

San Giovanni in Ayno (deconsecrated)



The **church of San Giovanni in Ayno** is a small deconsecrated parish church, at Via di Monserrato 126 on the south-eastern corner of the Piazza de' Ricci in the rione Regola. It was dedicated to St John the Evangelist.

History:

It is first documented in a bull of Pope Urban III of 1186, in an appended list of the dependent churches of the parish church of San Lorenzo in Damaso. It also seems to be listed at the end of the 14th century as Ecclesia Sancti Iohannis in Agina, which may be a Latin tidying-up of Ayno. The explanation of this name is completely unknown, and the suggestion that it originally referred to the name of the founder is the best guess. The suggestion that Ayno is a corruption of Agnus would be more plausible if the dedication were to St John the Baptist instead of the Evangelist (Hülßen disagrees with Armellini on this point).

In 1566 the church was the base of a confraternity providing funerals for poor people, and hence was known as dei Morti.

In the latter part of the 16th century the church was at least partially demolished to make way for the Palazzo Ricci. However, it was rebuilt in 1590 which was surprising given that the neighbourhood was over-provided with parish churches even then. According to the inscription on the door lintel, this was a pious act by one Giusto Bonanni from San Gimignano in Tuscany.

The parish was recorded as functioning in 1697, but with only thirty families which would have made it marginal. It survived, however, and was augmented after 1804 when the suppressed parish of San Nicola degli Incoronati was joined to it.

The parish was suppressed in 1824, and the church was finally deconsecrated towards the end of the 19th century. This was not part of the re-ordering of the city then going on, but simply because the church was not wanted any more. However, the building survives even though all the furnishings were lost. After spending most of the 20th century as a warehouse, it was restored and at present it contains a suite of offices.

Exterior:

The plan of the church is rectangular, rather narrow in relation to its width. It was entered via a short passage.

The simple yet attractive façade, almost square, stands a little back from the main line of the street. It is of thin bricks in the ancient Roman style, painted pink at present, with the architectural details in travertine limestone. Two gigantic Doric pilasters on the corners support an entablature which occupies the horizontal roofline, and the frieze of this bears an inscription giving the year of rebuilding. This reads Anno salutis christianae MDCC (sic), and the year is obviously corrupt. Presumably it should read MDXC for 1590. The left hand pilaster is partially obscured by the fabric of the house next door.

A watercolour of 1835 by Achille Pinelli indicates that the church façade used to have a crowning triangular pediment.

The fine marble doorcase, unfortunately held together now by iron clamps, has a double lintel the lower section of which has a bust-medallion of presumably St John. The upper section of the lintel has an inscription recording the rebuilding by Bonanni. Above the lintel is a tympanum, the arch of which is decorated with ribbon volutes on top and at each end. There was a fresco in the tympanum showing Our Lady, but this has vanished. The doorway is flanked by a pair of rectangular windows, and above these is a pair of tall round-headed stone-framed panels which once held frescoes of two saints as well.

The church had three altars. The main altarpiece featured the Nativity by Antonio Ambrosi, one of the side altars had Our Lady with St Anne by Giovanni Battista Passeri and the other, St John the Evangelist by Sebastiano Conca.

Location:

Addr: VIA DI MONSERRATO 126, 00186 - ROMA

Coord: [41° 53' 47.9 "N 12° 28' 07.5" E](#)

Links:

[Roman Churches Wiki](#)

[Italian Wikipedia page](#)

["Romeartlover" web-page](#)

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