

## Sant'Andrea degli Scozzesi



St Andrew of the Scots is a deconsecrated late 16th century national church, located in the rione Trevi. The dedication is to St Andrew the Apostle, as patron saint of Scotland.

### History

The church was built in 1592, on the orders of Pope Clement VIII after Scotland had become separated from the Catholic Church in the Reformation. This was at about the same time as the Reformation in England, but was an entirely separate event as Scotland was still independent at the time.

In 1600, added to it was a college and hospice for the benefit of expatriate Scots in Rome, and especially for those aspiring to the priesthood. This was the beginning of the Pontifical Scots College, which is still a flourishing institution -although not here. The original building was a palazzo owned by a Florentine called Cosmo, which the pope purchased and placed under the authority of the first master, a Scots secular priest called Alexander Seton.

This administration seems to have been a failure for, in 1615, Pope Paul V granted charge of the college to the Jesuits. In 1645 they had the church rebuilt, and formally dedicated to St Andrew the Apostle alone (the previous dedication had been to SS Andrew and Margaret, Queen of Scotland).

The profile of the institution was raised when the exiled Stuart royal family took up residence in Rome in 1717, since they worshipped here on occasion. However, in stark contrast to their attitude to England, the Jesuits did not regard Scotland as being part of their missionary outreach but confined themselves to the administering the college until they were temporarily suppressed in 1773.

The church and college were abandoned during the French occupation of Rome in 1798. In 1820 they were re-opened, but the Jesuits were no longer responsible. There was a restoration of the church in 1864 by Luigi Poletti.

In the late 1950's the college decided to move to the suburbs, where it built premises with an interesting modern chapel -Cappella del Collegio Scozzese. This was formally consecrated in 1964. Meanwhile, in 1962 a bank called Cassa di Risparmio delle Province Lombarde (CARIPLLO), whose Rome office is in the white-painted palazzo adjacent to the north, bought the old church for which the college did not want to have responsibility. It was later sold on to developers who sought to convert it into a hotel.

This is the only example in Rome of a national church being simply abandoned. The new chapel is private, and does not have the status of a national church. Rather naïvely, the Diocese proclaimed that the English national church of San Silvestro in Capite would become the British national church to compensate. Italians tend not to understand the complexities of nationality in the United Kingdom, where three nationalities (English, Scots and Welsh) share the island of Britain. Most English used to identify with a British "nationality" based on loyalty to the central government, but that was before devolution when Scotland and Wales were given their own autonomous governments. Many Scots are offended by the whole concept of a British nationality (as distinct from citizenship), and many Scots Catholics will not set foot in San Silvestro on principle. The Scots national church is sorely missed by some.

After several years of disuse, this church was finally formally deconsecrated by a decree of the Cardinal Vicar of Rome on 1 June 2004. The major moveable artworks were removed to the Pontifical Scots College, at Via Cassia 481, Tomba di Nerone, 00189 Roma, where they are displayed in the Refectory (dining hall). Serious art students may be able to view them on prior written application.

There is another, nearby example of a national seminary college fleeing to the suburbs and leaving behind a deconsecrated church, at Santi Gioacchino e Anna alle Quattro Fontane.

After the hotel project failed, the church was bought by an international partnership of lawyers called NCTM which also owns the old college buildings. The complex is now their Rome headquarters. The interior has been restored as a conference centre with the original Baroque decoration left intact, and so the building now has a secure future. If you want to try and visit, use the e-mail address on their web-page.

## **Exterior**

The old buildings of the college occupy the street frontage between the church and the Via Rasella; despite the impressive façade, they are a hotch-potch of different architectural units. The church has no architectural identity separate from this, apart from the façade. The plan is a simple rectangle, with an apse and a ceiling vault supported by two pilasters on either side. There is no sign of a campanile.

The façade has two storeys. The first has four rectangular pilasters without capitals, and these blend into the architrave of the entablature separating the storeys. This latter has no frieze, but a projecting and molded cornice. The inner pair of pilasters is doubletted on the sides facing the doorway, and the architrave above blends with these slightly recessed strips.

The entrance doorcase is molded, and above the lintel is a tablet. If this had an inscription, it is indecipherable. Above this is a segmental pediment broken at the top. In the tympanum are two fish side by side facing the viewer with (for fish) rather friendly expressions; these are a reminder that St Andrew had been a fisherman before he became an apostle. In the break in the pediment above are the Sacred Initials

(IHS) in a Baroque glory, placed in front of a St Andrew's Cross made up of two diagonal logs. Above this in turn is a long, twisting ribbon with the inscription Sancto Andreae Apostolo Scotorum Patrono ("To St Andrew, Apostle [and] Patron of the Scots").

The first storey pilasters are mirrored on the second storey by pilasters with Doric capitals. The capitals are stylized, and are prolonged to the cornice of the entablature above. The shafts of the pilasters are tripletted, and the strips are blended into a disjunctive architrave in the same way as with the pilasters below. There is a large rectangular central window, with little curlicues at the top corners, and the entablature is projected above it. The whole frontage is crowned by a triangular pediment, with a blank tympanum and the central section slightly recessed.

### **Interior**

The nave is aisleless, with two side altars and a barrel-vaulted ceiling. In the centre of the vault is a 16th century fresco of St Andrew in Glory by Guillaume Courtois.

The sanctuary is rectangular, separated from the nave by a balustrade. The high altar was made in the 17th century. The former altarpiece from the 18th century is by Scottish painter Gavin Hamilton, and depicts the Martyrdom of St Andrew. Italian art critics of the 19th century knew nothing about Scottish artists, and ascribed this painting to the "Burgundian School" (this opinion seems first to have been recorded by Nibby in 1839).

There was also a depiction of Our Lady Enthroned with SS Columba and Ninian by Alexander Sire (? -this name is probably not given correctly in the sources).

An interesting detail can be seen on the walls of the sanctuary. On both sides, there are hinged grates covering openings into tribunes where members of the exiled Scots royal family would sit when they attended Mass.

To the right of the entrance was a monument to John Stewart (1700-38), the son of a Scottish baronet called James Stewart who was an earl of Bute. The information given on the Wikipedia page for James Stuart, 2nd Earl of Bute does not cohere with the inscription on the tomb (see "Jacobite Gazetteer" web-page); this John was not the heir to the earldom.

To visit the church, go to the adjacent offices of CARIPLO (see below). They may not be able to arrange a visit at once, so you if you are only visiting Rome for a short time, make sure that you don't delay it until the last day.

### **Location:**

Address: Via delle Quattro Fontane 163

Coordinates: [41°54'11.4"N 12°29'18.4"E](#)

### **External links**

[Roman Churches Wiki](#)

[English Wikipedia article](#)

[Info.roma web-page](#)

[De Alvariis gallery on Flickr](#)

[Nolli map](#) (look for 218)

[Jacobite Gazetteer web-page with photos](#)  
and [here](#)