

Santi Giovanni e Petronio dei Bolognesi



Santi Giovanni e Petronio dei Bolognesi is a 16th century confraternity, titular and regional church, at the east side of the Palazzo Farnese in the rione Regola. The dedication is to St John the Evangelist and St Petronius, jointly. This is the regional church for expatriates from Bologna.

History:

The first edifice here was founded as a small parish church in the 10th or early 11th century, although no records survive. It was listed in 1186 as a dependency of San Lorenzo in Damaso, with the name San Tommaso and a dedication to St Thomas the Apostle.

In the catalogues of the late Middle Ages it had the name of San Tommaso de Yspanis or some variant of this, apparently because it was administered by expatriate Spanish priests. Also, the name San Tommaso dei Muratori was recorded in the 15th century (muratori were wall-builders).

In the early 16th century an alternative name of San Tommaso della Catena is also found, allegedly because a penitential confraternity was based here, the members of which either went in procession in chains or whipped themselves with them (the former is perhaps more likely).

This old church had a typical plan of a central nave with side aisles, and a semi-circular apse.

There was a visitation in 1566, and the report (which survives) condemns the priests of the church for negligence especially as regards the Blessed Sacrament. Apparently as a result, Pope Gregory XIII suppressed the parish and gave the church in 1581 to the Bolognese expatriate community in Rome (he had come from that city himself). This had set up the Arciconfraternita delle Stimate della Nazione Bolognese in 1576, which was originally based at San Giovanni Calibita on the Tiber Island.

The confraternity immediately initiated a project to have the church rebuilt, and rededicated to the patron saints of their city (St John the Evangelist and St Petronius, who had been a bishop there in the 5th century). Also, the project involved a private oratory erected in 1601, and a hospice for pilgrims.

The design was the work of the Bolognese architect Ottaviano Mascherino. The actual construction took a long time, and the internal dome was only finished in the second half of the 17th century. The façade was added between 1696 and 1701. Interior decoration continued until 1735, and was by artists from Bologna. From the evidence of the dedicatory epigraph over the entrance, the church was consecrated in 1700.

During the French occupation, the church was deprived of several important artworks and was actually desecrated in 1810. The most notable of the lost paintings was the 1625 altarpiece, *The Mother and Child with SS John and Petronius* by Domenichino which only came back to Rome in 1953 and is now in the Palazzo Barberini. The gallery's online catalogue page for it is [here](#) and an image of it is [here](#).

The confraternity remained in possession until 1892, when its assets were sequestered by the Italian government which required all religious confraternities to register as secular charities if they wished to retain their assets.

The confraternity only secularized itself in 1940, and so recovered possession of the little complex. However, its ecclesiastical status was restored with the promulgation of new statues in 1985, and it now has Cardinal Achille Silvestrini as its chair.

A thorough restoration was completed in 2000, during which archaeological evidence of a 1st century domus was found under the church.

The church is one of the smallest in Rome with a cardinalate title.

Exterior:

Layout and fabric

The church is on a square plan (the interior is a Greek cross) with an added rectangular apse, and shelters under a square tiled roof with four triangular pitches meeting at a lantern. In other words, the internal dome is false. Of the external walls, only the façade is visible because of neighbouring buildings.

The façade is not perpendicular to the major axis because of the angle of the street, which makes the left hand side wall slightly longer than the right hand side one. The anomaly is dealt with by having a narrow triangular void between the façade and the counterfaçade on the left hand side.

There is a tiny campanile over the far right hand side wall, but this is invisible from the street.

Façade

The façade, which is painted in a pale orange-yellow with white architectural details, has two gigantic rectangular pilasters on very high plinths occupying the corners. These have stylized derivative Composite capitals, and their outer edges are doubletled. They support a triangular pediment with a broken cornice, and into this pediment is intruded a very large rectangular window with a molded frame. The actual fenestration is recessed, and has a balcony of iron rails in front of it. Above the window, in the gable of the pediment, is a woman's head flanked by decorative billows and curlicues.

The single doorway has a raised segmental pediment over a simple dedicatory inscription dated 1700.

If you look into the central window, you will see how the counterfaçade wall inside is at an angle to the façade.

