

Sant'Apollinare alle Terme



Sant'Apollinare alle Terme is an 18th century former collegiate church of ancient foundation located in the rione Ponte. It is titular, a minor basilica and part of the Prelature of [Opus Dei](#). The dedication is to [St Apollinaris](#), bishop of Ravenna and martyr. (1)

History:

An ancient, possibly 8th century church was built here near a Roman bath, hence the source of the name. It is said to have been dedicated in 780 by Adrian I., who, as we learn from Anastasius Bibliothecarius, presented it with sacred vestments. The first church was described as attached to a monastery of Byzantine-rite monks who had fled from persecution during the reign of the iconoclast emperor Leo the Isaurian at Constantinople. At this time the Eastern Empire ruled Rome from Ravenna, hence the dedication. Another function that the church took on from its foundation was the enshrinement of martyrs' relics taken from the catacombs. The church is mentioned in a document of 1281, referring to a canon of Sant'Apollinare. In the Catalogue of Turin in 1320 it is listed as a papal benefice, with eight priests. Under the church's high altar was a collection of martyrs' relics, and their names have been preserved: Tibertius, Eustrasius, Auxentius, Eugenius, Mardarius (or Bardarius) and Orestes. (1) (a)

In 1574, Pope Gregory XIII gave the church and adjoining priests' house, which amounted to a small palazzo, to the Collegium Germanicum which was founded by Ignatius Loyola, and chartered in 1552 by Pope Julius II, and erected the two adjoining palaces. In 1580, the college was united with

the failed project for a Hungarian seminary, and the German-Hungarian College remained a Jesuit institution on this site until 1773. (1) (a)

In 1645, during a small earthquake, two boys and a soldier took refuge in the church loggia and saw the plaster coating covering an icon of Our Lady in the loggia fall off. The picture thus revealed became the focus of intense devotion on the part of the local faithful. (1)

In 1742, Pope Benedict XIV commissioned **Ferdinando Fuga** to rebuild the church, and the college building or palazzo. The style is considered to be transitional between late Baroque (tardobarocco) and neo-Classical. (1)

The Jesuits were suppressed by a decree of Pope Clement XIV in 1773. The college somehow managed to survive until 1798, when the French occupiers of Rome finally forced its closure. In 1824, Pope Leo XII finally formalized the status of the church and college by granting the complex to the Roman Seminary, which remained here until 1848, when it moved to the Collegio Romano. After 1848, the complex was occupied by a school called the Pontificio istituto di Sant'Apollinare. (1)

In 1990 the complex was granted to Opus Dei to be the headquarters of their Pontificia Università della Santa Croce. This institution has proved a great success, and in response Opus Dei restored the church and re-modelled the palazzo between 2004 and 2007. The church and college have extraterritorial status and are owned by the Holy See, hence burials are possible here. (1)

Exterior:

The church occupies the entire south side of the Via dei Pienellari. The palazzo or college is to the south. It has a cortile with colonnades on the north and west sides, which you can see through the main entrance to the south of the church. The palazzo contains two interesting Baroque fountains, one by **Bernini**. (1)

The façade was completed in 1742, by **Fuga**. The style is rather retro and a little boring, resembling that of the late 1500's with Baroque elements added. It has two storeys, rendered in ochre with the architectural elements picked out in white. (1)

The first storey has six Ionic pilasters, the inner pair doubletted and the middle pair tripletted. The capitals are embellished with a crown and palm fronds (symbols of martyrdom), a row of egg-and-dart with a rosette above and beading on the volutes. They support an entablature with a blank frieze. The single entrance has a Baroque doorcase with a single tassel on each side, and a raised triangular pediment above. The tympanum of the pediment contains a relief of palm fronds tied with a ribbon. In between lintel and pediment is a proclamation of a plenary indulgence for pilgrims, flanked by a pair of tasselled panels bearing stylized poppies. (1)

In between the middle and outer pilasters is a pair of vertical rectangular windows. Each has a raised segmental pediment over a pair of rosettes. (1)

The second storey is on an attic plinth which contains a segmental lunette window. It has four Corinthian pilasters, the inner pair doubletted and the outer pair tripletted, which support an entablature and a double pediment. The latter has a triangular pediment inserted into a segmental one, and both have vertical steps breaking up their outlines. There is a large rectangular central window with a balustrade, and this has a raised segmental pediment with the crown and palm motif in its tympanum. The second storey has been given two outer screens at its corners which curve

forwards to end in two corner pilasters without capitals. The entablatures of this pair of add-ons do not correspond with that of the second storey of the façade, but have a different design. (1)

