

## Santa Croce e San Bonaventura dei Lucchesi



**Santa Croce e San Bonaventura dei Lucchesi** is a 17th century convent church dedicated to the Holy Cross and St Bonaventure. It is the National (regional) church of the people of Lucca in Tuscany. The church is in Rione Trevi, in via dei Lucchesi, between the Fontana di Trevi and the Pontifical Gregorian University. Two earlier church edifices survive as part of the complex.

### History

The first church here, **San Niccolò de Portiis**, was built in the 9th century. The first documentary reference dates from the end of the 12th century, and the church is listed in the late mediaeval catalogues as *San Niccolò de Trivio* or *San Niccolò de Portiis*. The latter name, with variations, is thought to derive from a mediaeval family called Porzi which owned property in the area. It is certain that this church was still in use in the 14th century, since surviving fresco fragments date from then.

Towards the end of the Middle Ages, the old church was abandoned and a new church built on top of it. The new edifice must have been consecrated, after all. The old church became a crypt, but there was no proper access provided so it did not continue as a place for worship.

In the second half of the 16th century the ancient church, was granted to the Friars Minor Capuchin Fathers by Pope Gregory XIII. They built a monastery here where St [Felix of Cantalice](#) spent a great part of his life. In 1575 the Capuchins built a third church just to the west of the second one, with the apse abutting onto its former façade. This arrangement looks as if the friars used the old church as their choir chapel, as an identical arrangement occurs in many other Roman convents. This new church was dedicated to St [Bonaventure](#). In 1626 the Capuchins moved into a new, more commodious monastery at Santa Maria della Concezione dei Cappuccini. They are now in their curia at Corpus Christi dei Cappuccini.

In 1631 the church was given to the Lucchese community in Rome as their national church by Pope Urban VIII. A hospice for poor and infirm Lucchese, as well as for pilgrims, was opened adjacent to the church in the former monastery. In the same year, a congregation propagating the devotion to the [Holy Face of Lucca](#), and a dedication to the Holy Cross was added to that of St Bonaventure to give the present church's title. The Holy Face is an ancient crucifix which has been at the cathedral

of Lucca since the 8th century, and is credited with miraculous powers. The altarpiece here is a representation of it.

The old Capuchin church was completely remodelled in 1682-1683 by Mattia de Rossi. The result was very sumptuous. The old choir chapel (the second church) was kept as a meeting room.

Beginning in 1692 the interior was redecorated according to a design of Cardinal Buonvisi, the confraternity's cardinal protector. Between 1692 and 1696 the church was embellished with four large coretti (balconies) placed between the six lateral chapels, and with statues, stuccoes, and a new facade. The project was financed by money contributed by Cardinal Buonvisi, the Republic of Lucca, and confraternity members

There was another restoration in 1736, and again in 1787. In 1859-1863 there was a major restoration by Virigilio Vespignani, and much of the present decoration dates from this. Further repairs took place in 1907.

The hospice was proving redundant and so was shut down in 1845. In 1897, the premises were granted to the Sisters of Mary Reparatrix which was a French active sisterhood founded in 1857. They still occupy it as a convent, and have made it their generalate or headquarters. The convent is dedicated to St Peter. The church remained in the charge of the confraternity, which since 1907 was called the *Opera Pia dei Lucchesi*.

## Exterior

The façade is single-storey, on a high plinth and is hence accessed by a wide staircase. In contrast with the interior, the decoration is very restrained. There are four Corinthian pilasters supporting an entablature with a blank frieze, and a triangular pediment. In the tympanum of this is an oculus in a molded Baroque frame, decorated with ribbons and a cornice with archivolt.

The single entrance has a molded doorcase, with a simple dedicatory inscription above the lintel. This is topped by a slightly oversized segmental pediment. Above this in turn is a vertical rectangular window in a Baroque frame topped by a scallop shell flanked by a pair of curlicues.

