostle (patrons of Brazil), while above are God the Father in the middle, St Anthony of Padua to the left and St Elizabeth of Hungary to the right.

The polyptych obscures two side wall paintings, The First Proclamation of the Faith in Brazil and The First Celebration of Mass in Brazil. The left hand lunette shows a group of martyrs, and the right hand one The Miraculous Discovery of the Aparecida Image. The cupola shows Our Lady as the Protectress of Latin America, with the constellation of the Southern Cross to the left. The round window has stained glass displaying the national heraldry of Brazil.

The entrance archway has frescoes of Pope St Pius X and Cardinal Joaquim Arcoverde de Albuquerque Cavalcanti, the former having made the latter the first cardinal from Latin America. They are accompanied by St Joseph and St Joachim, their respective patrons, and two tondi show scenes of The Proclamation of Arcoverde as Cardinal and The Gratitude to Pope St Pius of the Brazilian Nation.

### Portuguese Chapel

The chapel sponsored by Portugal was designed by Virginio Monti. It is rich in fresco depictions of saints.

The altar is in red Sicilian jasper, edged with yellow Siena marble, and has an altarpiece statue of St Anthony of Padua in a round-headed niche above (he is here because he came from Portugal). Above him is a depiction of the Sacred Heart, and he is flanked by representations of (left to right) SS William of Bourges, Anne, Margaret Mary (not yet canonized when this was painted) and Bernard.

The left hand wall has a depiction of Christ with Martha and Mary, Sisters of Lazarus, which is flanked by depictions of St Andrew the Apostle and "Blessed" Alan de la Roche (not formally beatified). The right hand wall depicts The Miracle of the Roses, which here is associated with St Elizabeth of Portugal (having been stolen for the purpose from St Elizabeth of Hungary). To the sides are SS Ivo of Chartres and Simon of Jerusalem.

Above the main frescoes is a row of tondo portraits of saints. There is a total of twelve of these, given as: St Giles, "Gundisano" (no such saint exists), Bl Jane of Portugal, Bl Gundisalvus of Lagos, St Teresa of Portugal, St Tarcisius, St John of God, Bl Sancha, St Theotonius, St Irene of Santarém, St John de Brito and Bl Mafalda.

The side lunettes depict The Holy Family, and St Anthony Heals a Child. The window has stained glass in the form of a floral wreath surrounding a fleur-de-lys, and is flanked by a saintly king (Afonso I, the founder of Portugal?) and a martyr (St Vincent?).

The cupola shows The Apotheosis of St Anthony, and the pendentives show SS Peter, Paul, James the Great and Marcellus the Pope. The entrance archway has SS John the Baptist and Camillus de Lellis.

### Bavarian Chapel

The chapel sponsored by Bavaria was a late fitting-out, supervised by Maximilian Schmaltz who was one of the Redemptorists. The sculptural work on the altar frontal was done by Giovanni Scivo, to designs by Schmaltz. It features two reliefs, one of Melchizedek Offers Bread and Wine and the other of Aaron Offers Incense.

The walls and vault are entirely and superbly frescoed. The main painting over the altar depicts Emperor St Henry II Approves the Foundation of Bamberg Cathedral. He is accompanied by his wife, St Cunegund. There are four saints accompanying the main fresco, helpfully labelled: SS Burchard of Würzburg, Pirmin, Wolfgang of Regensburg and Killian. Above, the round window has stained glass showing a wreath surrounding a fleur-de-lys, and is accompanied by SS Walburga and Erentrude.

The left hand side wall has St Maximilian of Lorch Rebukes the Prefect Eulasius, with side panels showing SS Willibald, Valentine of Passau, Virgil of Salzburg and Gebhard of Constance.

The right hand side wall shows St Rupert of Salzburg Baptizes Duke Theodo of Bavaria. This event is taken as the conversion of the Bavarii to Christianity. The other saints depicted are SS Corbinian, Benno of Meissen, Ulrich of Augsburg and Emmeram.

The left hand lunette shows St Peter Canisius, and the right hand one St Mary-Crescentia Höss.

The vault has a fresco of Our Lady Consecrates the Ecclesiastical and Secular Authorities. The cupola pendentives feature SS Afra of Augsburg, Adelaide the Empress, Hildegard of Bingen and "Ademonta".

The entrance archway features SS Florian and Boniface.

### Polish Chapel

The chapel sponsored by Poland was decorated by Attilio Palombi.

The altarpiece features several Polish saints, with the icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa in the background. There are eight saints (left to right) SS Adalbert, John of Kęty, John of Dukla, Jadwiga (Hedwig) of Silesia, Simon of Lipnica, Josaphat, Casimir and Benedict of Szkalka.

