

San Camillo de Lellis



San Camillo de Lellis is an early 20th century parish and titular church, and minor basilica. It is also known as San Camillo de Lellis agli Orti Sallustiani, but this is the cardinalate title and the official name is as given. The dedication is to Saint [Camillus de Lellis](#), M.I., (1550-1614), an Italian priest who founded the Order of Clerks Regular, Ministers to the Sick. (1)

History:

The church was as a result of a project to provide this new suburban area with a parish church, which was initiated by Pope Pius X (1903-1914). The architect **Tullio Passarelli** started construction in 1906, and the first stone was laid by Antonio Cardinal Agliardi. The edifice was consecrated in 1910. (1)

Administration was granted to the Chierici Regolari Ministri degli Infermi, the "Clerks Regular, Ministers of the Sick" which is the order founded by St Camillus and which received papal approval in 1591. It is better known as the Camillians, and its more high-profile presence in Rome is at the church of La Maddalena where the Curia or headquarters is located. In 1965 Pope Paul VI elevated the church to the status of a Minor Basilica and, in the same year, established it as a titular church. (1)

Exterior:

This is a large and grand basilica church occupying a corner site. The style is described as Lombard Romanesque, but many details recall the great northern European churches of the 11th century. (1)

The left hand side elevation on the Via Sallustiana displays the church's design layout. The three bays are separated by shallow brick buttresses, which are continued as flying buttresses over the aisle roofs on three stepped arches each in order to support the upper nave wall. There are three of these buttresses, with a pair flanking the façade. (1)

Each of the three bays of the nave is divided into two vertical zones (this feature is repeated inside). The side aisle walls have six of these zones, all but one identical, and each pair is separated by a shallow brick buttress ending at the roofline. From bottom to top, each has a crypt window, a section of stone string course just above this and then a central small arched window with the arch emphasized by an enclosing thin projecting archivolt. Below the roofline is a row of little arches on brick corbels, above which is a row of brick diapered dentillation. The roofline itself is supported by twisted brick corbels. (1)

The last zone of the left hand aisle wall contains the church's side entrance, and is treated differently. The doorway is within an elaborately decorated arch, which has a relief carving of *Christ the Good Shepherd* on the tympanum and intricately carved animal and vine scroll decoration on the inner archivolt and on the capitals of the supporting columns. Above is a round window with the symbols of the *Evangelists* in the fenestration. (1)

Each bay of the upper nave wall has a blind arcade of two arches separated by a pilaster with a stone capital. Each arch contains a round-headed window with a detached stone archivolt, rather like an eyebrow, with modillions on the inner curve. Above the pilaster is a third, much smaller window in the same style. The roofline is elaborately decorated with three orders of fancy brickwork reminiscent of those along the side aisle rooflines, except that the pendant arches have stone corbels and the corbels under the roofline are fancier. (1)

The left hand transept end towers above the street in two storeys. The first storey has a large blind arch on two wide pilasters, and contains statues of three saints in a stone arcade on a shelf on brackets. Above this is a decorated projecting cornice. The second storey has five round-headed windows in an arcade on the cornice, and above these are three narrow separated round-headed windows enclosed by a floating stone archivolt of the same style as those over the upper nave windows. The right hand transept end is differently treated, as it has three large round-headed windows in an arcade separated by a pair of columns. (1)

Campanile

The massive and impressive campanile, 30 meters high, is not part of the church structure but is attached to the convent. The first storey, which is almost three-quarters of the height of the four-storey convent, is blank brickwork with a small arched window doubly recessed. At the top is a pair of dentillated cornices, and in between these is an arcade of three small windows, triply recessed this time. (1)

The brick tower itself springs from the upper cornice of the first storey. It has two recessed panels on each face stretching for the entire height of the main stage, each pair ending at the top in two pendant arches. These panels contain the little round-headed windows lighting the stairs. The top has a corbelled stone cornice. Above this is the bellchamber, with an arcade of three arched soundholes on each face separated by columns with block capitals and a dentillate cornice. Finally there is a squat pyramidal spire sheathed in copper with a ball finial, and this has a little brick aedicule on each side containing an arched window and having a triangular pediment. (1)

Convent

The convent building is on the other side of the campanile from the church, and occupies an L-shaped site at a road junction. It has four storeys, and is in the same style as the church but less decorated. The characteristic thin floating archivolts over the round-headed windows feature here. Interestingly, those on the main frontage on the Via Sallustiana are in stone, while those on the frontage on the Via Aurelian round the corner are in brick -someone was saving money. (1)

Façade

The façade is Passarelli's masterpiece. There are three entrances approached by steps, one very large one and two smaller ones for the side aisles. This is, of course, because of the crypt. The actual frontage has a massive shallow propylaeum attached to it. This has two brick pilasters ending in little kiosks, on top of which lie a pair of lions. In between the kiosks is an open arcade of nine stone arches, separated by columns with cushion capitals carved with vine leaves and scrolls and running along the top of the propylaeum. (1)

The propylaeum is dominated by the enormous arched entrance portal, with four orders and three receding columns on each side. The tympanum has a relief carving of *Christ Presenting St Camillus to Sick People*, below which is a panel showing *sheep adoring the Cross*. The archivolt is carved with biblical scenes, and the column capitals are again intricately carved in vegetation in which lurks more wildlife such as dragons. (1)

