

Santi Marcellino e Pietro al Laterano



Santi Marcellino e Pietro is an 18th century parish and titular church in Rome on the Via Merulana. It is dedicated to Saints [Marcellinus and Peter](#), 4th century Roman martyrs, whose relics were brought here in 1256.

Marcellinus was a prominent priest in Rome during the reign of Diocletian, and Peter is said to have been an exorcist. The *Passio* states that they were apprehended and cast into prison, where they were zealous in strengthening the faithful. At one point they even offered to cure the sick daughter of their pagan jailer, Arthemius. The man scoffed at the offer and asked if their God were powerful enough to free them from prison. In the middle of the night, Peter and Marcellinus were miraculously released and came to Arthemius. Thereupon, the jailer's entire family was baptized, together with three hundred others. Soon afterwards, they were condemned to death by Serenus (or Severus) the magistrate. The two were conveyed privately to a forest called the *silva nigra*, and there they were beheaded in order that their burial place should not be known. The secret, however, was divulged, possibly by the executioner, who subsequently became a Christian. Two devout women, Lucilla and Fumina, rescued their relics and interred them honorably in the catacomb of St. Tiburtius on the Via Labicana. They are honored still in the Roman Canon at Mass. [5]

History

The first church here was possibly built by Pope Siricius in the 4th century, close to the Jewish

catacombs on the Via Labicana. The evidence for this rests on two marble fragments of separate inscriptions discovered in the foundations of the church. [2]

Old church

A reference to a titulus for these two saints exists for the year 590, but does not specify a church. The first certain reference is in the *Liber Pontificalis* for Pope Gregory III in the 8th century, which implies that the edifice was built from scratch even if an older church was demolished in order to do so. A hospice which became a centre for pilgrims visiting the Lateran was then located here, the Ospedale del Salvatore, but the church seems to have been disused in the 12th century. [2]

The relics of the martyrs Marcellinus and Peter were brought to the church in 1256, and the church was restored again the same year by command of Pope Alexander IV. Twenty years later, the hospice and church were given to the Confraternity of those Commended to the Saviour, so the hospital was still functioning. [2]

In 1707 Pope Clement XIII gave the complex to the Aleppine Antonian monastic order of the Maronites, who established a monastery here for about half a century. They had been founded in 1695. Apparently the monastery did not do well, and the church fell into such disrepair that rebuilding was necessary. The monks moved out in 1753 and settled at Sant'Antonio Abate dei Maroniti, where they remain. [2]

The church was destroyed during the French occupation of 1810.

New church

The present church is the result of this rebuilding by Pope Benedict XIV in 1751, after the plan of the Marquis **Girolamo Teodoli**, as is recorded by an inscription inside over its entrance. [2] [b]

It became a canonry with four canons of the Lateran. As such it was a dependency of the monastery attached to the church of San Pietro in Vincoli, which lent it to some reformed Carmelite nuns formerly at the lost church of Santa Lucia alle Botteghe Oscure. These were called Teresiane del Corpus Domini, and remained there until 1906. Since 1911 it has been a parochial church served by diocesan clergy, after a few intervening years of disuse. [2]

In 2011 the church was attacked by a gang of anarchists during a street demonstration, and while they failed to gain access to the interior they dragged a statue of Our Lady and a crucifix from the priest's house and kicked them to bits in the street [2]

Exterior

The church stands below the present street-level, indicating its ancient foundation. The present building is on a square plan and is almost cube-shaped, the main body of it being slightly lower than it is wide and long. The fabric is rendered in pale orange with the architectural details in white travertine. [2]

The entrance façade is embellished in a style close to Neo-Classicism, indicating that the Baroque was becoming unfashionable. It was designed by **Girolamo Theodoli**, who was an Italian nobleman as well as an architect. [2]

The central portion of the façade projects, and has two pairs of gigantic Ionic pilasters in shallow relief flanking the entrance. Another pair of these pilaster strips is folded into the internal corners created by the façade's projection; two more pairs decorate the outer corners of the façade, and the last two are round the corners where the side walls are recessed. These support a powerful and deep entablature which runs along the sides of the church, but not round the back where the building abuts onto the former convent. The frieze of this on the façade bears an inscription proclaiming Pope Benedict's rebuilding, and the pediment above the projecting portion contains his coat-of-arms. The doorway has a simple triangular pediment, too. There is a central rectangular window below the entablature, the lintel of which intrudes into the architrave. [2]

The roofline of the church over the façade is higher than the cornice, and on either side of the pediment it bears a pair of stone flaming urns. Behind these is a pair of tiny lead saucer domes on

cylindrical drums and bearing ball finials. The attractive and rather low main dome is set on a drum with four buttresses and four oeil-de-boeuf windows, and has five steps. Its lantern is tall, with four arched windows separated by volutes and topped by ogee curves. The cap is shaped like an upturned goblet, and supports another ball finial. [2]

The side walls of the church are more simply treated, and the central section of each is recessed and has a rectangular window high up. [2]

Interior

The church has a nice stepped dome, and an interior which is clearly influenced by the work of Borromini. It has a Greek cross plan. [2]

The altarpiece by **Gaetano Lapis**, painted in 1751, depicts the *Martyrdom of SS Marcellinus and Peter*. Underneath the mensa is an urn with relics of the martyr St Marcia. [2]

The altar on the right side is dedicated to St Gregory the Great. The altarpiece shows *The Mass of St Gregory*, and is by **Filippo Evangelisti**. Next to it as a small chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes; the ceiling was painted by **N. Caselli** in 1903. [2]

On the left side is an altar dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, with a copy of **Guido Reni's** *The Virgin in Glory with Angels, St Joseph and St Rita*. Next to it is the Chapel of Reconciliation. [2]

On the first column on the left from the entrance is an image of *SS Marcellinus and Peter*, placed here in 1256, with an inscription recording Pope Alexander IV's restoration of that year. [2]

The present church preserves a miraculous painting of the Crucifixion.

Special notes

This is the station church for the third Saturday of Lent.

Feast that are celebrated with special solemnity here are those of Our Lady of Lourdes, 11 February and Sts Marcellinus and Peter, 2 June (celebrated first Sunday in June).

Relics:

Saints Marcellinus and Peter
Saint Marcia

Burials:

Flavio Cardinal [ORSINI](#), (1532-1581)

Artists and Architects:

Girolamo [Theodoli](#) (1677-1766), Italian architect
Gaetano [Lapis](#) (1704-1776) was an Italian painter of the late-Baroque period
Filippo [Evangelisti](#) (1680-1761), Italian painter
N. Caselli (20th cent), Italian painter
Guido [Reni](#) (1575-1642), Italian painter of high-Baroque

Location:

Via Labicana 1 - 00184 ROMA
Coordinates: [41°53'20"N 12°30'10"E](#)

Info:

Telephone: 0039 06 97840635
Opening times
Open 7.00am-12.00pm 04.00pm-07.30pm
Masses:

Weekdays: 07:00am-07:30am (winter)-08:30am-07:00pm

Holidays:07:30am-08:30am (winter)-10:00am-11:00am-12:30pm (winter)-07:00pm

Days before a holiday:07:00pm

Links and References

1. [Churches of Rome Wiki](#)

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