

San Giovanni Decollato



San Giovanni Decollato or **San Giovanni della Misericordia** is a church dedicated to St John the Baptist.

The church is not generally open to the public. If you wish to see it, call between 11 and 12 on a weekday and ask permission to see the church. For art lovers, seeing the Confraternity Chapel is well worth the effort. If you are visiting Rome for only a few days, try not to wait until your last day there as you may have to wait a day or two.

History:

Originally, this was the Florentine Confraternity of Mercy's church for ministering to condemned criminals and giving them a Christian burial after execution. It was built on land given to the confraternity by Pope Innocent VIII in 1490. It was completed in 1580 or 1588. Today, that intention is carried on, as the church's funds are used for the benefit of prisoners' dependants.

There are records of an earlier church on the site, *Santa Maria in Petrocia* or *Santa Maria della Fossa*.

It was reconsecrated by Pope Benedict XIII in 1727, and restored in 1888.

The church is served by Franciscan Tertiaries.

Exterior:

The façade is the original of the 15th century. It has a single story. Above the doorway is a semicircular window, and above that a triangular tympanon.

Interior:

The church has a single nave with side chapels. The cassette ceiling has rich stucco decorations. The side walls have frescoes of saints by Tuscan artists.

The apse has a square plan. Over the high altar is a painting by Giorgio Vasari, the *Beheading of St John*, made in 1553. To the left is another depiction of the same motif by Girolamo Muziano, and to the right the *Resurrection of Lazarus* by Giovanni Balducci.

Above the doorway is a painting of *The Baptism of Christ* by the Florentine artist Monanno Monnani.

The first chapel on the right-hand side has a painting of *St John the Baptist and the Apostles Thomas and Philip* by Jacopo Zucchi.

In the second chapel on the right is a painting of *The Doubt of St Thomas* by the school of Vasari, and of the *Apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew*.

In the third on the right you will find Pomerancio's *The Visitation* and *The Apostles Simon and Matthew*.

On the left, the first chapel has a painting of *The Apostles Peter and Andrew*.

The altarpiece of the second chapel on the left depicts *St John the Evangelist*. There are also frescoes of *St James the Greater* and *St Matthew* by Giovan Battista Naldini.

The last chapel on the left has a painting of the *Madonna of Mercy with the Holy Child*, from the 15th century. On one side is a painting of *Our Lady of the Assumption with St John the Evangelist and the Apostle James the Lesser*, by Francesco Zucca.

The Confraternity Chapel, opening off the cloister on the left side of the church, has beautiful paintings of scenes from the *life of St John the Baptist* by the Florentine Mannerists Jacopo del Conte and Francesco Salviati. Note especially the *Preaching of St John* by del Conte.

The bodies of executed criminals were buried in the cloister, where there are seven manholes made for this purpose. One of the holes was set aside for women. There are several funerary inscriptions.

Liturgy

The Birth of St John the Baptist is celebrated on 24 June, and the Beheading (Martyrdom) on 29 August.

Location:

Address: 22 Via di San Giovanni Decollato, 00186 Roma

Phone: 06 69 90 728

Coordinates: [41°53'23"N 12°28'54"E](#)

Links:

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