Two little plaques on each side above the arch display the shields of the Papacy and the Camillan order. In the center of the façade is a large, intricately carved rose window with eight "petals" formed from a colonnaded arcade in a circle. This has a wide frame, to which is attached four plaques bearing symbols of the Evangelists. (1)

The two side entrances are similar to the main one, except simpler with only one order and a pair of supporting columns. The carved reliefs in the tympani are *Christ between Children* and *The Pardon of the Adulterers*. Above these two entrances is a pair of smaller, simpler rose windows. (1)

The rooflines of the main nave and the aisles are decorated with little pendant arches on stone corbels, those of the main nave being carved with demons. The main gable has two orders of dentillation, the lower one double and the upper supported by more demons' faces. The pair of flying buttresses on each side are also crowned with dentillations, but here the order is reversed (double on top). (1)

Interior:

The church is basilical and on the plan of a Latin cross with a central nave, side aisles and a transept. The presbyterium is a very high semi-circular apse, while a pair of chapels occupies much lower apses at the ends of the aisles. The overall length is 50 meters, and the width 21 meters. The interior is clad with stone slab riveting in travertine. The nave, aisles and transept have cross-vaults, which are undecorated but their height is impressive. The interior decorations were by architect Alberto Calza Bini. (1) (2)

Nave and transept

As with the exterior, the three interior bays of the nave are each divided into two for design purposes. The bays are separated by enormous square pillars with capitals which bear the vault, and these have semi-columns attached on each side. Three have capitals of their own and bear the springers of the side aisle vaults and the arcade arches, but the fourth rises up to support the transverse arches which divide the vault into its three cross-ribbed sections. Interestingly, these tall semi-columns have pseudo-capitals at the same level as the real capitals of the other semi-columns, and are flanked by pairs of thin three-quarter columns which stand on bases on top of the main pillar capitals. (1)

Each bay has two arcade arches, separated by a bunch of four columns with capitals. The one facing the central nave bears another thin semi-column, but this runs up the wall to divide two very large blind arches on the upper nave wall of each bay. These arches contain a tall round-headed window each, and a third smaller window is above the capital of the semi-column. (1)

Above the arcade arches is an elaborate stucco frieze displaying relief sculptures of scenes from the life of St Camillus, and this frieze is continued round the transept. Above it in the nave walls are statues of saints in round-headed niches, three to each bay wall. (1)

All the column and pillar capitals are intricately carved in the same style as those in the façade. The wooden pulpit is also a fine piece of carving, with figurative panels; it is varnished, not painted, with some gold highlights. (1)

The large nave windows contain stained glass representing the twelve apostles, while the transept windows display Our Lady with the Christ Child and Christ with angels. (1)

Presbyterium

The apse has a high vaulted conch, with the vault ribs springing from four semi-columns belonging to a blind arcade. In the arcade arches are five narrow round-headed windows with stained glass representing *Christ* and the *Evangelists*. (1)

The apse itself contains a niche which is a miniature version of the main entrance having an arch of three orders with columns. In it is a statue of *St Camillus* by **Alberto Galli**, executed in 1911. Below is a stucco frieze of angels, which runs round the apse wall below four sets of triple arcaded windows (these open into the convent behind the church). (1)

The main altar is triple-decked, and has a large tabernacle in the style of a monumental domed gateway. The frontal has sculptures of events in the life of *St Camillus*, while the reredos reaching up to the main statue has statues of saints famous for works of mercy. (1)

Side chapels

Passarelli provided four side chapels for the church as first built. These are dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament, Our Lady of Consolation, the Sacred Heart and *St Joseph*. The baptistery is a little apse with a fresco of the *Baptism of Christ* in the conch; the font itself has a carved wooden cover featuring the *Lamb of God*. (1)

Other chapels added later are dedicated to: Crucifix, Immaculate Conception, *St Anthony of Padua* and the Relics of *St Camillus*. (1)

Crypt

Under the church is a crypt.

Artists and Architects:

- Alberto [Calza Bini](#) (1881-1957), Italian architect and painter
- Alberto Galli (20th cent), Italian sculptor
- E. Gazzerri, Italian painter
- Giovanni Battista Conti (20th cent), Italian painter
- Giulio [Tadolini](#) (1849-1918), Academic-trained Italian sculptor
- Tullio [Passarelli](#) (1869-1941), Italian architect

Location:

Address: Via Sallustiana, 24, Rione Sallustiano (Via Bissolati)

Coord: [41° 54' 25.5" N, 12° 29' 40.1" E](#)

Info:

- Telephone: +39 06 4818188
- Web site: www.parrocchiasancamillo.it
- Email: info@parrocchiasancamillo.it

Opening times

- Weekdays 7.00am-12.00pm 5.00pm-7.00pm
- Holidays 8.30am-1.00pm 6.00pm-8.00pm

Masses:

Weekdays 7.30am 9.00am 8.00pm

Saturday 9.00am 6.00pm

Holidays 9.00am 11.00am 12.00am 7.00pm

Links and sources:

1. [Roman Churches Wiki](#)
2. [Info Roma web site](#)
3. [060608 web site](#)
4. [Church history on parish web site](#)
5. [Parish web site](#)