The left hand side wall shows St Stanislaus of Cracow Resurrects a Dead Man, and the lunette above depicts The Child Jesus Appears to St Josaphat. The right hand side walls shows St Stanislaus Kostka Encourages the Polish Troops Against the Turks in a Vision, and the lunette shows St Hyacinth.

The vault shows St Stanislaus Kostka Receives Holy Communion From an Angel. The pendentives depict St Kinga, Bl Bronislawa, Bl Ladislav of Gielniów and Bl Helen (Yolanda) of Poland.

### Canadian Chapel

The chapel sponsored by Canada was designed by one S. Noel, and is dedicated to St Anne who was the wife of St Josaphat and the mother of Our Lady.

The altar is polychrome marble work, having a frontal arcade of six arches little piers in pavonazzetto on a background of so-called rosso antico and gradini (ledges) in green and violet. The altarpiece is The Presentation of Our Lady, showing SS Joachim and Anne delivering Our Lady to the Temple in Jerusalem as a little girl. The legend is that she lived there until she married St

Joseph.

The left hand side wall has a statue of St Teresa of Liseux, with angels scattering flowers. The right hand side wall shows St Anne Rescuing Sailors in Danger.

The lunettes depict two shrines dedicated to St Anne, one at Beaupré in Canada and the other at Auray in France. The vault shows The Apotheosis of St Anne.

The entrance arch has frescoes of SS Margaret Bourgeoys and Mary-of-the-Incarnation Guyart.

#### English Chapel

The chapel sponsored by England is in the right hand end of the transept, and is apsidal. It was designed by Cisterna, with the fresco work executed by Monti.

Entry is by a set of gates in gilded bronze, hung in an intricately designed fretwork balustrade of white Carrara marble with polychrome inlay. The green is described as verde della valle di Polcèvera, and the red as rosso di Francia.

The altar itself is in polychrome stonework, featuring a dark red marble (called rosso dei Piranei), yellow marble from Siena, banded alabaster and green malachite. There are inlays in bronze, including two heraldic shields -the left hand one is of the Redemptorists, and the right hand one is described as "of the Catholics of England" (no such heraldry exists). The altar frontal bears a white marble relief copy of the famous Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci. A yellow marble screen over the gradini has eight little round-headed niches in red marble, which contain bronze figurines. Six of these are angels, of which two are venerating the central tabernacle and four holding Instruments of the Passion. The other two statuettes are of SS John the Evangelist and Helen the Empress. The tabernacle itself has a silver-gilt relief as its door, showing Christ in Glory with Angels. Above is a monstrance throne in the form of a little baldacchino with onyx columns.

The altarpiece is a depiction of Our Lady with Her Parents, set inside a polychrome marble arched aedicule on corbels set into the apse wall. The vegetation in the picture -roses, lilies, date palm, cypress, olive- alludes to the Song of Songs.

The apse wall has two registers, separated by an entablature. The lower one is entirely covered in a fresco imitating a tapestry hanging in red, green and yellow with white doves, and which bears portraits of saints: SS Gregory the Great, Augustine of Canterbury, Winifred and King St Edmund. A top band features angels in between English Catholic heraldry. The upper register has a window of three lights separated by a pair of columns, and the stained glass in this window features Pope Leo XIII flanked by allegorical figures of Prudence and Temperance. It is flanked by fresco panels depicting SS Thomas Becket, Edward the Confessor, Helen the Empress, Bede the Venerable, Cuthbert, Mildred, Thomas More and John Fisher. St Helen is here because of a false legend that she came from Britain.

The conch of the apse has a fresco of The Apotheosis of St Joachim.

The frescoes over the arches flanking the entrance show St Margaret of Scotland at Prayer to the right, and St George and the Dragon to the left.

#### American Chapel

The chapel sponsored by the United State of America is tucked into the corner between the right hand end of the transept and the sanctuary bay. The decorative fresco work is by Cisterna.

The dedication is to the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, and over the altar is a white marble statue of her by Tripisciano. The altar itself has its mensa on two pairs of volute corbels, which flank a marble relief of The Annunciation. The gradino above the mensa has four attractive mosaic tondi with floral motifs. The wall behind the statue is frescoed with flowers also, flanked by the archangels Michael and Gabriel.

The wall with the large round-headed window has, to the left, Judith with the Head of Holofernes and, to the right, Rebecca at the Well. The stained glass in the window itself has a Trinitarian motif.

