

Santi Sergio e Bacco



Santi Sergio e Bacco is an Oriental-rite parish church in the rione Monti. The church is dedicated to the two Roman officers [Sergio and Bacco](#) who were martyred in the 4th century, and whose cult spread rapidly throughout the Roman Empire. At one time there were five churches dedicated to these saints in the Roman world, this is the only one remaining today. The church is also known as the *Madonna del Pascolo*, after an icon kept there.

It is one of the three national churches of the Ukraine in Rome, and belongs to the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

History

The original church was built at the beginning of the 9th century. The first reference in the *Liber Pontificalis* states that Pope Leo III (795-816) endowed an oratory dedicated to SS Sergius and Bacchus *in Callinico*. Pope Paschal I (817-824) founded a Benedictine monastery known as *Canelicum*, with a church referred to as *Sancti Sergii in Suburra*. Suburra was the ancient Roman name for the neighbourhood, notorious for slums and prostitutes. Pope Benedict III (855-58) endowed this institution with church plate.

However, the little monastery here seems to have failed in the 13th century when there was a general collapse of Benedictine observance in the city. In 1413 the church is recorded as parochial and collegiate, with several secular priests. Attached was a hospice for Albanian pilgrims, which was presumably in the old convent.

The church was rebuilt in 1563 on orders from Pope Paul III after the destruction wrought in the Sack of Rome in 1527. Part of the motivation also seems to have been that the main church dedicated to the two saints in Rome, *Santi Sergio e Bacco in Foro Romano*, had just been demolished.

In 1622 Pope Urban VIII Barberini granted the complex to the [Minims](#), but they decided instead to move to the present church of San Francesco da Paola nearby. In 1641 The pope had the church renovated, and the cost was mostly borne by his brother Cardinal Antonio Barberini who is commemorated in an inscription over the entrance. The pope then granted the complex to the so-called "Ruthenian Monks of St Basil" (predecessors to the Order of St Basil the Great), who built a college adjacent to the church. Some changes were also made to the church interior at that time, to conform it to the needs of the Byzantine rite. The most obvious alteration would have been the provision of an [iconostasis](#).

In 1718 the Church was renovated and in this work an old image of the Madonna with the baby Jesus was found under plaster in the church's sacristy. It was believed that it had once been affixed to the wall by some shepherds. Those present felt that it was a miracle that the image had come to light and Pope Clement XI ordered the cutting down of the wall and the image restored by [Lorenzo Gramiccia](#). As a result, it was installed over the high altar in 1730 in a silver frame provide by the Metropolitenn of Kiev, and devotees donated enough money to finance the rebuilding of the church. The icon itself is now protected by a gilded metal plate. The church was thus restored by architect [Francesco Ferrari](#) in 1741, providing new ceiling, frescoes and altars.

Shortly after the Church was dedicated to this icon. The name of the icon, *Madonna del Pascolo*, means "Our Lady of the Pasture", and is a copy of one at a place transcribed in the sources as "Zirowich", which is a little village named *Žyrovichy*, outside a town in Belarus called Slonim.

In 1896, Pope Leo XIII ordered a major restoration including a new façade, designed by architect [Ettore Bonoli](#). This was part of his scheme for a new Ukrainian rite seminary, which was called the "Ruthenian Pontifical College" when it was founded and which was given charge of the church. Subsequently it built its own larger premises, San Giosafat al Gianicolo.

In 1970 Pope Paul VI issued a bull that gave the church to the Ukrainians, and became the headquarters of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in exile until 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1971 it was rededicated by the senior archbishop of Leopoli, Cardinal Josyf Slipyj which then sparked new restorations of the Church, just as he had some rooms on the 3rd and 4th floor of the old Collegio Ruteno adapted to the museum.

The church continues to be important, as the Greek Catholic Church re-establishes itself in its homeland. Presently it is even more a centre of Ukrainian pilgrimage, and the hostel of *Santa Sofia* next door is administered by a Byzantine-rite sisterhood, the *Catechists of St Anne*.

Exterior

The church is incorporated into the large block of building between the Via dei Serpenti and the Via del Boschetto. There is a bellcote at the far right hand corner, beyond the flat roof which extends without break over the domestic edifice to the right. This bellcote is invisible from the street.

The Neo-Classical façade was rebuilt in travertine in 1896, and restored in 1970. There are three storeys, and each storey has its own entablature. The whole is topped by a triangular pediment with fine dentillation containing the coat-of-arms of Cardinal Slipyj.

The first storey has one entrance doorway, which is flanked by a pair of round-headed niches containing statues of two of the four Greek Doctors of the Church SS John Chrysostom, Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzen and Basil (it is not immediately obvious which is which). The niches are arched, with Doric pilasters and scallop shell decoration, and the stonework separating them is

smoothly rusticated. The doorway has a Baroque doorcase and its own triangular pediment, which intrudes into the middle storey. The frieze of the entablature is decorated with lions' masks, and these recall the city of Lviv ("city of the lion"), the seat of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. The inscription over the door records the renovation work done in 1641, mentioning Cardinal Antonio Barberini as the donor. This inscription is the only part of the old façade to have survived.

