

San Cesareo in Palatio

St Caesarius in the Palace

San Cesareo in Palatio is dedicated to St Caesarius, the 2nd century Deacon and martyr.



History

In the 4th century, Emperor Valentinian was cured at the shrine of Caesarius at Terracina, the site of his martyrdom. The emperor then decided to move his relics to Rome. They were taken to a church on the Palatine, and when they were later moved to a new church, that church got the name "in Palatio", "at the Palace". It is also known as *San Cesareo de Appia*.

Excavations have revealed foundations of what is thought to be the first church here, built in the 8th century. The first time the church is mentioned in written sources is in 1192, so nothing is known about the early period.

No written evidence exists for the church's origins however, for the first time it is mentioned in the written sources is 1192. In the Middle Ages, the church was part of a hospice and hospital for pilgrims.

The present church is the result of Pope Clement VIII's rebuilding in 1602-1603, carried out under Cesare Cardinal Baronio's instructions. Baronio was a historian of the Church, and

was interested in restoring the church to its original state. It was restored in the years 1955 to 1963.

The present titular of the church is Cardinal Andrzej Maria Deskur. From 1967 to 1978, Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, later Pope John Paul II, was titular of the church.

Exterior

Next to the church is a medieval house where Cardinal Baronius, who restored Santi Nereo e Achilleo, lived when he was titular of San Cesario. It is sometimes open to the public - check if you are interested.

The Renaissance façade was designed by Giacomo della Porta. It was decorated with frescoes in the 1602-1603 rebuilding, but these have since disappeared through erosion.

The column in front of the building was used as a sign in the Middle Ages, showing that the church was a centre for pilgrims.

Interior

The Cosmatesque furniture here may have been brought here from San Giovanni in Laterano, although it may also have come from other churches, when the transepts there were restored in the early 17th century. It includes the pulpit, the balustrades, a frontal to the altar and an episcopal chair behind the altar. Note the pale blue colour, which is unusual in Cosmatesque work. The columns of brocatelle marble are from a Roman pagan temple.

The paintings between the windows are by Cavaliere d'Arpino and Cesare Rosetti in the 17th century. They depict the martyrdoms of St Caesarius and several saints named Hippolytus. The latter were included as a compliment to Pope Clement VIII, who was baptised as Ippolito.

The motif in the coffered ceiling is Clement VIII's coat-of-arms (the Aldobrandini family), and St Caesarius is depicted in the central panel.

The fresco of the Blessed Virgin hanging above the bishop's chair is from the 15th century.

In the apse is an uncommon motif in the mosaic, God the Father made from a design by Cavalier d'Arpino in the 16th century.

Excavations below the church have revealed a Roman bath from the 2nd or 3rd century. If you ask the custodian, he will open a door leading to the huge black and white mosaic depicting Neptune and marine creatures.

Special notes

The church is very popular for weddings.

You may find it closed for restoration, but if you ring the bell at the door to the right you may be admitted.

Relics:

St. Caesarius

Location:

<http://www.wikimapia.org/#lat=41.878952&lon=12.496031&z=18&l=0&m=h&v=2>

Links:

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

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

Chiesa di San Cesareo in Palatio

Jurisdiction: Roma

Sector: Central

Prefecture: V

Diocesan Code: 807

Type: Cardinal Deaconry, Rectory church

Address: Via di Porta San Sebastiano, 00179 Roma

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