

## Santa Maria dell'Umiltà



**Santa Maria dell'Umiltà** is a church in Rome dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

### History

Francesca Baglioni Orsini was a woman well known for her piety and learning. She was the daughter of Catharina de Medici and niece of Pope Clement VII, and widow of Francesco Orsini of Monterotondo. In 1599 she decided to dedicate all she possessed toward building a convent, which would house thirty nuns and six converse. She bought the property next to her house at the foot of the Quirinal Hill, and on March 7, 1601, Francesca, with her own hand, placed the foundation stone of the Dominican convent of S. Maria dell'Umiltà, a title chosen because of her great devotion to the virtue of humility. She also built the convent church and furnished it with fine cloths and silver vessels, but her own humility prompted her to forbid any appearance of her coat of arms to mark her generosity. The architect was Paolo Marucelli.

In 1613 the convent was finished and she consigned it to the Dominican General, Serafino Sicco of Pavia. The convent was originally intended to Roman noblewomen fallen into poverty, but that eventually became one of the most exclusive convents of the city, and came to embrace the entire block. Francesca lived a most devout life in her convent, revered as a model by the nuns, although she did not take the veil. Surrounded by her companions, she died there in 1626.

The community was founded on the Rule of St. Francis of Sales. Pope Paul V sent three monks from the monastery Santa Maria Maddalena on the Quirinal to introduce the community to Dominican precepts.

Between 1641 and 1646 the church was rebuilt by the architect Paolo Marucelli. In 1680 Carlo Fontana redesigned the façade.

In 1853, the convent complex was given to the North American College, which is still there, by Pope Pius IX. The entire monastic complex was then completely renovated by architect Andrea Busiris Vici, the church was incorporated into the front of the building on the street. The late Baroque pediment was replaced with a triangular pediment, and over the entrance door there was a placed of relief the *Assumption* by Vincenzo Felici.

## Exterior

The façade was designed by Carlo Fontana in 1680, on orders from Pope Innocent XI. It was somewhat modified in 1853, but remains more or less as it was in the 17th century. Above the entrance is a bas-relief by Vincenzo Felici.

## Interior

The interior of the church has a single nave.

The Baroque marble and stucco decorations are by Carlo Fontana, made in 1710, and were paid for by a nun from a wealthy family. The interior was completed by Alessandro Dori in 1737.

In the ceiling is a painting of the *Assumption of the Virgin Mary* by Michelangelo Cerruti, painted 1726.

There are sculptures by Antonio Raggi in the niches along the sides.

The largest chapel was designed by Martino Longhi the Younger in 1640-1646, and has stucco bas-reliefs of *St Mary Magdalena* and *St Catherine of Alexandria* by Francesco Cavallini.

At the second altar on the left is a depiction of *St Michael the Archangel* by Francesco Allegrini.

The organ is one of the most beautiful in Rome.

## Special notes

The church is always closed to the general public. It is possible to arrange a visit through the North American College.

**Artists and Architects:**

Alessandro Dori

Andrea [Busiris Vici](#) (1817-1911), architect

Carlo [Fontana](#) (d. 1714), Italian architect of the Late Baroque period

Ercole Antonio [Raggi](#) (1624-1686), Italian sculptor of the Baroque

Francesco Allegrini da Cantiano (16<sup>th</sup> cent), Italian painter

Francesco Cavallini (17<sup>th</sup> cent), Italian sculptor

Martino [Longhi](#) the Younger (1602–1660), Italian architect of the Baroque period

Michelangelo [Cerruti](#) (1663-1749), Italian painter of the Baroque period

Paolo Marucelli, architect

Vincenzo Felici, sculptor

**Location:**

Address: 30 Via dell'Umiltà, 00187 Roma

Coord: [41° 53' 59.2" N, 12° 29' 1" E](#)

Phone #: 06 67 89 184 / 06 69 00 11

**Links:**

[http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/Santa\\_Maria\\_dell%27Umilt%C3%A0](http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/Santa_Maria_dell%27Umilt%C3%A0)

[http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=it&u=http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiesa\\_di\\_Santa\\_Maria\\_dell'Umilt%25C3%25A0\\_\(Roma\)](http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=it&u=http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiesa_di_Santa_Maria_dell'Umilt%25C3%25A0_(Roma))

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**Refs:**

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

Valone, Carolyn; “**Women on the Quirinal Hill: Patronage in Rome, 1560-1630**“; *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 76, No. 1 (Mar., 1994), pp. 129-146