

# San Paolo alla Regola



**San Paolo alla Regola** is a 17<sup>th</sup> century convent and titular church dedicated to St Paul the Apostle, located in the rione Regola.

## History

The Acts of the Apostles describe how St Paul was allowed to rent his own lodgings, and to hold assemblies where he instructed the first Christians at Rome, while waiting for the trial before the Emperor. Tradition claims that this church is built on the site where he lived and taught in this period, and it is believed that his room is preserved therein. In favor of this tradition, there is some evidence that tanners worked along the bank of the Tiber here, which would make it a logical place for a tentmaker to settle. Also, it is known from a 2<sup>nd</sup> century “Life of St Paul” that he hired a granary for his meetings, and excavations behind the church conducted from 1978 to 1982 led to the conclusion that it was very likely that there was a granary at the site. (1)

However, this tradition conflicts with another claiming that he lived at the site of Santa Maria in Via Lata. The alternative possibility is that the church descended from a guild chapel belonging to a brotherhood of leatherworkers and tanners, whose patron St Paul is, and that the legend was invented to fit. (1)

The origins of the church are not documented. By tradition, it was founded by Pope Sylvester I in the 4<sup>th</sup> century next to the oratory which had been created out of St Paul's single-room residence. However, the first documentary evidence is only from 1186. (1)

It belonged to an Augustinian convent in the Middle Ages, and was made into a parish church in

the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It did not perform this function for long, because in 1619 it was granted to the Sicilian branch of the Third Order Franciscans (Terz'Ordine Regolare di San Francisco or TOR) who were financed by the King of Spain. They built a large convent and college adjacent, and set about rebuilding the church. This was begun in 1687 but only completed in 1728. In the process another old church called San Cesario, which was adjacent, was demolished in order to make room for a more dignified building. The original plans were drawn up by Giovanni Battista Borgonzoni, one of the brethren, revised by Giacomo Ciolli and completed by Giuseppe Sardi . The last-named was responsible for the façade. (1)

A further restoration was carried out in 1930 by Antonio Muñoz.

The college survived until the sequestrations of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the church remained in the administration of the TOR until the early 21<sup>st</sup>. It is now run by members of the *Sodalitium Christianae Vitae*, a Society of Apostolic Life of pontifical right, and was opened to the public again after restoration in 2008. The TOR remain in possession. (1)

## Exterior

The two-storey stucco façade on a stone plinth, which looks impressive after the restoration, is bowed in an ogee curve. The first storey has six derivative Corinthian pilasters, two pairs flanking the main door and a pair at the outer corners. This storey gives the impression that the church has aisles, which is not the case. Two much smaller subsidiary doors are between the paired pilasters, and all three doors have plain doorcases. Above the main door is a floating arc moulding, and above the side doors are two vertical blank capsule-shaped panels. The outer sections of this storey have a pair of large blank rectangular panels with chamfered corners. (1)

The pilasters support an entablature the frieze of which carries an inscription: *Gentium doctori divo Paolo Apostolo Collegium Siculum Tert[<sup>ii</sup>] Ord[inis] S[ancti] Francisci* ("The Sicilian college of the Third Order of St Francis, [dedicated to] the divine Paul the teacher of the Gentiles"). The second storey has four Corinthian pilasters of the same style flanking a large rectangular recessed window having a balcony with a solid balustrade. These pilasters support an entablature the central section of which is recessed as well. Above the window is a relief of St Paul holding his sword of martyrdom inside an oval tondo, and above the entablature is an ogival pediment containing a recessed coat of arms. Finally, there is a crowning pilaster finial supporting a wire cross. (1)

## Interior

The very attractive and highly decorated Baroque interior is designed around the central dome on its four pillars. There are three chapels on each side. (1)

The first chapel on the left is dedicated to St Anthony of Padua, and the altarpiece depicting the saint is by Giacinto Calandrucci. (1)

The second chapel is dedicated to St Anne, and the altarpiece is *Holy Family with S. Anna* , also by Calandrucci. The vault of this chapel is frescoed by Salvatore Monosilio. (1)

The third chapel on the left is dedicated to *Madonna delle Grazie*, and contains a venerated 14<sup>th</sup> century icon of her breastfeeding the Child Jesus. This was apparently originally in the church of *San Cesario*. (1)

The sacristy is to the left of the presbyterium, and over its door off the latter chapel is a painting of *Our Lady with the Christ Child and St Clare* by Biagio Puccini (1675-1713) who was a native Roman artist. The sacristy, panelled in walnut, was completed in 1736 and has a fresco on the internal dome, *Glory of the Virgin* and *Ss.Paolo and John Chrysostom*, was painted by the Bavarian Ignaz Stern (1679-1748). (1)