The background is rendered in a yellowish pink, with architectural details in white.

The chapel frontages on either side each have a pair of Doric pilasters supporting an entablature marking a flat roofline. On the outer corners are perched, oddly, two halves of a split and very widely separated segmental pediment.

### ----- note -----

To see the exterior of the second mediaeval church, you have to go round to Via della Dataria 21. There, in an early 20th century building is a large arched portal with a pair of columns, which leads via a high passage to a large courtyard with a single tall palm tree. The old church is on the far right hand side of this courtyard, and the external fabric of the rectangular edifice is distinguished by a projecting cornice with corbels, framed by two courses of bricks in a saw-tooth pattern.

Accessing this courtyard may be difficult, as the passageway may be guarded.

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## Interior

There is a single nave of five bays, continuing directly into a square apse without a transept. On each side of the nave are three large external chapels, and these are connected by corridors. If you look down the side of the church, you will see how each chapel has its own roof, with the corridors in between roofed at a lower level. Modern buildings about the apse on each side, and on the right hand end of the nave is perched a little campanile which probably replaced a medieval tower when the Capuchins took over.

In between the chapels are what look like opera boxes, with slightly bowed fronts on volute corbels. These are *cantorie*, and are intended for singers and musicians. Above the chapels and *cantorie* are six large windows on each side, the light from which give a glowing quality to the decoration.

The cassette ceiling dates from 1637-1677, and was designed by Mattia de Rossi. The woodwork is intricately carved and gilded. There are large fresco panels of contrasting shapes decorated with scenes from the life of Christ. These were painted by the Lucchese artists Giovanni Coli and Filippo Gherardi. The two were of the school of Pietro da Cortona, having trained in Lucca under Pietro Paolini.

The counterfaçade has two large statues of Luccan saints, St Frigidian (in Italian, *Frediano*) and St Paulinus of Lucca, the two patron saints of Lucca, both by Francesco Baratta the Younger in 1693.

#### Presbyterium

The presbyterium is a square apse, with a little cupola on pendentives. The walls are richly revetted in polychrome marbles, and the cupola and pendentives are frescoed with angels and saints with symbols of the Passion (repeating the scheme for the smaller panels in the nave ceiling). The Veil of Veronica is featured. The high altar has a pair of Corinthian columns with gilded capitals, in a deep pink stone which is allegedly Sicilian jasper. The altarpiece is a large painting of the Volto Santo of Lucca.

On the side walls of the apse are paintings with motifs related to the devotion to the Holy Face, by Francesco Grandi.

#### Chapel of the Holy Spirit

The first chapel on the right is dedicated to the Holy Spirit, and the anonymous 17th century altarpiece depicts *The Holy Spirit Poured Out on the Apostles at Pentecost*.

#### Chapel of St Zita:

The second chapel on the right is dedicated to St Zita, arguably the most famous saint from Lucca and a patron of domestic servants. It is has rich decorations of colored marbles, alabaster and jasper, including a pair of columns in *verde antico*. The altarpiece is an oil painting of St. Zita by Lazarro Baldi, who also executed the fresco work. The marble putti sustaining the cross above the altar are by Lorenzo Ottoni.

The chapel is also known as the *Cappella Fantinelli*, after the original patron.

#### Chapel of the Trinity:

The third chapel on the right is dedicated to the Most Holy Trinity. It also rich in colored marbles and gilding; and its little tabernacle is composed of precious stones. The architect was Simone Costanzi, and the patrons were the Castagnari family.

It has an altarpiece of *Mary Immaculate* by Biagio Puccini. of Lucca. On the right wall is a painting of St Frigidian, son to a king of Ulster in Ireland and Bishop of Lucca in the 6<sup>th</sup> century,

miraculously checking an impetuous flood of the river Auser, now the Serchio, by [Francesco del Tintore](#), and on the left a painting of St [Lawrence Giustiniani](#) by [Domenico Maria Muratori](#).

