

Santissima Trinità dei Monti



Trinità dei Monti (also called **Santissima Trinità al Monte Pincio**, **Trinità del Monte**, or **Holy Trinity on Pincio Hill**) is a famous 16th century convent and titular church in Rome. It is best known for its scenographic dominance above the Spanish Steps that descend into the Piazza di Spagna. This is a French national church, because the French government owns the property.

History

King [Charles VIII of France](#), a great admirer and patron of Saint Francis of Paola, a hermit from Calabria and founder of the [Minim friars](#), instructed the French ambassador in Rome to purchase a site to build a monastery for the Minims there. In 1493 a vineyard on the Pincio was bought from the Papal scholar and former patriarch of Aquileia, Ermolao Barbaro. Then the authorization was obtained from Pope [Alexander VI](#), and the foundations of a friary laid out in the following year, which was when Charles entered Italy with a French army to prosecute the Italian War. In 1502, under the patronage of [Louis XII of France](#), construction began on the church next to this monastery, to celebrate his successful invasion of Naples. Construction began in a cutomarily French style with pointed late Gothic arches. Construction was interrupted following the sack of Rome in 1527. This was an enormous setback as soldiers of Emperor [Charles V](#) pillaged and occupied the convent. (1)

The body of the church was finished by about 1560 in a more conventionally Italian Renaissance style. The architect was **Sebastiano di Marino**, who was from Fano. Then King [Henry III of](#)

[France](#) put up enough money for a façade, and this was begun before 1567, supervised by **Giacomo Della Porta**. Along with the façade two new chapels were added at the rear of the church. Constructed in stone imported from Narbonne, the church was finally consecrated in 1585 by the great urbanizer Pope [Sixtus V](#), whose *via Sestina* connected the Piazza below with the Porta del Popolo, the main north entrance to Rome. (1) (3)

A major restoration and expansion of the complex was completed in 1624. As regards the church, the work was confined to the provision of a new sacristy by **Filippo Breccioli**. The church's ceiling vault was restored by **Giuseppe Pannini** in 1775. (1) (3)

The Bourbon kings of France remained patrons of the church. During the Napoleonic occupation of Rome, the church, like many others in Rome, was despoiled of its artwork and decoration. In 1800, during the occupation, portions of the vault collapsed. After the Bourbon restoration of [Louis XVIII](#), the looted artwork was returned, and Louis ordered a restoration of the derelict building in 1816 by **François Mazois**. There was another restoration in 1857 by **Andrea Busiri Vici**. (1) (3)

In 1828, under an agreement worked out by Pope [Leo XII](#) and [Charles X](#) of France, the church and monastery were entrusted to the "Religieuses du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus", a French religious order. The Society of the Sacred Heart, as it is otherwise known. In September 2006 the sisters withdrew from the church, which was entrusted by the French government to the Monastic Fraternities of Jerusalem (Fraternités Monastiques de Jérusalem). This is a new Roman Catholic monastic order, founded in 1975 to live the monastic life in the heart of the modern city according to the ideals of the Desert Fathers. Both monks and nuns are now in residence in the complex (1)

There has been a major restoration in recent years, completed in 2013. (1)

The Spanish Steps were completed in 1725. The obelisk at the top of the steps was put in place in 1789. It was originally in the Gardens of Sallust, and was a made-to-order Roman copy.

Exterior

Layout and fabric

The most impressive part of the exterior has little to do with the church itself, which is not architecturally impressive. Rather, the location at the top of the Spanish Steps makes it stand out among the churches in Rome. (1)

The nave is under one pitched and tiled roof, and the transepts, sanctuary and choir are under a separate, slightly higher one. The fabric is in red brick, with a few architectural details in stone. (1)

The large convent is to the north, on the left hand side. To the south, a chaplain's house abuts the church. As a result, only the façade is visible from the street. (1)

Obelisk

Called the 'Sallustian Obelisk', which originally came from Sallust's gardens on the Pincio, and was given to [Clement XII](#) by the Ludovisi family but abandoned at the Lateran until Pope Pius VI erected it at Trinita dei Monti in 1789. This is an Aurelian copy, although smaller, of the Flaminio obelisk of Ramses II in the Piazza del Popolo, although the hieroglyphs were copied backwards from the original. (k)

Staircase

The double staircase was originally by **Domenico Fontana**, and was added by him in 1587 when he carved the piazza out of the hillside. (1) (3)

Two transverse staircases with balustrades run up to a patio in front of the entrance, from which there is a spectacular and famous view. The retaining wall below the stairs is in blank white render, except for a large epigraph reading:

**Ludovicus XVIII, exoptatus Gall[icorum] rex, templum SS Trinitatis in Pincio restituit,
curam agente comite Blacas de Alpidio regis legato ad Pium VII Pontificem Maximum,
ann[o] sal[utis] MDCCCXVI.**

This deliberately makes it clear that it was the King of France who had the church restored in 1816, not the Pope. The epigraph tablet is flanked by four Doric pilasters which support the patio balustrade, and above the outer pair of these are two panels bearing single stars. The balustrades of the staircases themselves have three panels each bearing the coat-of-arms of Pope [Clement XI](#), comprising a star above three mountains. This is proof that the balustrade at least was rebuilt in the early 18th century. (1)

The bottom of the stairs on each side has a very odd assemblage comprising a plinth, an ancient Composite column capital and, on top of that, a 16th century bas-relief in the form of an ancient tombstone. The reliefs were donated originally by one Gualdi di Rimini. The right hand one shows St Francis of Paola with his motto of Caritas (Charity), while the left hand one has what looks like a Vestal virgin. The plinths have the three mountains of Pope Clement facing the road, and the coat-of-arms of Pope Sixtus V round the side. (1)

