

San Giovanni Battista de Rossi



San Giovanni Battista de Rossi is a mid 20th century parish and titular church in the Appio-Latino quarter. The dedication is to the Roman priest St Giovanni Battista Rossi (1698-1764).

History

St John Baptist (Giovanni Battista) de Rossi was from Genoa, and studied and worked in Rome before becoming a priest there and a secular canon of Santa Maria in Cosmedin . He worked tirelessly for homeless women, sick people, prisoners and workers, and was a very popular confessor. As a result, he was being called a second Philip Neri in his lifetime. After he had been canonised in 1881, it was only a matter of time before a church was dedicated to him in Rome.

The parish bearing his name was established by Pope Pius XII in 1940. Because of the war construction of the church was delayed, and it was not until 22 May 1965 that it could be consecrated. The architect was Tullio Rossi, who designed it in his easily recognizable derivative neo-Romanesque style.

The mortal remains of St Giovanni Battista de Rossi were transferred to here from Santissima Trinità dei Pellegrini on 23 May 1965, the day after the church had been consecrated. Luigi Cardinal Traglia, Vicar General of Rome, presided at the ceremony.

Blessed Pope Paul VI made the church titular on 30 April 1969.

Exterior

The church is basilical, with a central nave of seven bays having side aisles but no transept. The plan overall is rectangular, into which is inserted the central nave and an integral semi-circular apse forming an extended U along the major axis. This is under the same pitched and tiled roof, which is an unusual design feature in Roman churches. The nave aisles share the same lower flat roof, which is taken round the back of the apse in order to cover the sacristies and ancillary rooms.

The exterior walls are mostly in bare brown brick, with few architectural details in stone. The left hand side frontage on the Via Luigi Cibrario is monumental, with a completely blank brick external wall for the aisle. Above, each bay of the central nave wall has a rectangular window with cross mullions, above which is a round window ditto. The stone cross in each of the latter bears four round tondi in red, one in each arm. The bays are separated by pairs of thin brick pilasters, a design feature of the church.

There is a detached campanile to the right of the façade, a tall elegant square tower in brick with three thin pilaster strips on three sides (the fourth side, facing away from the street, has staircase windows instead). Above a stone cornice is the bellchamber on a smaller plan, with large sound-holes each containing a Latin cross in stone. The cap is a low pyramid.

Façade

The entrance façade has two storeys, mostly of blank brickwork. The first storey has six pairs of thin undecorated brick pilasters, which run to an entablature without an architrave but with a stone frieze bearing a dedicatory inscription and a projecting cornice. This entablature runs across the entire façade, hiding the aisle rooflines. There are three entrances for nave and aisles, and these are arched with the nave entrance being larger. The arches are of tiles, flush with the wall and with no decoration. Unusually they have no tympani, but have their doors cut to fit the top curves.

Above the entablature, the second storey or upper nave frontage is also mostly blank brickwork. There is a central round window, with mullions in the form of a Greek cross. Unusually, the fenestration here is not glass but sheets of alabaster, an ancient method to be seen (as a modern replica) at Santa Sabina for example. In the gable is a stone tablet with the coat-of-arms of Pope Pius XII.

Interior

The nave is separated from the aisles by square piers with applied Doric pilasters. These support an entablature which is basically a deep frieze without proper cornice or architrave. On this is an inscription in gilt mosaic reading "Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit". The upper nave walls between the windows are decorated by frescoes of the Twelve Apostles by D. Duili.

There is no ceiling, and the open roof is of wood, and is trussed.

The stone Stations of the Cross in the nave aisles are by Ortisei. At the end of the aisles are chapels, the left hand one having a fresco of Gethsemane and the walk to Emmaus, and the right hand one a fresco containing scenes of the Nativity, the burial of Christ and the glory of Our Lady of Pompei.

The conch of the apse contains a fresco of the patron saint in glory accompanied by angels, and at the base of this are scenes from his life. Above the triumphal arch are symbols of the Evangelists flanking Christ the King. These two frescoes were executed by Alessandro Missori in 1945.

Liturgy

Mass is celebrated:

Monday to Friday, 7:00 (not summer), 8:00, 9:00 (not summer) and 18:30 (19:00 in summer);

Sundays and Solemnities 8:00, 9:30, 11:00, 12:30 (not summer), 18:30 (19:00 summer).

"Summer" is July, August and September.

No Mass is advertised on Saturdays.

The Solemnity of St Giovanni Battista de Rossi is celebrated on 23 May.

Location:

Address: Via Cesare Baronio 127

Coord: [41°52′17.3″N 12°31′08.3″E](#)

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