At the foot of the altar is the tomb of Blessed Mary of Jesus ([Émilie d'Oultremont](#)), founder of the Sisters of Mary Reparatrix, who was beatified on 12 October 1997.

#### Chapel of St Bonaventure:

The first chapel on the left is dedicated to St Bonaventure. The altarpiece reflects the original dedication of this chapel, which was to the Assumption of Our Lady. It depicts *Mary Assumpta, Venerated by SS Francis of Assisi and Jerome*, by the school of Dominichino. On the side walls are depictions of various saints.

#### Chapel of Our Lady, Queen of Heaven

The second chapel on the left is sometimes called the Pantheon of the Lucchesi. The 17th century altarpiece by [Domenichino](#) depicts *The Coronation of the Virgin*.

Several notable persons from Lucca are interred here; the tombs of Alessandro Buttaioni and Stefano Tofanelli are on the right side, and those of Lorenzo Prospero Bottini and Filippo Buonamici are on the left side.

#### Chapel of the Crucifix:

In the third chapel on the left, which is dedicated to the Most Holy Crucifix, is a wooden crucifix and paintings by Giovanni Coli and Filippo Gherardi. The one to the right representing our *Lord mocked by Herod*, and the other to the left, an *Ecce Homo*.

### **Special notes**

Feasts that are celebrated with special solemnity are those of the Holy Cross on 14 September, St Bonaventure on 15 July and Blessed Mary of Jesus on 11 October.

Normally open every day 12.00-13.00; guided tours can be arranged at other times.

**Artists and Architects:**

Biagio [Puccini](#) (1673–1721), Italian painter  
 Domenico Maria [Muratori](#) (1661-1744), Italian painter of the Baroque period  
 Domenico Zampieri, aka [Domenichino](#) (1581-1641), Italian Baroque painter of the Bolognese School, or Carracci School  
 Filippo [Gherardi](#) (1643–1704), Italian painter of the Baroque period.  
 Francesco Baratta the Younger (18<sup>th</sup> Cent), Italian sculptor  
 Francesco del [Tintore](#) (1645-1718), Italian painter of the Baroque period  
 Francesco [Grandi](#) (1831-1891), Italian painter  
 Giovanni [Coli](#) (1636–1691), Italian painter from Lucca, active in the Baroque style  
 Lazzaro [Baldi](#) (1624-1703), Italian painter of the Baroque period  
 Lorenzo [Ottoni](#) (Il Lorenzone) (1658-1736), Italian sculptor  
 Mattia [de Rossi](#) (1637-1695), Italian architect of the Baroque period  
 Simone [Costanzi](#) (18<sup>th</sup> cent), Italian architect  
 Virginio [Vespignani](#) (1808-1882), Italian architect

**Burials:**

Blessed Maria of Jesus (1818-1878)  
 founder of the Sisters of Mary Reparatrix

Giambattista Cardinal [SPADA](#), (1597-1675)  
 Lorenzo Prospero Cardinal [BOTTINI](#), (1737-1818)  
 Buried in his family's tomb

Alessandro Buttaioni  
 Stefano [Tofanelli](#) (1750-1810)  
 <an Italian painter during the Neoclassic period>  
 Filippo [Buonamici](#) (1705-1789)  
 <Italian 18<sup>th</sup> century Italian writer>

**Location:**

Address: 3 Via dei Lucchesi, 00187 Roma

Coordinates: [41°53'58"N 12°29'3"E](#)

**Info:****Contacts**

Telephone: 0039 06 6792017

**Opening times**

Open 12:00-13:00

Closed Saturday

Closed Sunday

**Mass schedule:**

Weekdays: 12:25 (only during the academic year)

**Links:**

[http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/Santa\\_Croce\\_e\\_San\\_Bonaventura\\_dei\\_Lucchesi](http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/Santa_Croce_e_San_Bonaventura_dei_Lucchesi)