Façade

The façade was finished in 1584 by **Giacomo della Porta**, and is now bright and white after a major restoration. Beforehand it was dirty and brownish, the 19th century white-on-orange render having weathered badly. (1)

It is best described as two identical campanili, with a slightly recessed central section between them. Each campanile has three storeys, the second being half the height of the first and the third being the actual bellchamber above the roofline. (1)

The first storey of each has a pair of Corinthian pilasters at the outer corners, duplicated round the corners and on high limestone plinths. These support an entablature with a molded architrave, and a projecting cornice with dentillations and modillions. The modillions are fronded, and have rosettes between them. The entablatures of the campanile are joined across the central section of the façade, which gives the design some unity. (1)

Between the pilasters, and with its keystone touching the architrave, is a blind arch springing from Doric imposts and with a molded archivolt. The impost capitals are joined by a molded string course, and the tympanum thus created contains a vertical oval oculus (round window) with a molded stone frame. A large rectangular window is in the arch, again with a molded frame. (1)

The second storey of each campanile is almost cubical, and has a large clockface within a molded frame flanked by a pair of Doric pilasters. (1)

The third storey, the actual tower, is a rectangular kiosk with a large arched and balustraded soundhole on each face. The arches have Doric imposts, and the kiosk has an Ionic pilaster on each

corner. Each side has a triangular pediment, and above these is an octagonal drum with an elliptical opening on every other face. This in turn supports an ogee-curved cupola in lead, with a final little octagonal pepperpot finial with its own miniature cupola. (1)

The central recessed section of the façade is dominated by the single entrance, which has a molded doorcase within a propylaeum comprising two Ionic columns supporting an entablature and triangular pediment. The columns are ancient, and are of cipollino marble from Euboea in Greece. Above the entablature, the second storey of this section has an enormous arch with a double molded architrave, divided into three windows by a pair of vertical mullions. (1)

The entablature that unites the façade as a composition has a dedicatory inscription on the frieze, which unusually starts and finishes round the corners so you can't read it in one go. It says: (1)

S[anctae] Trinitati, regum Galliae munificentia et pio elemosynis adiuta,
Minorum sodalitas struxit ac d[e]d[it] anno MDLXX.

Clocks

Note that the second storeys of the campanili have two clockfaces. This was not originally a redundancy for the sake of symmetry. Originally the right hand one showed the Italian (originally ancient Roman) method of telling the time, which is now completely unfamiliar. This divided the duration of daylight into twelve "hours", the length of which of course changed with the seasons. Zero hour was sunrise, and the end of the twelfth hour was fixed at sunset. This meant that mechanical clocks had to be re-set regularly to be correct. (1)

Incredibly the Papal government persisted with this method of telling the time well into the 19th century, forcing the city to go back to the old method after the French occupation and only conforming to the rest of the world in 1842. (1)

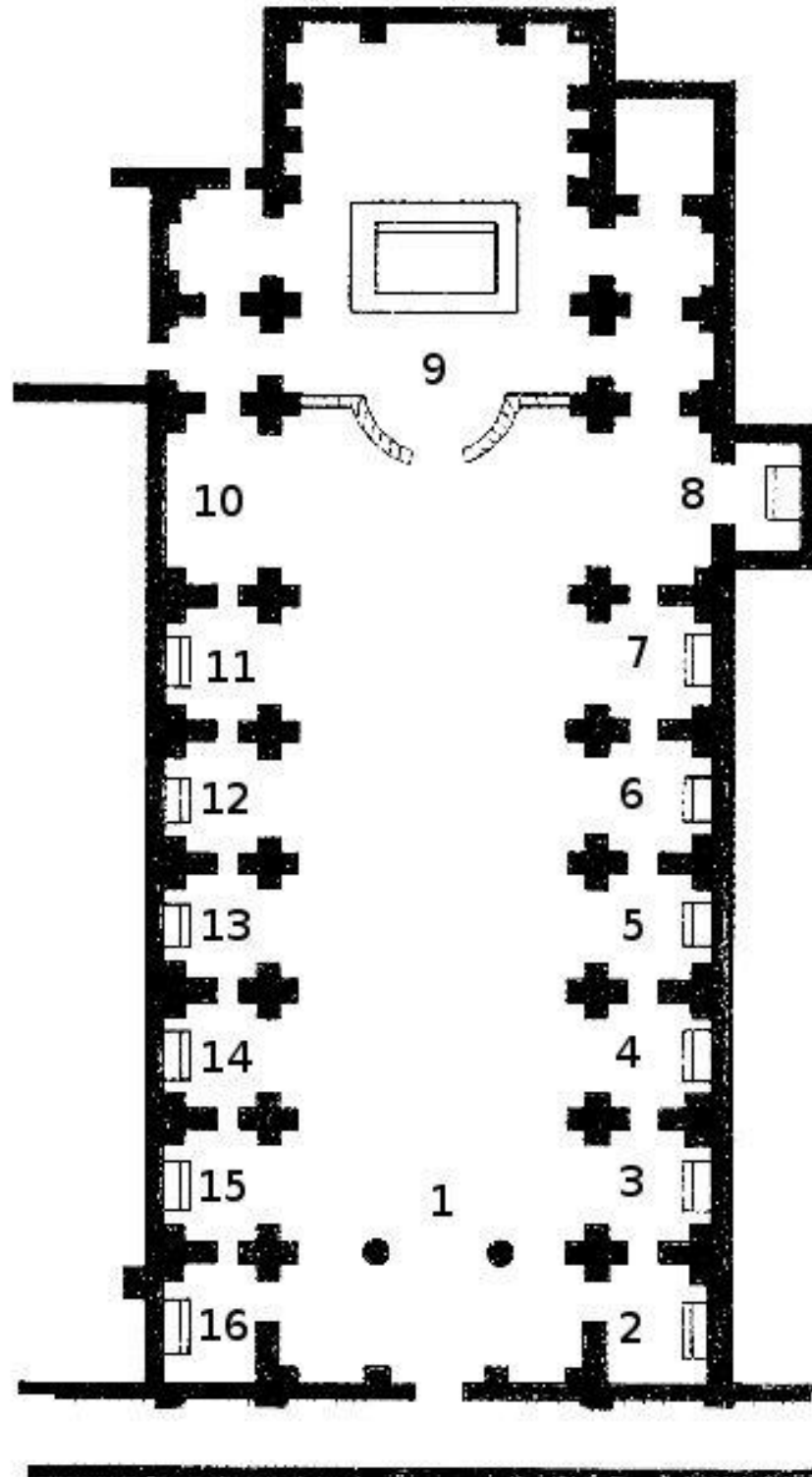
The left hand clock told the time in the familiar way, which used to be called tempo Ultramontano or "the way they tell the time on the other side of the Alps". (1)

