

Santa Maria del Priorato



Santa Maria del Priorato is a priory church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. The church belongs to the Priory of the [Knights of Malta](#). The church is also known as San Basilio Magno al Monte Aventino.

History:

It was designed by [Giovanni Battista Piranesi](#) in the 18th century, his sole architectural work of importance. Construction started in 1765 on the site of an older church owned by the Priory. The first church was built in 939, when Alberic II gave his palace to St Odo of Cluny.

The older church belonged to an important Cluniac foundation, which is mentioned in 13th century texts as one of the most important abbeys in Rome. The most famous member of the monastic community was Hildebrand, better known as Pope St Gregory VII. As a young man, he studied and took his first monastic vows here.

Exterior:

The keyhole of the Priory, at 3 Piazza dei Cavalieri di Malta, is famous - look through it, and you'll see that St Peter's is perfectly framed. The keyhole was deliberately placed here, as part of Piranesi's excellent design.

The façade is in the Neo-Classical style.

Adjacent to the church is the Complesso dell'Ordine dei Cavalieri di Malta (Compound of the Order of Knights of Malta).

Interior:

The high altar, made of stucco, has a statue group of *The Glory of St Basil of Cappadocia*. The altar and statues by Tommaso Righi.

The tomb of Monsignor Bartolomeo Carafa (died 1405) was made in the 15th century by Paolo Romano. Very few works by this Roman sculptor have been preserved. Two other tombs in the church are made from reused Roman sarcophagi. Piranesi was buried in a tomb designed by Giuseppe Angelini.

Special notes:

The church is not open to the public. It is possible to apply for permission to enter, but it is not easy to get in. Visit with permission of the Knights of Malta. The request must be submitted to the Grand Magisterium - Bursar Office - Via dei Condotti, 68 tel n ° 06675811

The only part you can see is the keyhole, and it's possible to look into the complex from the atrium of Sant' Anselmo.

Artists and Architects:

Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778), Italian engraver and **architect**

Giuseppe Angelini (1738-1811), Italian sculptor

Tommaso Righi (1727-1802), Italian sculptor and stuccator

Paolo Salviati, Italian sculptor

Paolo Romano aka Paolo Tuccone (15th cent), Italian early Renaissance sculptor and goldsmith

Burials:

Joaquín Cardinal FERNÁNDEZ DE PORTOCARRERO MENDOZA, (1681-1760)

Riccardo Caracciolo (d. 1395), Italian nobleman from the Kingdom of Naples, who was a rival Grand Master of the Knights Hospitaller

Bartolomeo Carafa (d. 1405), Grand Master rival in Rome

Fra Seripando (d. 1465)

Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778), Italian engraver and architect

Baldassarre Spinelli

Location:

Addr: **Piazza dei Cavalieri di Malta 4, 00153 Roma**

Coord: [41° 52' 59.8" N, 12° 28' 38.6" E](#)

Info:

Telephone: 06-57.79.193

Links:

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

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

http://www.info.roma.it/monumenti_dettaglio.asp?ID_schede=474

<http://www.060608.it/en/cultura-e-svago/luoghi-di-culto-di-interesse-storico-artistico/chiese-cattoliche/santa-maria-del-priorato.html>

http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/thinking_pictures/small.htm

Refs:

Minor, Vernon Hyde; "Tommaso Righi's Roman Sculpture: A Catalogue" from *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 126, No. 980 (Nov., 1984), pp. 668-675