

Santi Nereo e Achilleo alle Terme di Caracalla



Santi Nereo e Achilleo is a 4th century basilica church in Rome.

The church is located in the rione Celio, close to the Baths of Caracalla. The current titular priest of the church is H.E. Theodore Edward Cardinal McCarrick, Archbishop of Washington.

History:

The church was one of the *tituli*, the first parish churches of Rome, known as the *Titulus Fasciolae*, the Title of the Bandage. The name refers to the legend of Peter's flight from Rome to escape martyrdom; a bandage is said to have fallen from his leg at this site. It is uncertain when the church was built, but an inscription in the museum of San Paolo fuori le mura dated 377 says that a deceased man named Cinnamius had been a lector in the Titulus de fasciolae. The synod list from 499 also mentions this name, and lists it as being served by five priests.

This same building is recorded as *titulus Sanctorum Nerei et Achillei* in 595; therefore the dedications to Sts. Nereus and Achilleus, two soldiers and martyrs of the 4th century, must have happened during the 6th century.

It was rebuilt under Pope Leo III in 814, when the relics of the two martyrs were brought here from the Catacomb of Domitilla. At that time, relics were moved from the catacombs to protect them from Saracen raiders, and since the church had already been dedicated to the two saints for more than 200 years it was only natural to translate their relics here. The relics of the two martyrs are buried beneath the high altar, together with St Flavia Domitilla.

In the Catalogue of Turin, c. 1320, the church is mentioned as a presbyterial title, with no priests serving the church. From other sources, it seems that the church was in a state of

The church is built according to the typical basilica plan, with a single nave and two side aisles. The original columns were substituted in the 15th century with octagonal pillars, and the nave is characterized by the large fresco decorations commissioned by Cardinal Baronio.

The cardinal in his historical works emphasized the role of the Roman martyrs during the early centuries of Christianity. He defined an iconographical plan of Santi Nereo e Achilleo for the 1600 Jubilee centred on the martyrdom of the greatest early saints. The execution of the frescoes were entrusted to a minor painter, generally thought to be Nicolò Circignani. There are a lot of gruesome details and blood all over the walls, but the pastel colors soften somewhat a frightening effect of the pictures.

The medieval pulpit is placed on a huge, ancient porphyry urn taken from the Baths of Caracalla. The choir is made with spoiled Cosmatesque style walls. The baldachino is from the 16th century, and has columns of African marble columns.

The major altar, made of three Cosmatesque panels, houses the relics of Nereus, Achilleus, and of St Flavia Domitilla; all three of them were brought here from the Catacomb of Domitilla. Next to the altar there are two pagan stones depicting two winged spirits, taken from a nearby temple. The canopy over the great altar is supported by four columns of African marble. To the right of the altar is a candelabrum adorned with well chiseled decorations and partly gilt.

Behind the altar there is the episcopal throne with column-bearing lions, in Cosmatesque style - Vassalletto school. The seat of this throne is ancient. In St Gregory the Great's twenty-eighth homily, he states that he preached before the shrine of Sts Nereus and Achilleus, and Cardinal Baronio assumed that this was the site. He had an inscription about this made on the back of the throne during the 16th century restoration, but when the underground basilica at the catacombs of Domitilla was discovered in 1874 it was realised that it St Gregory had preached there and not at the church the relics were translated to at a later time.

The arch of the apsis has mosaics of the 9th century with the *Annunciation*, the *Transfiguration*, and the *Theotokos* (Madonna and child).

The two lateral altars are adorned each with two spiral fluted columns of marino bigio; the portrait of S. Domitilla over her altar, and the frescos on the walls, illustrative of the lives of the Apostles, (are by C. Roncalli ?).

Artists and Architects:

Niccolò [Circignani](#) aka Il Pomarancio (1520-1597), Italian late-Renaissance / Mannerist painter

Burials:

Baccio Cardinal [ALDOBRANDINI](#), (1613-1665)

Location:

Address: Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 28, 00153 Roma

Telephone: 0039 06-57.57.996

Coordinates: [41°52'48.8"N, 12°29'41.2"E](#)

Info:

Open times: 10:00am-12:00pm 04:00pm-06:00pm; Closed Tuesday

Guided tours upon booking: 06.5757996

Links:

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

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

<http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Santi-Nereo-e-Achilleo>

<http://images.google.com/images?hl=en&q=Santi%20Nereo%20e%20Achilleo&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=N&tab=wi>

<http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=it&u=http://www.enrosadira.it/santi/n/nerco-achilleo.htm>

<http://www.060608.it/en/cultura-e-svago/luoghi-di-culto-di-interesse-storico-artistico/chiese-cattoliche/ss-nereo-e-achilleo.html>

Ref:

Donovan, Jeremiah; ROME ANCIENT AND MODERN AND ITS ENVIRONS; 1842

Herz, Alexandra: "Cardinal Cesare Baronio's Restoration of SS. Nereo ed Achilleo and S. Cesareo de'Appia" from The Art Bulletin, Vol. 70, No. 4 (Dec., 1988), pp. 590-620