Pairs of clocks like these also operated at San Pietro in Vaticano and Sant'Agnese in Agone. (1)

After 1842 the right hand clock was removed and replaced with a sundial. This was completely obscured until the recent restoration, but is now back in full working order. (1)

Plan and layout

Structurally it is a nave of six bays with side aisles, but the aisles have been divided by blocking walls to form self-contained chapels. Beyond the nave is a transept, and then a sanctuary of two bays. Beyond this, mostly invisible to visitors, is the conventual choir in a rectangular apse. (1)



Interior

Nave

The single nave has six bays, with two side chapels off each bay. These were sponsored by noble families as funerary enclosures, hence the richness of the Mannerist works of art in them. The chapel ceiling vaults are spectacular. The entrances into the chapels form two side arcades, with the arches separated by Doric pilasters supporting a pair of entablatures. The arches themselves spring from Doric impostes, have molded archivolts and strap finials on their keystones. (1)

The ceiling is barrel-vaulted, with transverse rib-arches separating the bays. Over each chapel the vault has a lunette containing a window, and these windows are the main source of natural light for the church. The decoration is very simple, and is in monochrome creamy white. Apart from the fourth chapel on the right, stucco embellishments are confined to the window frames. (1)

The first three bays are separated from the other half of the nave by a wrought iron screen. This was inserted to mark the friary enclosure in 1679, and has been kept closed outside the times of liturgical celebrations. This means that casual visitors can only view part of the church. (1)

At the entrance is a white marble statue of Christ by **Giovanni Meli**. (1)

Transept

The nave ends in a triumphal arch which is pointed, that is, Gothic. The crossing vault beyond this has Gothic tracery. The ends of the transept have their own Gothic triumphal arches, and each has a ribbed cross-vault. (1)

There is an external side chapel off the right hand end of the transept, but not one off the left hand end because of the convent cloister here. Instead, the left hand end comprises the famous Cappella Pucci. The right hand end also used to be fitted out as a chapel, until the altar was removed for the entrance to the external chapel mentioned. (1)

Sanctuary

The sanctuary has two bays, with arcades of two arches on each side leading into short side aisles. The design of the arcades and the ceiling vault resembles those of the nave. (1)

The right hand side aisle has a custodian's chamber at its end, while the left hand one is the access to the sacristy and convent. These aisles used to contain a chapel each, the right hand one being the Cappella Rayal and the left hand one, the Cappella della Pietà. Over the arcades are four cantoria or opera-boxes for solo musicians and singers, having balustraded fronts on corbels. (1)

The massive and overwhelming main altar aedicule was designed by **Jean Regnaud**, also known as **Jean de Champagne** or **Giovanni Rinaldi**. He was of the school of Bernini, and executed the work in 1679. There was a modification at the start of the 19th century by **Guillaume Lethière**. Four ribbed Corinthian columns in a black-veined white marble and with gilded capitals support a coved entablature in the form of a three-quarter circle. The frieze of this is in a pale green marble, and bears the declaration that this is a "privileged altar" in bronze lettering. The same marble is used in two panels inserted between the front and back column pairs, and the edges of these panels are done as alabaster pilasters with capitals to match. Two wings supported by another pair of columns project on either side. Above is the triangular symbol of the Trinity in glory, venerated by stucco angels. The stucco work is by **Pietro Sassi** and **Giuseppe Ruggieri**. (1)

The altar is unusual in having no altarpiece of its own, and in having a very uncommon design. There is a large tabernacle on the altar, designed by **Charles Errard** in the form of a round temple. The altar frontal is in verde antico, alabaster and a purple-veined marble. The inscription on the frieze refers to the fact that the altar was counted as one of those in Rome which pilgrims could visit in order to obtain a plenary indulgence. (1)

There are two Paschal candlesticks in white marble at the sides of the sanctuary, in the form of twisted barley-sugar columns. These imitate the serpentine columns that once embellished the shrine of St Peter in the Old Basilica of St Peter. They are dated to the 13th century, and are similar but not a matching pair. The sanctuary is set off by a low balustrade with an outward curve, in white marble and what looks like red jasper. (1)

Choir

The very small choir hidden away behind the aedicule has a semi-circular set of wooden stalls. The far wall has a painted *Calvary*, which you can see through the altar aedicule. The side walls have *St Louis, King of France* by **Charles Thévenin**, and a copy of the *Deposition* by **Daniele da Volterra**.