The other wall has a fresco featuring a dedicatory epigraph dated 1900, topped by the heraldry of the United States. It is flanked by depictions of Queen Esther and Abigail, both regarded also as prophetic of Our Lady.

The vault is in leaf-green with golden stars, and features Marian symbols and two angels.

### Spanish Chapel

The chapel sponsored by Spain was fitted out in one of the rooms of the sacristy suite in 1908 by Carlo Maria Busiri Vici, Eugenio Cisterna and Giulio Cesare Giuliani who supervised the stained glass. The marble sculptural work was by one A. Senatori, and the paintings by one "Estevan" and José Nogué Massó.

The dedication is to Our Lady of the Pillar.

The decoration is exceptionally rich. The vault is supported on six columns of so-called breccia medicea, and is embellished with frescoes of angels and tondi in stained glass. The hanging lamps are in alabaster.

The altar is in Carrara marble throughout, with three mosaic and carved relief tondi on the frontal showing the heraldry of Spain. The tabernacle is also in the same marble, with a silver-gilt door. Above, a copy of the venerated image of Nuestra Señora del Pilar is in a gilded glory on a column of marmo rosso ciliegia, within a white marble arch. This arch is connected to the vault arch in which the altar is situated, by diagonally inserted panels of stained glass. In the dishd archivolt thus created are blue glass panels with flowers and stars, while flanking the image are four angels with lilies and roses.

The left hand wall has a statue of St Joseph Calasanz, and pictures of SS John of the Cross and Ildephonsus of Toledo.

The right hand wall has four windows depicting SS Isidore the Farmer, Isidore of Seville, Thomas of Villanova, Vincent Ferrer, Engratia of Zaragoza, Elizabeth of Portugal, Vincent the Deacon and Lawrence. These flank a statue of St Teresa of Avila.

### French Chapel

The chapel sponsored by France is in the corner between the transept and sanctuary on the left hand side. It is dedicated to the Sacred Heart. The fresco work is by Cisterna, and the design of the altar is by Carlo Maria Busiri Vici and Giovanni Scivo. The mosaic work is by one C. Cappabianca.

The altar frontal and tabernacle is in superb imitation Cosmatesque work, the frontal having four twisted and inlaid columns. The tabernacle is dated 1917, and has two tiny columns in the same style flanking its door which has a mosaic copy of the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. Above is a white marble statue of the Sacred Heart by Tripisciano in a round-headed niche. The wall around it is frescoed, to either side of it in imitation of embroidered cloth-of-gold hangings. In the upper corners are King St Louis IX and St Martin of Tours, both accompanied by a pair of angels, and above the statue is a relief depiction of the vision of the Sacred Heart to St Margaret Mary Alacoque. A tondo portrait of St Benedict Joseph Labre is in the vault lunette.

Flanking the altar is a pair of marble candlesticks in the form of angels on columns, and also a statue of Our Lady of Chartres.

The wall to the left shows St Remigius Baptizes Clovis of the Franks, and this picture is flanked by representations of SS Bernard and Vincent de Paul. St Joan of Arc is in the lunette.

The other wall has a window with glass depicting Christ showing his Sacred Heart to St Margarete Mary. This is flanked by SS Genevieve and Jane Frances de Chantal, and below it is a reliquary holding the alleged relics of St Generosa who was apparently one of the Scillitan Martyrs.

The vault displays a jewelled cross with the Lamb of God, surrounded by angels holding the Instruments of the Passion.

### Italian Chapel

The chapel sponsored by Italy is in the left end of the transept, and is dedicated to St Alphonsus de' Liguori the founder of the Redemptorists. The frescoes are by Monti, and the altar with its balustrade are by Ettore Poscetti.

The balustrade is in white marble with polychrome inlay, and has pierced roundels in the form of an eight-petalled flower. The intricate bronze gates are gilded

The altar is richly inlaid in semi-precious stones (including amethyst, malachite and lapis lazuli), with detailing in bronze and a mosaic of Christ the Redeemer on the tabernacle door. The frontal has a relief of The Lamb of God in white marble, flanked by matching panels displaying angels. The outer ends of the frontal display the heraldry of the Liguori family and the Redemptorists, in bronze.

The altarpiece is an enormous round-headed depiction of The Apotheosis of St Alphonsus, which is within an arched wall aedicule formed of a molded archivolt on marble Corinthian columns. The painting is flanked and topped by grotesque decoration in gilded mosaic.