The second storey has four Doric pilasters on high plinths supporting the entablature, the frieze of which has an inscription which reads: *Leo XIII Pont[ifex] Max[imus] instaurandum curavit*. This pope oversaw the 19th century rebuilding. In the centre of the storey is a large round-headed window in an arch with Corinthian pilasters; the intrados of the archivolt of the arch is coffered with rosettes. In between the two pairs of pilasters are the arms of Pope Leo XIII (on the left) and the Order of St Basil (on the right) in mandorlas. Above these are two panels which together read: *Anno Domini MDCCCLXXXVI* (1896).

The top storey has four Ionic pilasters supporting an entablature. There is a large Venetian-style window, being triple with a round-headed fenestration between two rectangular ones. This is in the style of a triumphal arch; the side fenestrations have a pair of Doric pilasters each supporting short cornices. These in turn support an archivolt over the central window, which has its own triangular pediment and a pair of rosettes in the spandrels. To either side of this, sweeping volutes and ball finials are carved in relief. Above, the frieze of the entablature has an inscription which reads: *Restituit et restauravit Ioseph[us] I. Card[inale] Slipyi A. M. MCMLXIX MCMLXXIII*. To either side of the window are two more statues of the Greek doctors.

Interior

The 18th century Baroque interior was designed by Francesco Ferrari and has a single nave with two side altars and a wide apse. Along the walls are narrow niches between pilasters with Corinthian capitals and a tympanum with little angels in stucco.

The interior does not remind one of the interior of a Byzantine rite church. Especially, there is no traditional iconostasis which is a partition screening the sanctuary from the nave. Here, the iconostasis is an modern open metalwork screen bearing only a few icons in a non-Byzantine style but having the traditional three doors.

Part of the reason for this is that the icon of the *Madonna del Pascolo* is venerated in the church and was placed in its current location above the high altar in 1718. This arrangement makes the provision of a proper iconostasis untenable. The under a silver plate that covers a large part of the picture.

The altar, by Filippo Barigioni, has a pair of fluted Corinthian columns of verde antico marble and with gilded capitals. These support an entablature with a segmental pediment broken at the top, and into the break is inserted an elliptical window containing a depiction of the Holy Spirit as a dove. The window has a swag of flowers below, and is flanked by a pair of angels frolicking on the pediment.

In between the columns and below the entablature is a little segmental apse on the wall of which the icon is enthroned in a glory. A window above, partially concealed by the entablature, throws natural light onto it. On the side of the altar is a depiction of *The Holy Family*, and on the other *St Anne with the Child Mary*.

The ceiling has a 18th century fresco by Sebastiano Ceccaroni, depicting *The Assumption*.

There are two side altars; the left one with a depiction of Sts Sergius and Bacchus, and the right one with St. Basil, both by Ignazio Stern.

The entrance consists of a very beautiful neo-classical furniture in walnut-"Bussola" ("corridor") of 1788 and above sits a beautiful choir, also in walnut.

Liturgy

The liturgy is celebrated according to the Byzantine Rite of the Ukrainian Catholic church. The memorial of Sts Sergius and Bacchus is celebrated on 24 February.

Note:

The Byzantine rite is much more relaxed than the Latin rite over people wandering about the church during the Liturgy, venerating the icons and lighting candles. On the other hand, talking or taking photos will cause offence. The worshippers here prefer women to have their heads and arms covered and to wear skirts (not trousers) below the knee during the celebration, which corresponds to the norm in Orthodox churches also.

Artists and Architects:

Ettore Bonoli (19th cent), Italian architect
 Filippo Barigioni (1690-1753), Italian sculptor and architect of the Late Baroque tradition
 Francesco Ferrari (1634-1708), Italian painter and architect of the Baroque period
 Ignaz Stern (1679-1748), Austrian Baroque painter
 Lorenzo Gramiccia (1702-1795), Italian Baroque painter
 Sebastiano Ceccarini (1703-1783), Italian Baroque painter

Location:

Addr: 3 Piazza Madonna dei Monti. 00184 Roma
 Coord: [41° 53' 42.2"N 12° 29' 3.1818"E](#)

Info:

Telephone: 0039 06 485778

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Open Times:

Open 07:00am-08:00am

Sunday 08:00am-12:00pm 03:00pm-06:00pm

Thursday 05:00pm-07:00pm

Orario Messe:

Weekdays:07.00am-05.00pm (Thursday)

Holidays:07.00am-09.30am-05:00pm-06:00pm

Links:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santi_Sergio_e_Bacco

http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/Santi_Sergio_e_Bacco

<http://www.romeartlover.it/Vasi37.htm#Church>

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Santi Sergio e Bacco degli Ucraini](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Santi_Sergio_e_Bacco_degli_Ucraini)

http://www.info.roma.it/monumenti_dettaglio.asp?ID_schede=980

<http://www.060608.it/en/cultura-e-svago/luoghi-di-culto-di-interesse-storico-artistico/chiese-cattoliche/ss-sergio-e-bacco-degli-ucraini.html>

http://www.vicariatusurbis.org/?page_id=188&ID=292

<http://www.annasromguide.dk/sevaerdigheder/viminalsev/santisergioebaccokort.html>

Refs:

Lewine, Milton; THE ROMAN CHURCH INTERIOR, 1527-1580; 1963