

## Sant'Ivo dei Bretoni



The **Church of Saint Ivo of the Bretons** (Italian: *Sant'Ivo dei Bretoni*, French: *Saint Yves-des-Bretons*) is a 19<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholic church dedicated to Saint [Ivo of Kermartin](#), patron of Brittany. It is one of the national churches in Rome dedicated to Brittany (France). (1)

### History

Pope Callixtus III (1455-1458) gave the old church of St. Andrea de Mortarariis to the Confraternita di Sant'Ivo dei Brittoni in Rome. At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the confraternity erected a fairly substantial new church with a hospice attached which took up the entire triangular city block where it was located. It became a center for assistance to Breton pilgrims.

The complex fell into serious decay in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, in 1875 the old buildings were demolished after the ancient campanile collapsed, apparently onto the church. A new, much smaller church built on part of the site of the old one and was completed in 1890 in Neo-Renaissance style. The work was paid for by the French government, and the architect was Luca Carimini. Ancient Roman artifacts found in the foundations were taken to San Luigi for display. Former altar of the church of Saint-Yves-Britons, probably dating from the twelfth century, is also preserved in the church of Saint-Luigi dei Francesi.

A restoration of the façade and interior was completed in 2003, after they had fallen into decay again.

On January 24, 2014 a small bomb exploded outside of the church, causing minor damage and broken windows.

### Exterior

The new church was laid out with its major axis perpendicular to that of the old one, and located at the latter's far end. The plan is rectangular, to which is added a semi-circular apse entered through a triumphal arch. There is a semi-circular external chapel halfway up each side wall of the nave, entered through a little arcade on two columns.

The far wall of the presbyterium of the old church occupies the new church's major axis as far as the triumphal arch, where the old church's top right hand corner was. The new church's apse continues as far as the far wall of the old clover-leaf chapel.

### Façade

For some reason, Caramini built the new façade in a Florentine Romanesque style which was nothing like the old church's façade. He went so far as to use a grey stone for the work, which contrasts badly with the local and more familiar honey-colored stone and proved to be of poor quality. Allegedly this was to further the resemblance to a Florentine building.

The church is incorporated into a larger secular edifice, hence the façade is surrounded by the latter's frontage. It has three storeys, separated by projecting cornices. The first one contains the entrance propylaeum, which is inserted into an enormous arched recess the archivolt of which intrudes upon the second storey. This propylaeum consists of a pair of Composite columns on high plinths with capitals in a derivative style, supporting an entablature which in turn supports a large segmental pediment with a substantially recessed tympanum. The little barrel vault thus created is coffered, and the tympanum itself is occupied by a majolica relief of *Our Lady and Child* in a tondo, being venerated by two saints, by **Luca Della Robbia**. This artwork was apparently over the entrance door into the old church from the vestibule. The pediment is decorated with finials formed of rosettes and cloud-puffs. On either side of the entrance is a blank round-headed niche with scallop shell decoration in the conch.

The second storey has an identical device in relief on either side of the archivolt. It is a lozenge-shaped shield showing the arms of Brittany, hanging from a ring in a lion's mouth and surrounded by a garland of fruiting boughs. Four ribbons are waving above. These devices crumbled badly before 2003.

The third storey has a round window with a plaited molded frame and a complicated fenestration derived from a cross, circle and two squares. It is flanked by a pair of round-headed niches with pediments supported by strapwork corbels; these have scallop shell decorations as well but upside down. The crowning triangular pediment is embellished with strapwork modillions and dentillation, and below it is a dedicatory inscription:

Deo sacrum in hon[ore] S[ancti] Ivonis presb[iteri] advocati pauperum.

### **Interior**

The little church has a single nave, a three-sided sanctuary apse and a chapel on each side of the nave. The interior is richly decorated in a neo-Renaissance style, with lots of white marble in shallow carved relief and imitation Cosmatesque inlays on the walls. It is dominated by the large triumphal arch, which has pink granite Corinthian columns supporting a semi-circular archivolt with coffering on its intrados (a motif repeated in the propylaeum outside). A pair of stucco angels holding a wreath and crown is in the spandrels.

The floor is imitation Cosmatesque as well, and is really very good.

### Sanctuary

The apse has an arcade of three arches separated by red marble Corinthian columns, and a large conch which culminates in a lunette window. The central arch contains the small main altar, which has a gilded metal bust of the patron saint in a niche flanked by a pair of Corinthian pilasters and containing two columns in the same style, all in green marble.

The side arches contain the exits to the sacristy, and above these are cantorias for solo musicians. There is a low altar screen cutting off the apse, with fretwork stone decoration recalling the fenestration of the round window in the façade. At the right end of this is a little stone statue of St Yves, in a mediaeval style. He is holding a bag of money, because he was famous for his charitable donations in his home city of Chartres.

The frescoes in the apse conch and ceiling vault are by **Ludwig Seitz**. The former shows *Christ in Glory, Venerated by French Saints*. The saints are, left to right: Clotilde, Martin, Yves, Louis the King, Bernard and Genevieve of Paris.

#### Side chapels

One of the two semi-circular side chapels is dedicated to the Sacred Heart, and has a white marble statue. The other is dedicated to Our Lady, and has an icon of the Madonna' of the Angels.

They contain eight tondi showing portraits of saints by **Riccardo Mancinelli** from Orvieto. The saints are helpfully labelled, and are: *Francis de Sales, Radegund, Denis of Paris, Joachim, Germaine Cousin, Anne, John the Baptist* and *John the Evangelist*. The artistic quality varies from quite good to dreadful.

The altar balustrades are in the same style as that of the sanctuary.

#### **Artists and Architects:**

Luca [Carimini](#) (1830-1890), Italian architect  
 Luca della Robbia (1489-1547), Italian sculptor from Florence  
 Ludwig (Ludovico) [Seitz](#) (1844-1908), Italian painter  
 Paolo [Bartolini](#) (1859-1930), Italian sculptor  
 Riccardo Mancinelli (20<sup>th</sup> cent), Italian painter

#### **Location:**

Addr: Vicolo della Campana, 8, Rione Campo Marzio

Coord: [41° 54' 9.3" N, 12° 28' 29.2" E](#)

Open on Sunday only at 9.30 for the celebration of the Mass.

**Links:**

1. [http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/Sant%27Ivo\\_dei\\_Bretoni](http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/Sant%27Ivo_dei_Bretoni)
2. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sant%27Ivo\\_dei\\_Bretoni](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sant%27Ivo_dei_Bretoni)
3. [http://www.info.roma.it/monumenti\\_dettaglio.asp?ID\\_schede=787](http://www.info.roma.it/monumenti_dettaglio.asp?ID_schede=787)
4. [http://www.vicariatusurbis.org/?page\\_id=188&ID=951](http://www.vicariatusurbis.org/?page_id=188&ID=951)
5. <http://www.romeartlover.it/Vasi107.htm#S. Ivo>
6. <http://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&js=n&prev=t&hl=en&ic=UTF-8&u=http%3A%2F%2Fstyvesdesbretons.canalblog.com%2F>  
( Church blog)
7. <http://www.060608.it/en/cultura-e-svago/luoghi-di-culto-di-interesse-storico-artistico/chiese-cattoliche/sant-ivo-dei-bretoni.html>