The side chapels are described anticlockwise, beginning at the right of the entrance.

Side Chapels

The chapels will be described in a clockwise direction beginning at the left of the entrance.

Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows (16)

The first chapel on the left is now dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows, and is the Cappella Borghese. It used to be dedicated to the Crucifixion. The fresco work here is by **Cesare Nebbia**. *St Francis* and *St Catherine of Siena* flank the altarpiece, *Sibyls* are in the lunettes above and a side wall has *Christ Falls Beneath the Cross*. The superbly intricate vault has fresco panels with scenes from the *Passion*. (1)

The altarpiece is now a large plaster *Pietà*, a copy of a marble sculpture by **Wilhelm Achtermann** in Münster Cathedral which was destroyed in the Second World War. (1)

Chapel of the Deposition (15)

The second chapel on the left, the Cappella Aldobrandini or Cappella Bonfils, now contains the famous altarpiece of the *Deposition from the Cross* by **Daniele da Volterra**, 1546. The painting used to be the altarpiece fresco of the Cappella Elena Orsini, and part of a larger decorative scheme by **Daniele**. Allegedly the inspiration for the design of the work was Michelangelo's, which ref. (c) does not accept. This particular painting created an archetype for later Mannerist and Baroque works, and influenced many famous painters such as Caravaggio and Rubens. Poussin made the famous allegation that it was the third most important painting in the world after the Transfiguration by Raphael and the Communion of St Jerome by Domenichino. However, his artistic enemies alleged that he was talking merde to further his own style -perhaps a valid observation. (1) (5) (c)

When the vault of the chapel collapsed in 1800, the fresco was left exposed to the elements for six years. Then it was targeted for looting by the French, and transferred to canvas in 1810 by **Pietro Palmaroli**. This was an innovative technique which resulted in serious damage, and hence **Palmaroli** patched up the work in a rather freestyle way. It was decided not to take the painting to Paris because it was too fragile, but it was not returned to the church. However it was judged to be the property of the Orsini family and not the French state, and in 1822 it was heavily restored by

Vincenzo Camuccini who removed Palmaroli's daubings. The family then donated the painting to the church, but it was kept in the sacristy until 1861. Only then was it finally installed in the Cappella Bonfils. (1)

During the 20th century the painting decayed badly, owing mainly to the oxidisation of the wax covering which the 19th century restorers had applied. At the start of the 21st century it was thoroughly restored, and was returned to the church in 2005. (See the restored painting [here](#)) Those who saw the painting before this will be amazed at its present colourfulness and brightness. (1)

Most of the original fresco work in this chapel is by Paolo Cespedes, 1571. The side walls have *Adam and Eve Expelled from Paradise*, and the *Nativity*. The pilasters have *King David* and the prophet *Daniel with a tame lion*, and the vault has the *four Evengelists*. Over the altar is a small representation of the *Marriage of Our Lady to St Joseph*, thought to be by Cesare Arbasia, and *Adam and Eve* are also ascribed to him. (1)

The original dedication of the chapel was to the Annunciation to Our Lady, and the altarpiece before 1861 was a sculpted copy of the Madonna della Seggiola by Raphael. (1)

Chapel of the Immaculate Conception (14)

The third chapel on the left, the Cappella Elena Orsini, is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, and was re-fitted in 1830 by Cardinal Louis-François-Auguste de Rohan-Chabot After his death in 1838 his heart was buried here. (1)

The altarpiece is by Filippo Veit, 1830. The side walls have frescoes by Joseph Erns Tunner, showing the *Annunciation* and the *Visitation*. (1)

The dedication used to be to St Helen, the patron of Elena Orsini who commissioned Daniele da Volterra to fresco the vault in 1541. Like the Cappella Massimo, this chapel was extremely rich in its decoration and stucco work. Tragically, during the French occupation in 1800 the vault collapsed and no effort was made to save the artworks except the famous *Deposition* of da Volterra described above. When this was returned to the church, it was put in the sacristy and a copy by Nicolas Poussin was put here as the altarpiece until the 1830 refitting. (1) (b) (c) (e)

Chapel of St Joseph (13)

The fourth chapel on the left is the Cappella Cardelli, and is now dedicated to St Joseph. A painting here of *St Michael the Archangel Conquering Evil* is by Domenico Corvi, 1758. (1)

The altarpiece used to be an Ecce Homo by Giovanni Battista Biscara. The original dedication was to Our Lady and St John the Evangelist. (1)

Chapel of St Mary Magdalen (12)

The fifth chapel on the left is the Cappella Massimo, and is dedicated to St Mary Magdalen. The altarpiece depicting *Noli Me Tangere* is anonymous, of the 16th century. There is a 19th century neo-Classical monument to Emidio Antonini. (1)

This chapel is the scene of a minor artistic tragedy. It was originally commissioned by a wealthy repentant courtesan, named Lucrezia Scanatoria (hence the dedication). In the early 1520's Giulio Romano and Giovan Francesco Penni, of the school of Raphael, were commissioned to fresco the

interior and they completed the lunettes and altarpiece. (The latter by Penni, also a *Noli Me Tangere*, is now in the Prado at Madrid.) (1) (i)