The apse behind the main altar has three frescoes by Luigi Garzi depicting, left to right, *St Paul preaching*, *Conversion* and *Martyrdom*. In the apse below these is a semi-circular set of 17<sup>th</sup> century choir stalls in walnut wood. The altar itself is decorated with polychrome stonework in alabaster and

marble. (1)

The residence of St Paul is to the right of the presbyterium. Over its door is an oval painting by an artist named Puccini showing *St Bonaventure in Ecstasy, with St Thomas Aquinas* (those who know the history of the competition between the mendicant orders will marvel at a Franciscan being admired by a Dominican!). The residence has an altar with a green marble cross, and above this is a modern mosaic by Eugenio Cisterna showing the *Apostle teaching in chains and with his soldier custodian*. On the right side is an old inscription dating to 1096 listing a collection of relics then at *San Cesario*. (1)

The third chapel on the right is dedicated to the Crucifixion, and contains a bronze crucifix by Alessandro Algardi of Bologna. (1)

The second chapel on the right is dedicated to St Francis of Assisi, and has an altarpiece of the *Saint Receiving the Stigmata* by [Michele Rocca da Parma](#) (1666-1751). This has been erroneously attributed to Il Parmigiano. (1)

The first chapel on the right is dedicated to St Rosalia. Over the altar is a painting of *St. Rose, St. Rosalia and St. Clare before the Virgin and Child*, by Cristofaro Creo (?? may be incorrect). In the oval to the right is the *Martyrdom of St. Erasmus*, by Biagio Puccini. (1)

The excavations in the latter 20<sup>th</sup> century have left a very interesting set of ancient underground chambers and passages under this church, although they also extend under neighbouring properties. There is an article in Italian on them on the "Roma Sotteranea" link below. (1)

### Artists and Architects:

Alessandro [Algardi](#) (1598-1654), Italian high-Baroque sculptor  
Antonio [Muñoz](#) (1884-1960), Italian architect  
Biagio [Puccini](#) (1673–1721), Italian painter  
Eugenio [Cisterna](#) (1865-1933), Italian painter & mosaic designer  
Giacinto [Calandrucci](#) (1646-1707), Italian painter of the Baroque period  
Giacomo Ciolli († 1734), Italian architect  
Fr Giovanni Battista Bergonzoni (called Borgognone) (17<sup>th</sup> cent), Italian architect  
Giuseppe [Sardi](#) (1680-c.1768), Italian architect  
Ignaz [Stern](#) (1679-1748), Austrian Baroque painter  
Michele [Rocca](#) da Parma (1666-1751), Italian painter of the Baroque period  
Salvatore [Monosilio](#) (1715-1776), Italian Painter

### Location:

Address: Via di San Paolo alla Regola 6, 00186 Roma  
Coordinates: [41°53'34"N 12°28'24"E](#)

### Info:

Telephone: 0039 06 68 80 24 08  
Web site: [www.sanpaoloallaregola.com](http://www.sanpaoloallaregola.com)  
Email: [sanpaoloallaregola@gmail.com](mailto:sanpaoloallaregola@gmail.com)

### Open:

Monday to Saturday 10.00am-12.30pm 5.00am-8.00pm  
Sunday 11.00am-1.00pm 5.00pm-7.00pm

### Masses

Monday to Saturday 7.30pm  
Sunday 6.00pm

### Links and References:

1. [http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/San\\_Paolo\\_alla\\_Regola](http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/San_Paolo_alla_Regola)
2. [http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&ie=UTF8&prev=t&sl=auto&tl=en&u=http://www.romasegreta.it/regola/s-paolo-alla-regola.html&sandbox=0&usg=ALkJrhiDBu\\_5MEVmyzZoz\\_9jTxaoyVwjnA](http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&ie=UTF8&prev=t&sl=auto&tl=en&u=http://www.romasegreta.it/regola/s-paolo-alla-regola.html&sandbox=0&usg=ALkJrhiDBu_5MEVmyzZoz_9jTxaoyVwjnA)

3. <http://www.romeartlover.it/Vasi131.htm#S.%20Paolo%20alla%20Regola>
4. <http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=it&tl=en&u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.romasotterranea.it%2Fspaolinoallaregola.html>
5. [http://www.info.roma.it/monumenti\\_dettaglio.asp?ID\\_schede=601](http://www.info.roma.it/monumenti_dettaglio.asp?ID_schede=601)
6. <http://www.060608.it/en/cultura-e-svago/luoghi-di-culto-di-interesse-storico-artistico/chiese-cattoliche/san-paolo-alla-regola.html>
7. [http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&ie=UTF8&prev=\\_t&sl=auto&tl=en&u=http://www.romasotterranea.it/spaolinoallaregola.html](http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&ie=UTF8&prev=_t&sl=auto&tl=en&u=http://www.romasotterranea.it/spaolinoallaregola.html)

a. Donovan, Jeremiah; ROME ANCIENT AND MODERN AND ITS ENVIRONS; 1842