

# Santi Martino e Sebastiano degli Svizzeri



The **church of San Martino and San Sebastian for the Swiss** in the Vatican City in Largo San Martino.

## History

SS. Martino e Sebastiano degli Svizzeri was built by Pope Pius V in 1568 to serve as chapel for the Swiss Guards, whose patron saints are Martin and Sebastian. The architect was Nanni di Baccio Bigio. The interior was frescoed by Giulio Mazzoni.

The barracks of the Swiss Guard is located nearby. The exterior is visible from the colonnade. The church is located on a small triangular piazza sandwiched between the colonnade and the wall of the Palazzo Apostolico, which here is part of the original wall of the Leonine City.

Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) ordered a restoration of the church. The exterior received a general cleaning and painting and the insertion of brightly colored stained glass in the windows. In the inside a wooden loft was built on the entry wall to help solve the space problem.

In 1967 still another renovation of the church was begun. The exterior was more or less simply renewed, but the interior was handled more radically in the attempt to give the Swiss more space. All the Pius XI additions and decorations were destroyed, and the entire left wall, except for narrow strips at the ends, was ripped out. The old sacristy and living space above it, previously hidden by this wall, were then converted into a wing of the church, a wing that is raised a step above the nave and is covered by new groined vaults that replace the former flat ceiling. With these changes the church has become more useful to the Swiss, but of course the original character of the space has been totally lost.

## Interior

All of the fresco of the church are now gone and the present decorations are the work of Gino Giannetti in 1999.

The entrance now leads into the church with the sanctuary on the right. Over the entrance is a new choir gallery with a bronze balustrade. The original sanctuary apse straight ahead, now occupying the left hand side wall of the church, contains the organ.

The nave roof is a so-called pavilion vault, which is a cross-vault with the sectors coved (concave). The decorative scheme of the ceiling and walls is very simple, in white and a faint pink respectively.

The new altar is simple, in Carrara marble. The tabernacle is in the form of a sun with rays, accompanied by a pair of adoring angels looking down from above. Over these is a large crucifix. These works are in bronze, and the set includes a ciborium and monstrance. Together with the choir balustrade and the bronze door to the separate baptistry.

The above-mentioned door is to the left, opposite the sanctuary, and next to it is a stained glass window containing the *Stations of the Cross* designed by Trento Longaretti. Two other windows are also by him, depicting *The Annunciation* and *Pentecost*.

### **Artists and Architects:**

[Nanni di Baccio Bigio](#) aka Giovanni Lippi (d. 1568), Italian architect

Gino [Giannetti](#) (b. 1951), sculptor

Trento [Longaretti](#) (1916-2017), Italian painter

### **Location:**

Coord: [41° 54' 12.1" N, 12° 27' 24.2"E](#)

### **Links:**

[Roman Churches Wiki](#)

[Entry in Italiana Wikipedia](#) (translated)

[from Romeartlover web site](#)

[Artical from Vatican News Service](#) (translated)

### **References:**

(a) Lewine, Milton J; Article: Nanni, Vignola, and S. Martino degli Svizzeri in Rome: 1969

(b) Lewine, Milton J; THE ROMAN CHURCH INTERIOR, 1527-1580; 1960