

Santa Maria del Rosario della Divina Provvidenza

(deconsecrated)



Santa Maria del Rosario della Divina Provvidenza is a deconsecrated chapel at Via di Ripetta 231, in the rione Campo Marzio.

The dedication was to the Blessed Virgin Mary, under her title of Our Lady of Divine Providence initially and later of Our Lady of the Rosary also.

History

There is some confusion in the sources between the Conservatorio della Divina Provvidenza located here, and the Confraternita delle Sante Orsola e Caterina.

The remote origins lay in a foundation in 1674 of a combined school and orphanage for poor unmarried girls by a priest named Francesco Papaceti. The intention was to educate and train them for marriage and honest work as an alternative to the more convenient and obvious career of prostitution, which would otherwise have been one of the only ways of avoiding starvation for many of them.

The first address was allegedly in the Via di Tor de' Specchi (this may be wrong), but the institution was early on moved to a site next to a church or chapel called Sant'Orsola a Ripetta by Pope Clement X (1670-76) who took an interest in the work. The chapel became private in the rebuilding, and was rededicated to Our Lady of Divine Providence which is a famous icon at San Carlo ai Catinari.

In 1682 Pope Innocent XI assigned some of the customs revenues from the Porto di Ripetta nearby to the maintenance of the institution, which was run by a resident sisterhood (Zitelle). It acquired a slightly sinister reputation; the appearance from the outside is that of a contemporary prison.

Unfortunately, it is known that girls with an interest in recreational sex or (worse) mentally retarded girls, who were not able to understand the moral dimensions of sex, were liable to be coerced into remaining in residence in such institutions in Rome.

There was a reform in the 19th century. Firstly the conservatorio united with the Conservatorio di San Pasquale Baylon in 1828, and took both names. Secondly, the institution was re-vamped as a proper school run by the Sisters of St Dorothy in 1861. It avoided the sequestration of convents by the state in 1873 because of the secular importance of its work of teaching orphan girls without charge.

The school moved to the suburbs in the late 20th century, and the complex was converted into the Residenza di Ripetta which is a luxury hotel. The chapel was deconsecrated, and turned into a conference room called the Sala Bernini.

Appearance:

In the façade of the building, the large Baroque window with incurved volutes at its top corners marks the chapel, which was on the first floor.

This has no separate architectural identity, but is a substantial space and is church-sized. The plan is rectangular, with an external side chapel forming a large arched niche halfway up each side.

Doric pilasters in shallow relief support an entablature, above which is a barrel-vaulted ceiling cut into by lunettes. These look as if they contain blocked windows, but there were never any windows here. Rather, natural light comes from the window in the street façade and also from a smaller window in the tympanum of the arch enclosing the main altar wall.

The refurbishment of the deconsecrated chapel to create a secular space has meant that all surfaces except the ceiling fresco have been painted in white and cream. The surviving fresco on the ceiling vault is 18th century, by **Giacomo Triga**. It depicts *God the Father Proclaiming Christ's Glory to the Apostles* (Gospel of John, 12:28).

It's worth trying to view this deconsecrated chapel by asking at the hotel reception.

Location:

Addr: Via di Ripetta 231

Coord: [41° 54' 30"N, 12° 28' 34"E](#)

Links and References:

- 1) http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/Santa_Maria_del_Rosario_della_Divina_Provvidenza
 - 2) <http://www.romeartlover.it/Vasi107.htm#Conservatorio%20della%20Divina%20Provvidenza>
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