In 1537 it was ceded to Angelo Massimi, who commissioned **Pierin del Vaga**, on his return to Rome in 1538, to complete the job by painting frescoes on each of the lateral walls and on the pilasters on either side of the entrance, and with fantastically elaborate stucco work by **Guglielmo della Porta**. The vault collapsed in 1800, and the surviving frescoes were plundered and sold on in 1837. An accessible survivor is at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, which is *The Resurrection of Lazarus*. The British Museum and the National Museum at Budapest also have fragments, and others are in private hands. (1) (a) (i)

Chapel of the Sacred Heart (11)

The sixth chapel on the left is the Cappella Turchi, commissioned in 1532 and now dedicated to the Sacred Heart (the original dedication was to the Immaculate Conception). The altarpiece of *Christ with heart aflame* is by **Alexander Maximilian Seitz**, 1858, as are the side wall pictures of *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* and *The Prodigal Son*. (1)

The dedication in the 19th century was to St Louis, King of France with an altarpiece of him by Thévenin now in the choir. (1)

The cross-vault and lunettes have anonymous 16th century fresco panels depicting scenes from the legend of *SS Joachim and Anne*, parents of Our Lady. (1)

Chapel of Our Lady, Queen of Heaven (10)

In the left end of the transept is the Cappella Pucci, which is similar architecturally to the Chapel of St Michael except that there is no round window. It is dedicated to Our Lady, Queen of Heaven. (1)

The chapel was originally commissioned by Cardinal Lorenzo **Pucci** in 1523, and **Perin del Vaga** was appointed to fresco the interior. He executed the four fresco panels showing scenes from the life of Our Lady in the cross-vault, and *The Visitation* in the lunette above the altar. Then the Sack of Rome in 1527 caused him to flee, and the work was abandoned. (1) (a)

The chapel was then taken over by the Archbishop of Corfu, Giacomo Cauchio, who appointed Taddeo Zuccari to finish the job. Unfortunately, Taddeo died in 1566 and his brother Federico Zuccari completed the project. There has been some debate about which paintwork belongs to which brother, with a theory that they worked in tandem from the beginning. (1) (a)

The altarpiece shows *The Assumption* (The figure in the lower left looking out from the painting may be a self portrait of Federico). This and *God the Father with the Dead Christ* and *St Augustine* and a *Sibyl Venerating Our Lady* are by **Taddeo** or the brothers together, but the *Coronation of Our Lady* near the sacristy is by **Federico**. *The Death of the Virgin* is thought to be by **Taddeo** alone. (1) (a) (b)

Over the entrance arch is a heraldic shield containing a moor's head, which is from the coat-of-arms of the Pucci family. (1)

Chapel of St Magdalen Sophie Barat

The small chapel off the right hand end of the transept is dedicated to the foundress of the Society of the Sacred Heart, St **Madeline Sophie Barat**. (1)

It was originally erected by the Minims between 1739 and 1754, and dedicated it to St Francis of Sales. It was then that the present entrance from the transept was knocked through the former back wall of the chapel of St Michael. (1)

The sisters re-dedicated it to their foundress after she was beatified in 1906, and hence the altarpiece is presently a portrait of her. However, the monastics now in charge might want to re-fit this chapel again in the future to further their own devotion. (1)

The *Dream of St Joseph* by **Matteo Piccioni** has been kept in here. (1)

Chapel of St Michael (8)

The Cappella Chateauvillain used to occupy the right hand end of the transept, until it was knocked through to make an entrance for the next chapel. It was dedicated to St Michael the Archangel, and wall frescoes survive. The triumphal arch is Gothic, as is the ribbed cross-vault. The large round aperture above the far doorway used to be an external window. (1)

It was acquired in 1581 by Ortensia Farnese and in 1584 by Marco Antonio Colonna, but passed to the Verospi family in 1607 (hence it is sometimes called the Cappella Verospi). It was then owned in turn by the Gavotti family before its destruction in 1739. The frescoes are by **Jacopo Siculo** and **Angelo Maino**, of the school of Michelangelo, 1530. The right hand wall has *The Apparition of St Michael on the Castel Sant'Angelo*, and the left hand wall a damaged *Annunciation*. The lunettes show two scenes from the foundation legend of the shrine of Monte Gargano, where the saint allegedly manifested himself as a wild ox. The destroyed altarpiece fresco showed The Expulsion of the Rebel Angels from Heaven. (1)

Chapel of the Ascension (7)

The sixth chapel on the right, the Cappella Guerrieri, is dedicated to the Ascension of Christ. Melchiorre Guerrieri commissioned the chapel in 1513. The frescoes it contains are early, and are thought to have been completed just before the Sack in 1527. In the 18th century they were shown to tourists as works of Perugino, but 19th century art critics made the valid observations that they are not very good, and are probably not even of his school. This might be fair comment, and the works do have a cartoon-like quality, but they are good fun and the putti lifting Christ into heaven, while playing musical instruments, are in such bad taste as to be charming. Modern art critics describe them merely as in the Umbrian style. (1)

The altarpiece is the *Ascension*, to the left is the *Resurrection* and to the right, *Pentecost*. The altar lunette shows the *Annunciation*, and the side lunettes have the *Nativity* and *Adoration of the Magi*. A frieze above the main panels shows scenes from the Passion. The cross-vault depicts four *Doctors of the Church*, and is actually better quality work which might be from the school of Perugino. (1)

Chapel of the Nativity (6)

The fifth chapel on the right, the Cappella Marciac, is dedicated to the Nativity. It was commissioned by Pierre Marciac from Besançon in 1534, but the fresco work was only done six years after that. It is frescoed throughout in a style similar to that of Raphael. The artist is anonymous, but has been claimed to have been Michele Alberti. A recent claim has been made for Pietro Negrone as having done the altarpiece. Ref (g) gives the name of the painter as Michaeli Grechi Lucchese. (1) (g)