Interior:

Layout

The square edifice has a small square chamber inserted into each corner, hence the interior is on the plan of a Greek cross with four equal shallow arms. One is the entrance bay, two are side chapels and one is the sanctuary bay. The sanctuary is continued by a transverse rectangular apse of the same width.

Nave

The nave is covered by a dome on pendentives, the latter created by arches over the side arms of the cross. The pendentives show The Cardinal Virtues, monochrome frescoes by Pompeo Aldrovandini. The dome itself, which is a segment of a sphere with a large skylight oculus surrounded by a wreath, used to be frescoed in imitation square coffering with rosettes. However, in the 2000 restoration there was discovered under this a very seriously damaged fresco by Aldrovandini of The Saints of Bologna, and this is what you can now see.

The side arms of the cross have archivolts bearing a single row of painted pseudo-coffers.

The inner angles of the cross, the load-bearing piers of the dome, each have a pair of applied Ionic pilasters with swagged capitals, which are rendered to resemble light grey marble. Another pair of these pilasters is folded into the corners of each side arm, and together they support an entablature which runs around the interior.

High up on the side walls of each side arm are two monochrome panels showing Eucharistic symbols.

The counterfaçade has a pretty gallery or cantoria, on brackets with an ogee-curved balustrade. On the wall here is a memorial to Bonifacio Pasi and his son Pietro, who were killed at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. The father has a tondo portrait in oils. This is the most interesting of several memorials to Bolognese expatriates in the church.

Sanctuary

The apse of the sanctuary is entered through a triumphal arch with two piers in the same style as the nave pilasters. The ornate high altar is against the far wall, and is in polychrome marbles. The two red marble Corinthian columns support a pair of posts fronting an entablature with its frieze in the same stone. These posts are turned inwards, and on them are two incurved volutes which flank a tondo relief of God the Father. A pair of stucco angels are sitting on the volutes.

The altarpiece is anonymous, and shows The Madonna and Child with Saints. A copy of the lost Domenichino is on the pier to the right.

Chapel of St John

The chapel to the right is dedicated to St John the Evangelist, and the altarpiece by Francesco Gessi depicts the Death of St John. A monument to Alessandro Algardi by Domenico Guidi used to be here, but has been destroyed.

Chapel of St Catherine of Genoa

The left hand chapel is dedicated to St Catherine of Genoa. It used to be dedicated to the Pietà, with an altarpiece showing The Deposition of Christ by Emilio Savonanzi but this work was taken into the confraternity's oratory when the chapel was re-dedicated in 1728.

The work that replaced it, a portrait of the saint by Giovanni Gioseffo dal Sole, was lost in the French occupation. The altarpiece is now an anonymous depiction of her incorrupt body, sitting on a throne in the church of Corpus Domini in Bologna.

Location:

Addr: Via del Mascherone, 61

Coord: [41° 53' 38"N, 12° 28' 14"E](#)

Info:

Open 04:30pm-07:00pm

Mass Weekdays: 06:00pm (Saturday)

Links:

[http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/Santi Giovanni e Petronio dei Bolognesi](http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/Santi_Giovanni_e_Petronio_dei_Bolognesi)

[http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=it&u=http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiesa dei Santi Giovanni Evangelista e Petronio](http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=it&u=http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiesa_dei_Santi_Giovanni_Evangelista_e_Petronio)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santi Giovanni Evangelista e Petronio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santi_Giovanni_Evangelista_e_Petronio)

http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=it&u=http://www.romaspqr.it/ROMA/CHIESE/Altre_Chiese/ss%20Giovanni%20Evangelista%20e%20Petronio.htm

<http://www.060608.it/en/cultura-e-svago/luoghi-di-culto-di-interesse-storico-artistico/cattolici/ss-giovanni-evangelista-e-petronio-dei-bolognesi.html>

[Official diocesan web-page](#)

[Italian Wikipedia page](#)

[Nolli map](#) (look for 713)

["De Alvariis" gallery on Flickr](#)

[Roma SPQR web-page](#) with gallery

[Info.roma web-page](#)

["Romeartlover" web-page](#)

[History of confraternity](#) (pdf)

[Youtube video](#)