The campanile has two storeys above the roofline, each with a pair of arched openings on each face (those in the top storey are blank). There is a tiled pyramidal cap. (1)

Interior:

The layout of the church has three completely distinct architectural elements, as follows:

Firstly, there is a large and unusual entrance vestibule, cigar-shaped on a transverse axis and having apses at each end. One of these is occupied by the famous icon of Our Lady. (1)

Then comes the nave, that has aisles, but they are divided into three chapels on each side. (1)

Finally there is the presbyterium, square in plan with a transverse rectangular apse. The presbyterium has a saucer dome, and this is lit by a large cylindrical lantern with four round-headed windows and a lead cupola in the form of a segment of a sphere. (1)

Vestibule, and the Miraculous Icon

As mentioned, when you enter you do not find yourself in the church but in a large vestibule chamber, long high and narrow, which corresponds to the loggia of the old church. This functions as the church's Chapel of Our Lady, and is a liturgical space in its own right. It is decorated in a cool Baroque style, with a color scheme in white, pale lemon and cream. (1)

To the left on entering is the apse containing the detached and enshrined 15th century fresco of *Our Lady, Queen of Apostles*. The green marble pedimented frame with golden stucco cherubs below was added by **Peter Anton von Verschaffelt**, who is more famous for his statue of St Michael on top of Castel Sant'Angelo. The apse is revetted with polychrome marble, and has a conch in white and gold rosetted coffering. Unusually, this is above the level of the horizontal beam where you would expect to find a triumphal arch. (1)

Above the icon is a large lunette window in clear glass, with an archivolt with rosettes on which a pair of stucco angels sits. (1)

The icon itself shows the Madonna and Child being venerated by St Paul (on the left) and St Peter, and is in a Mannerist style described as Roman-Umbrian. Below her is an inscription added when she was invoked against a local outbreak of bubonic plague in 1657: (1)

Santa Maria, Reparatrix nostrae concordiae omnium fidelium Christianorum, tu intercede pro nobis apud Deum ut liberemur a peste epidemia et ab omnibus malis presentibus et futuris. Amen.

This icon has its own feast-day, 13 February, which is the anniversary of the earthquake which caused its rediscovery. (1)

On the wall to the right, outside the chapel, is the monument of the Ganonico Calandrelli, professor of astronomy in the Roman seminary, who erected its observatory, and who died in 1827. (a)

Nave

There is a single nave, with three self-contained chapels off each side. There are no proper arcades, but rather trabeations supported by Corinthian pilasters. This means that a continuous entablature supported by the pilasters runs above the chapels on both sides, and each side chapel is made to

look as if it is entered through an arcade arch by the insertion of barrel vaults under the entablature which begin with spandrels. The pilasters and entablature are revetted in a grey veined marble. (1)

The pavement of the nave has an inlaid list of past cardinals of the church. (1)

The barrel-vaulted ceiling has lunette windows over the side-chapels, in between which are vault springers meeting at a fresco of *The Glory of St Apollinaris* by **Stefano Pozzi**, one of the Jesuits. The paintwork is white and grey, with a golden frame to the fresco. The overall effect is light and airy. (1)

The church organ is over the entrance in front of the counterfaçade, and sits on a wide balustraded gallery with a bowed central section and coved wings. It can be played from a consol by the right hand pilaster of the triumphal arch. (1)

There are two 18th century confessionals in the church. (1)

Presbyterium

The presbyterium is entered through a triumphal arch supported by a pair of Corinthian verde antico pilasters. A heraldic shield supported by angels is on the crest of the archivolt. (1)

The small dome, a spherical saucer on pendentives, was constructed in 1748 and decorated with stucco in grey and white. The pattern is based on a Greek cross, with eight sectors alternating as diapered coffering and broad rays with a flower swag in the centre. In the lantern is a *Dove of the Holy Spirit*. (1)

The high altar was commissioned by Pope Benedict XIV. It is placed against the far wall of the apse, which has its own little barrel vault with a pair of lunettes and a symbol of the *Trinity*. The walls are sumptuously revetted in polychrome stonework, with panels of alabaster and verde antico. High on each side wall is a cantoria, or box for solo singers. (1)

The altar has two ribbed Corinthian columns in verde antico, with the ribbing inlaid in gilded bronze and supporting a triangular pediment on which angels sit. The angels and stucco decorations are by **Bernardino Ludovisi**. The early 17th century altarpiece depicts *The Consecration of St Apollinaris as Bishop of Ravenna*, and is by **Ercole Graziani of Bologna**. It is a duplicate of a painting by the artist at Bologna Cathedral. The consecrator depicted is St Peter, which detail relies on the saint's completely fictitious legend which was composed in the 7th century. (1) (2) (a)