This altarpiece, including trompe-l'oeil columns, depicts *The Adoration of the Shepherds*. To the right is *The Adoration of the Magi*, and to the left *The Circumcision*. The actual cut is in the process of being

made in the latter work. The lunette above the altar has two evangelists either side of the window. The side lunettes depict *The Baptism of Christ* and *The Escape to Egypt*. The cross-vault shows four prophets, *David, Isaiah, Jeremiah* and *Daniel*. The pilasters have two Sibyls, the *Hellespontine* and *Tiburine*. The arch spandrels have a pair of angels in monochrome. (1)

Chapel of the Flagellation (5)

The fourth chapel on the right, the Cappella Cecilia Caetani Orsini, is now dedicated to the Flagellation of Christ but used to be dedicated to SS Jerome and Henry the Emperor. (1)

This chapel was decorated by **Paris Nogari**, but was restored in the 19th century. Here is a funerary monument to Cardinal Rodolfo Pio da Carpi, 1564. The other memorial is to Cecilia Orsini da Carpi, 1575, both were made by **Leonardo Sormani**. He also carved the marble heraldic shields just below the vault -Orsini to the right, Pio da Carpi to the left and Caetani over the entrance. (1)

The altarpiece depicting *The Flagellation* is by **Léon-Louis Vincent Pallière**, 1817, replacing one that showed *The Entombment of Christ* by **Nogari**. The altar has a pair of stucco angels with gilded wings sitting on the ends of its broken segmental pediment. They obscure two prophets on the lunette. (1)

The glory of the chapel is the vault, lushly decorated in gilded stucco with fresco panels by **Nogari** depicting scenes from the Passion. These are: *The Last Supper*, *The Washing of the Feet*, *Christ in Gethsemane* and *Christ Before Pilate*. The pendentives have oval tondi containing *Doctors of the Church* (note St Jerome with his lion). The side lunettes show the *Flagellation* again on the left, and *The Road to Calvary* to the right. (1)

This chapel differs from the others in having a pair of stucco angels in the spandrels of its entrance arch. (1)

Chapel of the Assumption (4)

The third chapel on the right, the Cappella Lucrezia della Rovere, is dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady and was commissioned by the lady of the same name in 1548. It is completely frescoed by **Daniele da Volterra** and his school, 1550, and is a masterpiece. He was a pupil of Michelangelo. (1)

The altarpiece fresco showing the *Assumption* was seriously damaged by the French when they tried to loot it, and the 19th century restoration was not very good. However the work is still powerful, obviously reminiscent of the style of Raphael. The last figure on the right is thought to be a portrait of Michelangelo. **Da Volterra** also executed the *Presentation of Our Lady* on the right hand side wall, but the *Massacre of the Innocents* on the left hand wall is by **Michele Alberti**, regarded as the artist's best work. (1) (f)

The lunette frescoes have been badly damaged. The left hand one is of the *Presentation* again, by **Giovanni Paolo Rossetti**, and the right hand one of *the Birth of Our Lady* used to be ascribed to him but is now considered to be by **Gaspar Becerra**. The two in the lunette corners over the altar show the *Annunciation*. (1)

The vault is formed of four lunettes meeting at a tondo, and the former have frescoes of scenes from the life of Our Lady by **Pellegrino Tibaldi** and **Marco dal Pino**. Two putti hold onto the shield of the Rovere family in the central tondo which bears an oak tree, and oak trees also feature in the archivolt fresco over the entrance. The arch spandrels have a pair of prophets. (1) (f)

In 1552 Lucrezia was buried under the floor in front of her chapel, her unadorned tomb marked by an inscription. (f)

Chapel of St Francis of Paola (3)

The second chapel on the right is dedicated to St Francis of Paola, and is also called the Cappella Simoneta after Cardinal Giacomo Simonetta who had it erected in 1521. The chapel was restored with an altarpiece and frescoes by **Fabrizio Chiari** in 1665, but was re-dedicated and re-ordered by one **Raffaele Piccirelli** in the 19th century. The altarpiece of *St Francis* by **Chiari** was replaced by one by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres depicting *Christ Delivers the Keys to St Peter*, and this in turn was replaced by the present painting later in the same century. The altarpiece is now an anonymous 19th century copy of a contemporary likeness of *St Francis of Paola*, and other copies of this are fairly common in Roman churches. (1)

This is perhaps the least interesting of the chapels, although the polychrome marble decoration is impressive. The two angels in the entrance arch spandrels are the sole survivors of **Chiari's** work. (1)

Chapel of St John the Baptist (2)

The first chapel on the right, the Cappella Dosio or Cappella Altoviti, which was added to the original church during works for the new facade, was built in 1570 by the architect and sculptor **Giovanni Antonio Dosio**. In 1573 the Florentine banker Giovanni Battista Altoviti acquired the patronage and dedicated the chapel to St. John the Baptist, the Patron Saint of his city. In about 1580 **Giovanni Battista Naldini** created the frescoes that are still well-preserved today. (6)

The altarpiece and most of the frescoes are by Naldini, but the ceiling stucco work is by **Dosio**. The altarpiece shows *The Baptism of Christ*, and the two figures flanking the altar are the prophets *Isaiah* and *Zechariah*. (1)

A very enjoyable work is on the left hand side wall, which shows **The Dance of Salome** in the context of a 17th century banquet. Herod Antipas looks as if he is wondering whether Salome is going to tread on the cat. The other small animal is proof that kick-dogs are not a modern Roman phenomenon. In the lunette above is *The Beheading of St John the Baptist*, with Salome collecting the head. (1)

The ornate cross-vault above has four scenes from the life of the saint, being the *Visitation of St Elizabeth and Our Lady*, *Birth of St John the Baptist*, *St John Leaving His Parents for the Desert* (a charming composition) and *St John Preaching in the Desert*. (1)

There is an interesting trompe l'oeil fresco showing two doors opening onto views, one with a figure entering through a curtain. (1)

The monochrome frescoes of scenes from the life of the saint in the window embrasure are not by Naldini, but by **Giovanni Balducci**. Above the window is *St John in prison*, by **Naldini**. (1)

Access

Daily 6:30 to 20:00 EXCEPT

Mondays closed.

