

Santa Maria Antiqua (deconsecrated)



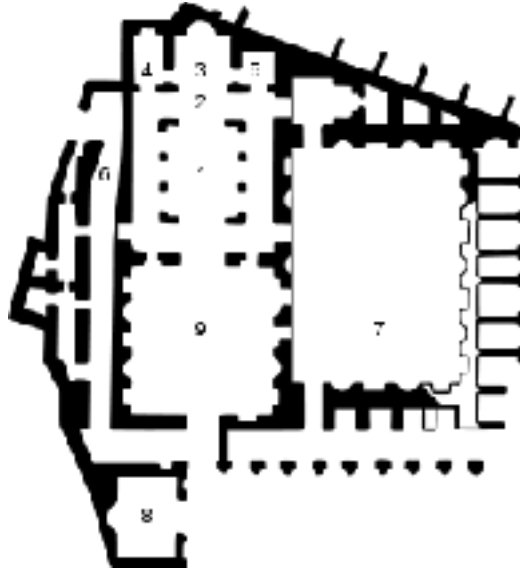
The **Ancient church of St Mary in the Roman Forum** (*Santa Maria Antiqua al Foro Romano*) was a Roman Catholic Church in Rome, built in the 5th century in the Forum Romanum, and for long time the monumental access to the Palatine imperial palaces. The church was abandoned in 847.

The church of Santa Maria Liberator was built in 1617 on top of its ruins, but then demolished in 1902 to bring the remains of the old church to light. It is the oldest Christian monument in the Roman Forum.

History:

Pope John VII (pope from 705 to 707) used this church in the early 8th century as see of the Bishop of Rome. It is possible that the *Titulus Cyriaci*, recorded in the acts of the 499 synod, is to be identified with this church

Originally, a late 1st century Roman atrium with porticoes near the foot of the Palatine at the back of the Temple of Castor and Pollux. In the mid 4th century the Byzantine Exarch used the building as part of a guard house to protect the approach to the palace on the Palatine.



Ground map of the Church of Santa Maria Antiqua and connected archeological structure. *Legend:*(1) Central Nave, (2) Presbytery, (3) Apse, (4) Chapel of Theodotus, (5) Chapel of Medical Saints, (6) Ramp to the Palatine Hill, (7) Temple of Augustus, (8) Oratory of the XL Martyrs, (9) Atrium.

The church was partially destroyed in 847, when an earthquake caused parts of the imperial palaces to collapse and cover the church. The rights and possessions were transferred to the church of Santa Maaria Nova, built within the Temple of Venus and Rome . Santa Maria Antiqua suffered further damages during the Norman Sack of Rome (1084). A new church, Santa Maria Liberatrice, was built over the old one. In 1902, Santa Maria Antiqua was freed from all superposed structures.



Santa Maria Liberatrice al Palatino by Giuseppe Vasi(18 century)

Interior:

There are a number of frescoes in Byzantine style, some of which are well preserved, dating from the 7th and 8th centuries. Pope Martin I (649–655) had the Lateran Council's decisions recorded on the walls.

Some of the frescoes are known to have been ordered by Pope John VII, and other by Pope St Zacharias (741–752). At the end of the left aisle, there is a *Crucifixion* scene, dated between 741 and 752. Christ is dressed in a blue garment with Roman bands of rank. He is flanked by the Blessed Virgin and St John the Evangelist, and the smaller figure is Longinus, the Roman soldier who pierced Christ's side. Below is a portrait of Pope Zacharius, the donor

Theodotus, an official of the *diaconia* and Sts Quiricus, Julitta, Peter and Paul flanking the Virgin and Child. The other paintings are damaged, but you can still make out some details. The painting of St Anne holding the Blessed Virgin in her arms, dated 649, can be identified from a Greek inscription, as can the painting of the Maccabees (also 649).

In the same aisle, there is a Christian sarcophagus with a relief of the story of Jonas, which is symbolic of resurrection.

Location:

Coordinates: [41° 53' 27.6" N, 12° 29' 8.1" E](#)

Links:

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

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

http://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate_c?hl=en&sl=it&u=http://www.romasegreta.it/smaria_antiqua.html

<http://archeoroma.beniculturali.it/santa-maria-antiqua/?q=en/home>

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/15/arts/design/roman-forum-church-santa-maria-antiqua.html?_r=2