The altar itself is in the form of an ancient bath fabricated in a dark blue stone claimed to be lapis lazuli, with gilt bronze fittings. (1)

The candelabras were made by Silversmith Luigi Valadier. (2)

Side chapels

The chapels are described from the near left hand side, proceeding clockwise:

The first chapel on the left is dedicated to St [John Nepomucene](#), and has an altarpiece on *St John before the Virgin and Child* by **Placido Costanzi**. (1) (a)

The second chapel on the left is dedicated to St [Josemara Escrivá](#), and has an altarpiece of the saint by **Angelo Zarcone**. The work is in a refreshingly realistic style, and shows the saint saying Mass. This chapel used to be dedicated to the Crucifix. (1)

The third chapel on the left is dedicated to St [Ignatius of Loyola](#) with an altarpiece statue of *St Ignatius Venerating the Madonna* by **Carlo Marchionni**. Here is the funerary monument of Francesco Antonio Zaccaria, writer and archaeologist, who died in 1795. (1) (a)

The third chapel on the right is dedicated to St [Francis Xavier](#), and has a marble statue of the saint by **Pierre Le Gros**. Note the large bronze crab to the left. The story is that the saint lost a crucifix overboard while on a ship, but had it brought back to him by a crab when he was standing on a beach after the voyage. This chapel is richly decorated in alabaster and verde antico, with a pair of putti sitting on the altar pediment. Note the IHS monogram in the gilded stucco barrel vault; this is a symbol of the Jesuits, and derives from the Greek form of the name of Jesus (IHΣΥΣ). (1)

The second chapel on the right is dedicated to St Joseph, and has an altarpiece of *The Holy Family* with Angels by **Giacomo Zoboli**. (1) (a)

The first chapel on the right is dedicated to St [Aloysius Gonzaga](#), and has an altarpiece of the saint by Ludovico Mazzanti. (1) (a)

Burials:

Ganonico Calandrelli († 1827)

<professor of astronomy>

Francesco Antonio [Zaccaria](#) (1714-1795)

<Italian theologian, historian, archaeologist and prolific writer>

Artists and Architects:

Angelo Zarcone (20th cent), Italian painter

Bernardino [Ludovisi](#) (1693-1749), Italian sculptor

Carlo [Marchionni](#) (1702-1786), Italian architect/sculptor

Ercole [Graziani](#) (1688-1765), Italian painter of the Baroque period

Ferdinando [Fuga](#) (1699-1781), Italian architect in the Baroque style

Francesco Guidotti (18th cent), Italian sculptor

Giacomo [Zoboli](#) (1681-1767), Italian painter from Modena

Ludovico [Mazzanti](#) (1686-1775), Italian painter from Orvieto

Luigi Valadier (1726-1785), Italian silversmith

Peter Anton [von Verschaffelt](#) (1710-1793), Flemish sculptor and architect from Ghent

Pierre [Le Gros](#) the Younger (1666-1719), French sculptor from Paris

Placido [Costanzi](#) (1702-1759), Italian painter of the late-Baroque period.

Stefano [Pozzi](#) (1707?-1768), Italian painter, designer, draughtsman and decorator

Location:

Address: 49 Piazza Sant'Apollinare, 00186 Roma

Coord: [41° 54' 3.5" N, 12° 28' 24.3" E](#)

Info:

Telephone: 0039 06 6875211

Fax: 0039 06 68164400

Opening times:

Weekdays 7.00am - 10.00am

Holidays 9.30am - 11.30am

Mass times:

Holidays 10.30am

Weekdays 7.30am 8.00am

During the celebration of the Holy Mass is not possible to visit the church

Links and References:

1. http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/Sant%27Apollinare_alle_Terme

2. http://www.info.roma.it/monumenti_dettaglio.asp?ID_schede=196

3. <http://www.060608.it/en/cultura-e-svago/luoghi-di-culto-di-interesse-storico-artistico/chiese-cattoliche/sant-apollinare.html>

http://www.vicariatusurbis.org/?page_id=188&ID=921

(Official diocesan web-page)

<http://www.apollinare.org/index.html>

(Website of the church)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/rinofelino/sets/72157632301035191/with/8294823338/>

(Gennaro Leonardi's gallery on Flickr)

<http://basilica.apollinare.org/Storia/Storia.html>

a. Donovan, Jeremiah; ROME ANCIENT AND MODERN AND ITS ENVIRONS; 1842; Pg. V2:255

b. Sharp, Mary; A GUIDE TO THE CHURCHES OF ROME; 1966, Pg. 48