

Sacro Cuore di Gesù a Via Piave



Sacro Cuore di Gesù a Via Piave is an early 20th century convent church on the way to the Porta Pia in the rione Sallustiano. The dedication is to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

History

It was designed by Aristide Leonori, and completed in 1916 as the convent church of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Ancelle di Sacro Cuore di Gesù).

This congregation was founded at Madrid, Spain in 1877, and should not be confused with a Polish congregation of the same name. The foundress was St Rafaela Porras y Ayllón, who established the convent at Rome in 1892. The following year there was an administrative crisis and she had to resign as Superior, so she transferred to Rome and spent the last years of her life there. She died in 1925, and her relics are now enshrined in the church. The congregation has a devotion to the Eucharist, and a Jesuit-inspired spirituality which is reflected in the artworks contained in the church.

Exterior

The church is unusual for the Centro Storico in being in the Gothic style. The fabric is in brick, with the façade rendered in white. The plan is based on a Latin cross, with a nave and aisles, shallow transepts and a three-sided apse. However, the site is awkward, and the architect chose to lay out the church parallel to the main street of Via XX Settembre. This means that the entrance façade and loggia are actually at an angle to the nave of the church. They are part of a projecting central block which contains the chaplain's accommodation.

The roofs are flat.

Façade

The entrance façade only fronts the central nave with the aisle ends set back.

There is a pointed-arched loggia on the ground floor of the façade, topped by a band of diaper molding containing quatrefoils. Then comes a cornice on which is a coat-of-arms in relief, and then another cornice which is dentillated. On this is a triple-arched Gothic arcade containing three windows, and above this is a statue of the Sacred Heart in a pointed-arched niche flanked by two Gothic single-light windows. A molding in the form of an enormous Gothic arch springs from corbels in the dentillated cornice, and encloses everything below the gabled roofline. It in turn has a floating archivolt. A pair of octagonal pilasters at the corners of the façade rise to pepperpot turrets flanking the roofline.

The loggia arcade has five arches supported by pairs of thin columns having bell-capitals. The central doorway is flanked by a pair of angels in mosaic, and the entrance arch is in between two Gothic niches containing mosaics of SS Peter and Paul. The side doors are beyond two large pointed arches at the ends of the loggia, and have pointed tympani with half-length mosaics of angels.

Interior

The rather fiddly and monochrome design of the façade is in contrast with the superbly lush neo-Gothic decoration of the interior. There is a nave of three bays with aisles, then a transept and finally an apsed sanctuary. Two small apsed chapels flank the sanctuary.

Nave

Despite the flat external roofs, the nave and aisles are provided with ribbed cross-vaults painted in blue with gold stars. The columns supporting the vaults are clustered, in a red stone except for the central nave wall pilasters supporting the vault which are in a contrasting grey veined marble. The spandrels of each arcade arch are painted in trompe-l'oeil Gothic tracery in yellow, red and white.

There are galleries above the arcade aisles, each bay having a triple arch with double red stone columns and embellished with gilding. Above these in turn are clerestory windows with stained glass by the firm Monaco of Bavaria. These depict various saints, and the motivation for choosing them was that they shared names with members of the architect's family.

The aisles have paintings by Pietro Gabrini, a Spanish artist, one in each bay in a pointed arched frame. The left hand aisle has The Death of St Francis Xavier, The Holy Family, The Annunciation and The Crucifixion. The right hand aisle has SS Aloysius Gonzaga, John Berchmans and Stanislaus Kostka, Our Lady of the Pillar with St James the Great and St Anthony of Padua Resurrecting a Child.

Transept

The transept end have one stained glass window each, of the Last Supper and the Priesthood of Melchizedek to the right, and the Adoration of the Eucharist to the left.

The left hand side chapel is dedicated to the Madonna della Strada, the original painting of whom is in the Gesù. The right hand side chapel has an altarpiece painting of St Ignatius of Loyola, and below the altar are enshrined the relics of an ancient Roman martyr known as St Romanus.

Sanctuary

The sanctuary is in the form of a three-sided apse, with a vault supported by four grey marble columns with gilded capitals. The walls of this apse are embellished by a mosaic of Christ being adored by angels and the Communion of Saints.

The altar has a Gothic back screen with a small depiction of the Sacred Heart, and an enormous spired Gothic monstrance throne for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

Chapel of St Rafaela

The saintly founder of the congregation is enshrined in a little chapel off the right hand aisle, fitted out in 1952. Her relics are within a wax effigy of her in a glass box under the altar, and the altarpiece

is a joyful and charming depiction of her Apotheosis.

Access

The church is open (unofficial source):
Daily 7:00 to 13:00, 16:00 to 19:00.

This church is very well worth visiting, both for its artistic value and its devotional interest. The church's web-page mentions that guided tours are available of the parts of the old convent of interest to devotees of St Rafaela.

Liturgy

Mass is celebrated:

Weekdays 8:00, 18:00

Sundays 8:00, 11:00, 18:00.

Rosary, Vespers and Benediction is at 17:15.

The congregation has the privilege of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, and when you visit you might find this taking place. Please do not wander about the church if so.

Location:

Address: Via XX Settembre 65B (Via Piave 5)

Coord: [41°54'29.1"N 12°29'56.4"E](#)

External links

[Roman Churches Wiki](#)

[Official diocesan web-page](#)

[Italian Wikipedia page](#)

[Church's web-page](#)

["Roman Despatches" blog with gallery](#)

[Info.roma web-page](#)

["Romeartlover" web-page](#)

["Roma Segreta" web-page](#)