

## Natività di Nostro Signore Gesù Cristo a Via Gallia



**Natività di Nostro Signore Gesù Cristo a Via Gallia** is a 20th century Fascist-era parish and titular church with a postal address at Via Urbisaglia 2. The main entrance is at Via Gallia 160, east of the Porta Metronia in the Appio Latino quarter. The dedication is to the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **History**

The church was designed by Tullio Rossi, and built in 1936 for a new parish which was set up in the following year.

It was made titular in 1985, and the present cardinal priest is Audrys Juozas Bačkis.

### **Exterior**

This is typical of Rossi, a hulking basilical edifice with a central nave having side aisles. Firstly comes an entrance bay, then the main nave of six bays, then a large semi-circular apse. There is no transept. The side

aisles have enclosed entrance lobbies at their bottom ends, and end in a pair of chapels. The last bay of each aisle as a second-storey chamber above it.

The exterior walls are in greyish-pink brick with few stone details. The central nave walls have large rectangular windows, one in each side for each bay except the last -a total of five on each side. Each of these windows has a slightly sunken frame in the brickwork, and has thick stone mullions in the form of a cross.

The roofs are pitched and tiled, with single pitches for the side aisles and the higher chambers just mentioned. The apse has its own roof, in sectors.

There is a tall and massive brick tower campanile to the right of the bottom end of the right hand aisle, with two sunken panels running the entire length on each side ending at two vertical rectangular bell openings. The cap is flat.

### Façade

The monumental façade is actually false, as the horizontal top of the rectangular central section is built up to conceal the gable of the central nave behind. The side walls of the entrance bay in front of the main nave are in sheer blank brickwork to match, so that it looks as if a brick box has been tacked onto the front of the church.

This central section has a large entrance portal, formed by three nested brick arches stepping back from the surrounding wall. These enclose a stone tympanum with a relief of The Annunciation. Above is a central oculus or circular window, with cross mullions. At the top the brickwork curves out slightly in a cavetto cornice before reaching the horizontal roofline, where there is a crowning horizontal concrete slab with a dedicatory epigraph on its near edge in raised lettering: Nativitati domini nostri Iesu Christi dicatum, AD MCMXXXVI. Flanking the doorway are two wide recessed strips in the brickwork running the full height of the façade, starting out shallow at the bottom then becoming deep at the level of the top of the tympanum.

The side aisle zones on either side are simple blank walls set back slightly, with the slope of the aisle roof pitch governing the roofline of each. Each has an arched entrance, matching the central portal but smaller and with one recessed order of bricks instead of three.

A patio approached by steps occupies the entire width of the façade.

## **Interior**

### Nave

The nave has a total of six bays, with an additional shallow structurally separate entrance bay containing the organ gallery. This is within an enormous transverse arch with the springers blending into the supporting piers at the level of the balcony screen. Within is the round window visible on the façade outside, which has stained glass showing the Dove of the Holy Spirit. The gallery is supported on five lunette arches which again blend into the counterfaçade wall.

The main nave has five bays with side arcades. The arcade arches are separated by square piers, each of which divides into two halves. From the back halves spring the actual arch archivolt, again without imposts, and the front halves rise as gigantic pilasters to the level of the roof where they end in horizontally chamfered capitals. There is a total of five of these pilasters on each side, not counting the piers supporting the entrance bay arch. Each bay has a large window on each side in the central nave side wall, with thick cross mullions and with some colour in the mostly white stained glass.

The central nave roof has no ceiling, and is in unpainted stained wood with transverse trusses. The latter are supported by the gigantic pilasters.

The side aisles have cross-vaults. Each bay has a little square window with stained glass, depicting Christian symbols (the Serpent in the Garden of Eden is well worth searching out).

Overall, the dominant colour of the interior is a very light grey with the pilasters and window frames in white. A dado in pale brown marble occupies all the walls and piers above floor level. The floor is in large red tiles.

There is an attractive set of mosaic panels of the Stations of the Cross on the pier pilasters, having a green background. Since there are only twelve piers available for the fourteen Stations, two are tucked into the entrance bay.

### Sanctuary

Since re-ordering after 1970, the free-standing altar occupies the fifth bay of the nave. The sanctuary area around it is raised on a single step, with a curve in front of the altar. In front of the step, in a central position in the fourth bay of the nave, is the interesting font. This is an octagonal block of brecciated marble, with a cross-shaped aperture having a cover formed of panels of stained glass depicting Our Lady and the four Evangelists.

The sixth bay of the structural nave, behind the altar, has no arcade arches but instead a rectangular portal on each side leading into the side chapel at the end of the aisle. Above the portal is a floating box-balcony for solo musicians.

The former sanctuary is a large apse with conch, the entire wall (above the dado) and conch surface of which is occupied by a mosaic of the Nativity of Christ by Gilda Nagni. This is an attractive work, in a neo-Byzantine style. Where the altar used to be there is now a set of stone celebrants' chairs, two free-standing benches following the curve of the apse and a central president's chair.

### Side chapels

The ends of the aisles are occupied by side chapels, the Sacred Heart to the left and Our Lady to the right. The round-headed altarpieces are in little barrel-vaulted niches, and are in mosaic. The right hand one actually shows Pentecost, with Our Lady presiding and the apostles in the background.

This right hand chapel is now the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, with a gilded bronze tabernacle on a pillar by Godfrido Verginelli. This is where the altar used to be. The present altar is a little free-standing box affair.

### Access

According to an unofficial source, opening times are now 8:30 to 20:00 daily.

### Liturgy

Mass is celebrated, according to the parish website:

Weekdays 8:00 (not July-September), 9:00, 10:00 (not July-September), 18:00;

Sundays and Solemnities 8:30 (9:30 July-September), 10:00 (not July-September), 11:30, 18:00, 20:00.

Location:

Coord: [41°52'49.7"N 12°30'19.2"E](#)

Address:

Via Urbisgalia 2

### **External links**

[Roman Churches Wiki](#)

Official diocesan web-page

Italian Wikipedia page

Parish website

Info.roma web-page