

San Sisto Vecchio



San Sisto Vecchio is a church dedicated to Pope St Sixtus II, who was martyred in 258. The church is on the Appian way, a little beyond the baths of Caracalla

History:

By tradition the church was founded by Pope Anastasius I (399-401) to mark the spot where Pope Saint Sixtus II (257-258), on his way to martyrdom, met Saint Lawrence during the Valerian persecution (253-260). Its original name was the *Titulus Tigridae*, possibly the name of the Roman lady on whose property it was built. It is also recorded as the *Titulus Crescentianae*.

The first recorded mention of it was in 595 at the Council of Rome. The Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great mention the nomination of the priest Basso to the title of St. Sixtus, and St. Gregory chose the church as one of the Lenten stations.

In the 6th century, the relics of Pope St Sixtus II were moved from the Catacombe di San Callisto to this church.

In the eighth and ninth centuries the church was rebuilt and enlarged out of the ruined temple of Mars that stood near by, famed for its hundred columns, and Gregory IV (827-844) presented the church with sacred vestments. After that it seems to have been neglected, since Innocent III (1198-1216) had to rebuild it almost completely in 1200. In 1219 Honorius III (1216-1227) entrusted the church and monastery to the recently-founded Dominicans, and St Dominic de Guzmán (1170-1221), who established a Dominican convent here. St. Dominic lived in the monastery for some time before moving to Santa Sabina. This is the oldest monastery in Rome, and is still in use by Dominican sisters.

Sixtus IV (1471-1484) ordered the complete renovation of the ceiling and the rebuilding of the façade, and its doorway is now in the southern wall. In the 16th century Filippo Cardinal Boncompagni, its titular, carried out extensive renovations.

About the same time, the Dominican nuns living in the convent attached to the church received permission to vacate it on account of the malaria raging in the district. In 1572 they established themselves in the convent of San Dominico e Sisto. From that time their old residence has been known as San Sisto Vecchio, or the Old.

In the 18th century Pope Benedict XIII (1724-1730), a Dominican, planned a restoration for the church. This plan, however, was abandoned in the midst of the invasion of Napoleon until 1856 when the Irish Dominicans, who had charge of the church from 1677-1798, restored it. New walls were built within the 13th century walls, perhaps to obviate the dampness. The walls are about a yard apart, at least at the apse, where, on the outer and more ancient wall, there are frescos by Giotto, including a striking figure of St. Paul.

Exterior:

The Romanesque bell-tower dates from the 13th century rebuilding.

To the right of the front of the church is the 13th century Chapter room. It is a hall about 40 ft. long and 28 ft broad and 18 ft high, with low Roman arches supported by two granite pillars. On the east side is an altar erected by Pope Benedict XIII. The walls are nearly covered with scenes from the life of St. Dominic, executed by Pere Besson, a Dominican friar, in the mid 19th century.

Interior

The interior consists of a single nave. The paintings, executed in the 18th century, are by unknown artists; and it contains the monuments of Cardinals Gatti, Lucini and Orsi, the last a distinguished writer. In it repose the remains of SS. Zephyrinus, Anther, Sixtus II and Felix, Popes and martyrs, and of SS. Soter, Parthenius, Lucius and Julius, bishops and martyrs.

There is an interesting 13th century fresco cycle depicting *Scenes from the New Testament and the Apocrypha*.

The church is usually closed, but if you ask at the adjacent convent at a reasonable time of day it is possible to visit it.

Burials:

Vincenzo Ludovico Cardinal [GOTTI](#), O.P., (1664-1742)

Luigi Maria Cardinal [LUCINI](#), O.P., (1666-1745)

Giuseppe Agostino Cardinal [ORSI](#), O.P., (1692-1761)

Location:

Addr: 8 Piazzale Numa Pompilio, Rome

Coord: [41° 52' 49.44" N, 12° 29' 45.6" E](#)

Info:

Telephone: 0039 06 77205174

Open times: Every day 7.30am-11.30am

Links:

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

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

http://www.pnac.org/station_churches/church_days/wk3d4.htm

http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=it&u=http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_academies/cult-martyrum/stazioni/descrizioni/vc_pa_martyrum_20030125_sistovecchio_it.html

<http://www.060608.it/en/cultura-e-svago/luoghi-di-culto-di-interesse-storico-artistico/chiese-cattoliche/san-sisto-vecchio-a-via-appia.html>

http://www.info.roma.it/monumenti_dettaglio.asp?ID_schede=485