

Santa Maria Liberatrice in Monte Testaccio



Santa Maria Liberatrice a Monte Testaccio is a modern parish and titular church in the Testaccio district. The name comes from a prayer and petition to Mary to “libera nos a poenis inferni” (free us from Hell's pains). The church stands just west of Porta San Paolo and the Pyramid of Gaius Cestius near the banks of the Tiber River in Rome. (1) (2) (3)

History

The church of St. Mary the Liberator was built on land specifically purchased by the Holy See during the pontificate of Leo XIII (1878-1903) to erect a large church building. The foundations were laid by the Benedictines of St. Anselm Aventine and only later, in 1904, Pius X resumed in the construction, commissioning work for the Salesians of Don Bosco (who already had a religious settlement and school in the Testaccio district) and the Oblates of Tor de'Specchi, Benedictines of St. Francesca Romana. The church was designed by Mario Ceradini, and completed in 1908. (1)

The pope wanted this new church particularly linked to the memory of the Roman population, and therefore gave the title of Santa Maria Liberator, which had belonged to a church built by Honorius Longhi in 1617 above the ruins of Santa Maria Antiqua in the Roman Forum, which was demolished for the sake of archeology in 1902. A new church by the same name was erected in [Testaccio](#) in the main square of a modern quarter built in the early 20th century to accommodate the growing working class of Rome. (1) (3)

The various works of art that decorated the old church were transferred to the [Monastero di Tor de'Specchi](#), including the sacred image, depicting the Madonna and Child (16th century), and then transferred to the new church. The image on the altar of old Santa Maria Liberatrice was moved to

the new church and the façade was embellished with a mosaic reproducing frescoes of S. Maria Antiqua. (1) (2) (3)

The history of the church is summed up by this inscription inside:

"This church perpetuates the cult of St. Mary Liberator inheriting title and icons of the church with the same name since the 16th century demolished MDCCCXCIX year held the place and memories Santa Maria Antiqua, the first shrine of the mother of God in the world. Salesians of the Venerable John Bosco with the help of their collaborators and Noble Oblate Tor de 'Mirrors erected the renewed Sanctuary because it was not to perish and solemn tribute to Saint Pius X during the jubilee of his priesthood."

Exterior:

The Romanesque-Byzantine style church, built in brick and travertine, was designed by architect Mario Ceradini of Turin. The imposing façade is divided into three round-arched portals with slabs of travertine. (1) (3)

The central one, framed caristo marble, is decorated at the top by two large rounds of precious marble, coming from the old church, called "African" from a mullioned window overlooking mosaics and the arms of Pius X, of the Salesian Congregation left, and the Oblates of Tor de'Specchi on the right. (1)

Decoration of the façade is a modern mosaic based on a fresco found in Santa Maria Antiqua. The mosaic above is the Crucifixion, Christ wears a "colobium" a tunic without sleeves which was originally reserved to the Roman senators and his eyes are open to indicate his triumph over death. Watching are Mary Magdalene and St. John left to right, while behind are two soldiers, one with the sponge and the other with the spear. (1) (2) (3)

The mosaic below, rebuilt in 1924 after being badly damaged, represents the Madonna between Saints Peter, Paul, Quirico and Julietta, Pope Zacharias left Theodotus, who erected Santa Maria Antiqua, the latter two have the square nimbus for persons living. The whole is surrounded by symbolic palm trees and rivers. The mosaic reproduces a fresco from Santa Maria Antiqua. (1) (2) (3)

Between the mosaics and the windows are the coat of arms of Monastero di Tor de' Specchi to which old S. Maria Liberatrice belonged: it is consistent with the traditional account which said the monastery was named because of mirrors (specchi) on its roof. (1) (2)

The stained glass windows on the facade represent episodes of life the Virgin. (1)

Interior:

The interior is on the plan of a Latin cross, and is divided into a nave and two side aisles, with two pairs of red granite columns supporting oversized carved cushion capitals. The aisles contain side altars with paintings taken from the old church. The pillars of the crossing are square, and the transepts contain altars to St [John Bosco](#) and [Santa Francesca Romana](#). The aisles are continued either side of the sanctuary as enclosed sacristies, with entrances matching those in the façade. (1)

The sacred fresco of the Madonna is located on the main altar, decorated with a precious red marble canopy supported by four granite columns with symbols of the evangelists on the capitals of the columns. (1)

The pavement of the central nave, decorated with a mosaic in black and white marble fragments with representations of geometric elements and symbols of the zodiac.

Between 1956 and 1964 Luciano Bartoli painted the apse fresco depicting the Trinity and the Incarnation and, below the works of mercy. The windows in the aisles depict the saints, also by Bartoli.

Artists and Architects:

Mario Ceradini (1865-1940), Italian architect
Luciano Bartoli (20th cent), Italian painter

Location:

Addr: Via Lorenzo Ghiberti 2, Piazza di Santa Maria Liberatrice, 00153, Rome
Coordinates: [41° 52' 46"N 12° 28' 27"E](#)

Info:

Zone: Rione Testaccio (Roma centro)
Tel: 06-57.50.294, 06-57.28.98.11

Links:

1. http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/Santa_Maria_Liberatrice_a_Monte_Testaccio
2. <http://www.romeartlover.it/Vasi54.htm#Nuova>
3. <http://rometour.org/church-santa-maria-liberatrice-testaccio-hill.html>
4. http://www.panoramicearth.com/4014/Rome/Santa_Maria_Liberatrice_a_Monte_Testaccio_Church
5. http://www.vicariatusurbis.org/?page_id=188&ID=34
6. http://www.info.roma.it/monumenti_dettaglio.asp?ID_schede=770
7. http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=it&u=http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Maria_Liberatrice
8. <http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=it&u=http://www.testaccio.roma.it/santa-maria.asp>
9. <http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=it&u=http://www.romasette.it/modules/news/article.php%3Fstoryid%3D321&ei=qO76SqB5MYfgnAfNwtiEDQ&sa=X&oi=translate&ct=result&resnum=9&ved=0CCQQ7gEwCA&prev=/search%3Fq%3DSanta%2BMaria%2BLiberatrice%2Bin%2BTestaccio%26hl%3Den>