<http://www.060608.it/en/cultura-e-svago/luoghi-di-culto-di-interesse-storico-artistico/cattolici/santa-croce-e-san-bonaventura-alla-pilotta.html>

[http://www.info.roma.it/monumenti\\_dettaglio.asp?ID\\_schede=948](http://www.info.roma.it/monumenti_dettaglio.asp?ID_schede=948)

[http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=it&u=http://www.vicariatusurbis.org/%3Fpage\\_id%3D188%26ID%3D726&prev=/search%3Fq%3DSanta%2BCroce%2Be%2BSan%2BBonaventura%2Bdei%2BLucchesi%26start%3D10%26sa%3DN%26hl%3Den%26biw%3D1225%26bih%3D985](http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=it&u=http://www.vicariatusurbis.org/%3Fpage_id%3D188%26ID%3D726&prev=/search%3Fq%3DSanta%2BCroce%2Be%2BSan%2BBonaventura%2Bdei%2BLucchesi%26start%3D10%26sa%3DN%26hl%3Den%26biw%3D1225%26bih%3D985)

[http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=it&u=http://fe.fondazionezeri.unibo.it/catalogo/ricerca.jsp%3Fdecorator%3Dlayout%26apply%3Dtrue%26percorso\\_ricerca%3DOA%26tipo\\_ricerca%3Danzata%26mod\\_LDCN\\_OA%3Desatto%26LDCN\\_OA%3DChiesa%2Bdi%2BS.%2BCroce%2Be%2BS.%2BBonaventura%2Bdei%2BLucchesi%26componi\\_OA%3DAND%26ordine\\_OA%3Drilevanza&prev=/search%3Fq%3DSanta%2BCroce%2Be%2BSan%2BBonaventura%2Bdei%2BLucchesi%26start%3D10%26sa%3DN%26hl%3Den%26biw%3D1225%26bih%3D985](http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=it&u=http://fe.fondazionezeri.unibo.it/catalogo/ricerca.jsp%3Fdecorator%3Dlayout%26apply%3Dtrue%26percorso_ricerca%3DOA%26tipo_ricerca%3Danzata%26mod_LDCN_OA%3Desatto%26LDCN_OA%3DChiesa%2Bdi%2BS.%2BCroce%2Be%2BS.%2BBonaventura%2Bdei%2BLucchesi%26componi_OA%3DAND%26ordine_OA%3Drilevanza&prev=/search%3Fq%3DSanta%2BCroce%2Be%2BSan%2BBonaventura%2Bdei%2BLucchesi%26start%3D10%26sa%3DN%26hl%3Den%26biw%3D1225%26bih%3D985)

[http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=it&u=http://www.romaspqr.it/roma/CHIESE/Altre\\_Chiese/ss\\_croce\\_e\\_bonaventura\\_pilotta.htm&prev=/search%3Fq%3DSanta%2BCroce%2Be%2BSan%2BBonaventura%2Bdei%2BLucchesi%26start%3D20%26sa%3DN%26hl%3Den%26biw%3D1225%26bih%3D985](http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=it&u=http://www.romaspqr.it/roma/CHIESE/Altre_Chiese/ss_croce_e_bonaventura_pilotta.htm&prev=/search%3Fq%3DSanta%2BCroce%2Be%2BSan%2BBonaventura%2Bdei%2BLucchesi%26start%3D20%26sa%3DN%26hl%3Den%26biw%3D1225%26bih%3D985)

[http://www.romeartlover.it/Vasi193.htm#SS.Croce\\_dei\\_Lucchesi](http://www.romeartlover.it/Vasi193.htm#SS.Croce_dei_Lucchesi)

**REFs:**

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

Dunn, Marilyn; "Two Early Documented Works by Francesco Baratta the Younger"; *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 133, No. 1055 (Feb., 1991), pp. 91-94