Thursdays 6:30 to 23:59 (midnight).

The rule of the monastics specifies Monday as a "Desert Day", when they go into solitude and have no public interface.

The church's opening hours are now very generous for Rome. However, outside the times of the liturgies the part of the church beyond the iron enclosure screen is not visitable except, apparently, as part of the monastery guided tour or with special permission from the office of the Presidente degli Stabilimenti Francesi in Italia.

Liturgy

Mass and the Divine Office are now celebrated daily in the church, except on Mondays.

Tuesday to Friday: Lauds 7:00, Sext 12:30, Vespers with Mass 18:00.

Saturday: Lauds 8:00, Mass 12:30, Vespers 18:30.

Sundays and solemnities: Lauds 8:00, Mass 11:00, Vespers 18:30.

Only those attending the liturgies are allowed in the church while they are taking place.

Burials: (7)

Giacomo Cardinal [SIMONETA](#), (1475-1539)

Antonio Cardinal [SANSEVERINO](#), O.S.Io.Hieros., (ca. 1477-1543)

Philippe Cardinal de [LA CHAMBRE](#), O.S.B., (ca.1490-1550)

Jean Cardinal [DU BELLAY](#), (1492-1560)

Rodolfo Cardinal [PIO](#), (1500-1564)

Pope Pius V erected his funeral monument

Carlo Cardinal [GRASSI](#), (1520-1571)

Buried on the right side of the main altar

S raphin Cardinal [OLIVIER-RAZALI](#), (1538-1609)

Denis-Simon Cardinal de [MARQUEMONT](#), (1572-1626)

Luca Antonio Cardinal [VIRILI](#), (1569-1634)

Fabrizio Cardinal [VEROSPI](#), (1571-1639)

Buried in the tomb of his ancestors

Girolamo Cardinal [VEROSPI](#), (1599-1652)

Buried in the tomb of his ancestor

Clemente Cardinal [ARGENVILLIERS](#), (1687-1758)

Buried in the chapel of S. Francesco di Paolo

Pietro Girolamo Cardinal [GUGLIELMI](#), (1694-1773)

Jean Cardinal [VILLOT](#), (1905-1979)

Buried in the crypt

Bartholomew [Lippi](#) [aka Nanni di Baccio Bigi] (1513-1568),

Italian architect

Cecilia Orsini di Carpi

Artists and Architects:

Alexander Maximilian [Seitz](#) (1811-1888) was a German painter, from Munich

Andrea [Busiri Vici](#) (1817-1911), Italian architect

Angelo Maino (16th cent), Italian painter

Cesare [Arbasia](#) (ca.1540-1614), Italian painter of the Mannerist period

Cesare [Nebbia](#) (1536-1614), Italian Mannerist painter

Charles [Errard](#) the Younger (1606–1689), French painter, **architect** and engraver

Charles [Th evenin](#) (1764-1838), neoclassical French painter

Daniele Ricciarelli *da Volterra* (1509-1566), Italian Mannerist painter, sculptor and architect

Domenico [Corvi](#) (1721-1803), Italian painter

Domenico [Fontana](#) (1543-1607), Swiss-born Italian architect and engineer of the late Renaissance.

Fabrizio [Chiari](#) (1621-1695), Italian painter

Federico [Zuccari](#) (1541-1609), Italian Mannerist **painter** and architect
 Filippo Breccioli (1574-1627), Italian architect
 Filippo Veit (1792-1877), painter
 François [Mazois](#) (Carlo Francesco Mazois) (1783-1826), French architect and archaeologist
 Gaspar [Becerra](#) (1520-1570), Spanish **painter** and sculptor
 Giacomo [della Porta](#) (1533-1602), Italian **architect** and sculptor
 Gianfrancesco [Penni](#) († 1528), Italian painter
 Giovanni Antonio [Dosio](#) (1533-1611), Italian **architect** and **sculptor**.
 Giovanni [Balducci](#) [aka *Il Cosci*] (1560-1631), Italian painter, from Florence
 Giovanni Battista [Naldini](#) (1537-1591), Italian painter of a late-Mannerism from Florence
 Giovanni Meli (19th cent), Italian sculptor
 Giovanni Paolo [Rossetti](#) († 1586), Italian painter
 Giulio [Romano](#) (1499-1546) Italian **painter** and architect
 Giuseppe Pannini (1720-1810), Italian architect
 Giuseppe Ruggieri (17th cent), Italian sculptor and stuccoist
 Guglielmo [della Porta](#) (c. 1500–1577), Italian architect and **sculptor** of the late-Renaissance or Mannerist period
 Guillaume Lethière (19th cent), French architect
 Jacopo [Siculo](#) [aka Giacomo Santoro da Giuliana] (1490-1544), Italian painter of the Renaissance
 Jean Regnaud de Champagne [Giovanni Rinaldi] (17th cent), French architect
 Joseph Ernst [Tunner](#) (1792-1877) Austrian painter
 Leonardo [Sormani](#) (ca. 1550-1590), Italian sculptor
 Léon-Louis Vincent Pallière (1787-1820), French painter
 Marco [da Siena](#) (1521-1583), Italian painter of the Renaissance and Mannerist period
 Matteo Piccioni, Italian painter
 Michaeli Grechi Lucchese (16th cent), Italian painter and engraver
 Michele [Alberti](#) (16th cent), Italian painter
 Paolo de Cespedes (1583-1608), Italian painter
 Paris [Nogari](#) aka Romano (1536-1601), Italian painter of the Renaissance period
 Pellegrino [Tibaldi](#) (1527-1596), Italian mannerist architect, sculptor, and mural **painter**.
 Piero Bonaccorsi [aka *Perin del Vaga*] (1501-1547), Italian painter of the Late Renaissance/Mannerism
 Pietro Palmaroli (19th cent), art restorer
 Pietro Sassi (17th cent), Italian sculptor and stuccoist
 Sebastiano di Marino (16th cent), Italian architect
 Taddeo [Zuccari](#) (or Zuccaro) (1529-1566), Italian painter of the Roman Mannerist School
 Vincenzo [Camuccini](#) (1771-1844), Italian Neoclassic painter
 Wilhelm [Achtermann](#) (1799-1884), German sculptor

