

Santa Anastasia al Palatino



Santa Anastasia is a basilica church in Rome, situated at the western angle of the Palatine, between it and the Circus Maximus.

The first church here was built in the late 3rd or early 4th century, possibly by a Roman woman named Anastasia, on the site of her family mansion which lay at the foot of the Palatine Hill. The church is listed under the *titulus Anastasiae* in the acts of the 499 synod. Later the church was entitled to the martyr with the same name, Anastasia of Sirmium. It is listed in the *Catalogue of Turin* as a presbyterial title with six clerics.

It was the official church of representatives of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) empire who resided on the Palatine.

Traditionally, the church is connected to the cult of St Jerome, who possibly celebrated mass here. The saint is depicted over the altar, by Domenichino.

Parts of the 4th century church, as well as parts from the rebuilding in the 6th century, are preserved. Beneath the church are subterranean chambers and passages communicating with the nearby imperial palaces of the Palatine. Under the high altar are the relics of Saints Fausta and Anastasia. Also in this church are the veil of Our Lady and the mantle of Saint Joseph, said to have been brought from Palestine by Saint Jerome.

History:

The first church here was built in the late 3rd or early 4th century, and was one of the first parish churches, tituli, of ancient Rome. It was given by a woman called Anastasia and called *titulus Anastasiae* after her. It is mentioned in the catalogue of the Roman Synod of 499. Later, it was dedicated to a martyr of the same name. Parts of the 4th century church, as well as parts from the rebuilding in the 6th century, are preserved.

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It was restored under Pope St Damasus I (366–383), Pope St Hilarius (461–468), Pope John VII (705–707), Pope St Leo III (795–816) who enlarged it and Pope Gregory IV (827–844).

The last restoration, after the restoration during the papacy of Sixtus IV in 1475, occurred in 1636 by Urban VIII, when the facade was reconstructed after the cyclone of 1634. The rebuilding was carried out by Luigi Arrigucci of Florence, who had studied under Gian Lorenzo Bernini. The vault of the tribune was built by order of Card. Costaguti in 1703; and the interior was reduced to its present form in 1722 by Card. Nuno da Cunha, a Portuguese, who employed as his architect Carlo Gimach of Malta.

Exterior:

The façade dates from the 17th century, with lower Doric and upper Ionic order.

Underneath the church are the ruins of an ancient portico from the 1st century AD, as well as ruins of a group of insulae (multi-storied dwellings).

Interior:

The interior of the church is in form of a Latin cross, consisting of a vestibule, a nave and two aisles, a transept and a tribune. The interior was restored at the request of Nunho da Cunha Ataíde in the early 18th century and again under Pius VII (1800–1823) and Pius IX (1846–1878).

The nave is separated from the aisles by pillars, doorways and arcades; and the arcades are adorned with twelve columns, four of granite and eight of paonazzetto. The columns placed against the pillars in the nave are from the original basilica.

The ceiling is frescoed with a *martyrdom of the saints* (1722) by Michelangelo Cerruti.

The arch the tribune is sustained by two columns of porta santa. The altarpiece high altar has a *Nativity* by Lazzaro Baldi, who also painted the fresco above of *Saint Anastasia in Glory*. At the sides of the altar are two handsome urns of nero antico, over which the two bronze busts of Archbishops Febei, uncle and nephew, were designed by T. Ripoli. The great altar was erected by Onorio Lunghi; and the recumbent statue of the Saint beneath it was executed by F. Aprile and Ercole Ferrati. It clearly shows the influence of Bernini's Beata Ludovica Albertoni. In a leaden coffin inside the statue are the remains of the Titular Saint.

The altarpiece in the first chapel of the right aisle is a painting of *St. John the Baptist* by Pier Francesco Mola.

The last chapel on the right, the Chapel of the Relics, dates from the 17th century. It contains a fresco of *Scenes of the life of Saints Carlo Borromeo and Filippo Neri* by Lazzaro Baldi. In the reliquary over the altar is preserved the chalice of S. Jerome, the cup of which has been in part mutilated to be distributed in relics.

Three marble steps lead up from the nave to the transept, the arch of which is adorned with two columns of marmo bigio. The altar to the right is sacred to St. Toribio, whose portrait is by Francesco Trevisani from 1726. The altar is also adorned with two beautiful small columns of red Sicilian jasper; and its antependium is a beautiful specimen of the pietra dura mosaics of Florence. St. Turibius was a Spanish priest and Bishop of Lima who baptized St. Rose of Lima and St. Martin de Porres, two of the most popular saints of South America. Because of this altar, there is a tradition that the Peruvian ambassador assists at Mass on the first Sunday of May.

In the left transept is the chapel of the Madonna del Rosario, whose portrait over the altar, with those of St. Catherine of Siena and St. Dominic, is a much admired painting by Lazzaro Baldi. At the sides are two beautiful small columns of alabaster, and the antependium is an inferior specimen of Florentine mosaics.

The altar of the Holy Cross was dedicated to the Confraternity of the Cross and St Anastasia in 1615. The confraternity was a guild of tailors and coat-makers.

The last chapel to the left, by Domenichino depicts a *St. Jerome*. The altar is very ancient – tradition tells us that St. Jerome celebrated Mass here and that St. Gregory distributed ashes here on Ash Wednesday. A chalice preserved in the church is said to have been used by St. Jerome. The outer baldachino is in the style of the Cosmati.

The other chapel has a *Ss. Giorgio e Publio* by Etienne Parrocel.

Special Note:

The church has perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and is therefore open 24 hours a day. St Anastasia is celebrated on 25 December, and since the time of Pope Leo the Great (440-461) the church has been the station church for Mass at dawn on Christmas Day. It has become tradition that students from several colleges take part in this celebration.

Burials:

Ferdinando Maria Cardinal SALUZZO, (1744-1816)

Francesco Antonio Javier Cardinal de GARDOQUI ARRIQUÍBAR, (1747-1820)

Johann Casimir Cardinal von HÄFFELIN, (1737-1827)

Angelo Cardinal MAI, (1782-1854)

A celebrated philologist and paleographer, considered one of the most learned men of his time, he continued his research and publications until his death.

Karl August Cardinal von REISACH, (1800-1869)

Location:

Addr: Piazza di Sant'Anastasia, at the foot of the Palatine Hill, beside the Circus Maximus, at the end of the Via San Teodoro and the Via dei Cerchi.

Coord: [41° 53' 16.9"N 12° 29' 3.4"E](#)

Info:

Open times:

Open 24 h a day

Mass schedule:

Weekdays: 18.00

Holidays: 10.30 (English) - 16.00 (Arabic) - 18.00 (Italian)

Links:

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

http://www.pnac.org/station_churches/church_days/wk1d3.htm

<http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/Sant%27Anastasia>

<http://www.gcatholic.com/churches/rome/911.htm>

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