The chapel matches the English one opposite in having two registers separated by an entablature, and a crowning conch. The first register flanking the aedicule has two large frescoes depicting scenes from the saint's life, which are bounded by little panels showing scenes and Mysteries of the Rosary. To the right is The Prophecy of St Francis de Geronimo, in which the parents of St Alphonsus were informed of his future greatness. The lunette above shows The Foundation of the Redemptorist Order in 1732. To the left is The Vision of St Alphonsus at Foggia, which he had while praying at the shrine of Our Lady of the Seven Veils in 1745. The lunette shows The Granting of the Redemptorist Rule.

The second register contains a stained glass window of three lights which represent St Peter with allegories of Justice and Fortitude. The flanking frescoes show Italian saints: SS Francis of Assisi, Paul of the Cross, Ambrose, Thomas Aquinas, Charles Borromeo, Philip Neri, Catherine of Siena and Clare.

The vault conch has a spectacular fresco designed by Maximilian Schmalz, showing The Intercession of St Alphonsus with Our Lady. Also shown are St Clement Mary Hofbauer, to the left, and St Gerard Majella, to the right.

Over the side arches are frescoes of St Lucy to the left, and St Gregory the Great to the right.

### Belgian Chapel

The chapel sponsored by Belgium is dedicated to St Joseph. The designer was Carlo Maria Busiri Vici, and the frescoes are by Silvio Galimberti.

The altar is an attractive composition in white marble, with a diapered relief pattern on its frontal flanked by a pair of colonnettes in red marble. The wall above it has a depiction of The Death of St Joseph.

The left hand wall shows St Juliana of Liege, with the lunette above depicting The Escape into Egypt. The right hand wall has a statue of St Joseph surrounded by four tondi displaying symbols of virtues associated with him: Charity, Poverty, Faith and Prayer. The lunette above shows The Nativity.

The vault fresco is of The Marriage of Our Lady to St Joseph. The entrance archway piers display SS Gudula and Humbert.

### Dutch Chapel

The chapel sponsored by the Netherlands has been frescoed throughout by Attilio Palombi.

The altar wall shows The Consecration of St Willibrord as First Bishop of Utrecht. The altar itself is a vaguely Gothic work, with the mensa supported on two trefoil arches with spirally twisted

columns in white marble.

The left hand wall shows The Eucharistic Miracle at Amsterdam in 1345, and the right hand wall The Martyrs of Gorinchem. The vault depicts SS Peter and Paul, and the entrance arch piers Thomas à Kempis and Denis the Carthusian (neither of whom are canonized).

### Irish Chapel

The chapel sponsored by Ireland is dedicated to St Patrick, with the altar by Giovanni Scivo and the frescoes by Gagliardi and Cisterna.

The altar wall has a fresco of St Patrick enthroned, holding a shamrock and surrounded by other Irish saints. Those nearest to him are SS Benignus of Armagh and Bridget. The altar frontal is embellished with green Connemara marble, and bears a Celtic cross.

The left hand wall features St Brendan the Voyager, with St Columban in the lunette above. The right hand wall has St Fursey having a vision of Hell, with a lunette showing (?) St Ailbe of Emly -the original Elvis (the published description has this as St Boniface, which cannot be right).

The vault shows The Apotheosis of St Patrick. The entrance arch piers have SS Oliver Plunkett and Declan.

### Argentinan Chapel

The chapel sponsored by Argentina was designed by Cisterna. The altar is in pink marble with bronze embellishments, and above is a fresco of angels venerating Our Lady of Luján. The original image is in the great Marian shrine of Luján in Argentina.

The left hand side wall has representations of St Hyacintha and "St Solomon". The lunette shows the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe to St John Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin. The right hand wall has SS Francis Solano and Rose of Lima, with St Martin of Tours dividing his cloak with a beggar in the lunette. The vault has The Name of Mary in Glory.

### Sacristy

The lunette over the entrance of the sacristy has The Ecstasy of St Teresa of Ávila.

The square chamber has a coffered stucco ceiling, below which are allegorical figures and the coat-of-arms of the Redemptorists. Here is an oil painting of Our Lady, Queen of All the Saints and a series of modern portraits of popes.

## **Liturgy**

Mass is celebrated (parish website, November 2017):

Weekdays 8:00, 9:30, 11:00 (not July to September), 13:00 (not Saturdays nor July to September), 18:30 (19:00, June to September);

Sundays and Solemnities 9:00, 10:30, 12:00, 13:00 (not July to September), 18:30 (19:00, June to September).

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in the Spanish Chapel on weekdays from 8:30 to 23:00 (13:00 Saturdays).

## **Location:**

Address: Piazza dei Quiriti 17

Coord: [41°54'35.3"N 12°27'54.6"E](#)

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