Location:

Address: Piazza Trinità dei Monti 3, 00187 Roma

Coord: [41° 54' 23" N, 12° 29' 1" E](#)

Info: (4)

Telephone: +39 06-67.94.179

Opening times

Tuesday: 6.30 am - 8.00 pm;

Wednesday: 6.30 am - 8.00 pm;

Thursday: 6.30 am - 12.00 am (midnight);

Friday-Sunday: 6.30 am - 8.00 pm;

Monday: Closed.

Mass Schedule:

Weekdays (Tuesday-Friday): Praise: 7.00 am, Midday: 12.30 pm, Vespers: 6.00 pm,
Mass: 6.00 pm;

Saturday: Praise: 8.00 am, Mass: 12.30 pm, Vespers: 6.30 pm;

Sundays and holidays: Praise: 8.00 am, Mass: 11.00 am, Vespers: 6.30 pm;

Visits are not allowed during Services.

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Links of sites with photos

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[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Trinit%C3%A0_dei_Monti_\(Rome\)?uselang=it](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Trinit%C3%A0_dei_Monti_(Rome)?uselang=it)

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Convent

Cloister

You need to pre-book a guided tour here to view the convent, but it is worth it.

The large rectangular cloister is north of the church, and has arcades on all four sides. It was begun in 1549, and took about twenty years to finish. The arcade lunettes concern St Francis of Paola, and these are by several famous artists of the time:

The Canonization of St Francis of Paola is by the Cavalier d'Arpino, Charity (the saint's major virtue) is by Girolamo Massei, St Francis Curing an Invalid is by Cristoforo Roncalli and scenes from his life are by Paris Nogari. Giacomo Semenza painted scenes showing the saint with the king of France and with Cardinal Giuliano. Marco da Faenza executed five scenes, showing the saint's birth, baptism, clothing as a religious, as a hermit and as the founder of a monastery. Some of the works have been badly damaged by damp.

The springer vaults flanking the lunettes have a famous series of portraits of French kings, mostly by Avanzino Nucci from 1616 but the later ones by other artists. The series was continued up to Charles X in the 19th century, and begins with Pharamond who was the mythical first king of the Franks.

Refectory

The ceiling of the refectory features an important work by Andrea Pozzo, depicting The Glory of the Trinity with Saints. Separate panels show the apotheoses of SS Francis of Paola and Francis de Sales.

Anamorphic frescoes

The corridors above the cloister arcades have two very unusual anamorphic frescoes; that is to say, the actual form of the artworks is distorted so that must be viewed at a side angle and not head-on. The Minim community in the 17th century held friars with a serious interest in scientific matters including optics, and these two works seem to be a witness to this interest. They are thought to be either by a friar called Jean-François Nicéron, a noted mathematician and expert on anamorphosis, or by another friar called Emmanuel Maignan. One shows St Francis of Paola as a hermit in Calabria, and the other depicts St John the Evangelist at Patmos.

Mater Admirabilis

A venerated and allegedly miraculous painting of the Blessed Virgin known as the Mater Admirabilis used to be in an arched niche in a corridor of the convent, but the corridor has been converted into a little chapel. The icon has its own website here.

It is possible to see and venerate it. Many former students of the Society of the Sacred Heart, who used to run a girls' school in the complex, have found their way here to do so.

It was painted in 1844 by a French laywoman at the convent school called Pauline Perdrau (born 1817), who later became a religious here. On October 20th 1846 Pope Pius IX visited the convent, and was delighted when he saw the picture after pulling back a drape concealing it. He exclaimed Mater Admirabilis, hence the title. The date is the icon's feast-day.

The painting can be considered bad in execution (the proportions of the limbs are wrong), but Perdrau was very well-informed iconographically. Our Lady is pictured as a teenager, just before she was to marry Joseph (not a Mater yet, in other words) in a pose of thoughtful repose. The book in

the basket is the traditional Latin attribute which she holds in pictures of the Annunciation, but the spindle that she is holding is the equivalent Byzantine tradition. The legend is that she helped to spin the thread that went into the curtain of the Temple that tore when Christ died on the cross.

St Teresa of the Child Jesus came to pray before this painting that she would be allowed to enter Carmel at the age of fifteen -which she did.