



# JUBILEE CHURCHES

Church of San Paolo  
alla Regola





DICASTERY FOR EVANGELIZATION

SECTION FOR FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS  
REGARDING EVANGELIZATION IN THE WORLD



MINISTERO  
DEL TURISMO  
REPUBBLICA ITALIANA

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Jubilee journeys

## Church of San Paolo alla Regola

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Section for Fundamental Questions  
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## 4 themed routes to follow

The Jubilee is a great event for all peoples during which each and every pilgrim can immerse themselves in the endless mercy of God.

It's the Year of return to the essence of fraternity, mending the relationship between ourselves and the Father.

It's the Year that calls us to conversion, an opportunity to take stock of our lives and ask the Lord to direct them towards holiness. It's the Year of solidarity, of hope, of justice, and of commitment to the service of God, living in joy and peace with our brothers and sisters.

But, above all, the Jubilee year has at its center the encounter with Christ.

For this reason, the Jubilee asks us to get moving and to overcome the confines in our lives. When we move we don't just change place physically, but we transform ourselves too. For this reason, it's important to prepare well, to plan the route and



have a clear sight of our destination. In a sense the Holy Year pilgrimage begins before the journey itself: its starting point is the decision to do set out on the path.

To fully experience the 2025 Jubilee, through walking and prayer, four routes have been prepared for pilgrims within the city of Rome, each with its own theme.

### Europe in Rome

The Pilgrim Path of the Churches of the European Union, includes visits to 28 churches and basilicas, historically linked to EU member countries for cultural or artistic reasons or because they served as places of welcome for pilgrims from individual member states of the European community.

### Pilgrimage of the Seven Churches

Originally the idea of Saint Philip Neri in the 16th century, the pilgrimage of the Seven Churches is one of the most ancient Roman traditions. It's a 25 km route winding through the streets of Rome.

### Jubilee Churches

This is one of the churches designated as a meeting place for pilgrims. Catecheses will be held in these churches in different languages to rediscover the meaning of the Holy Year. They will also offer the sacrament of Reconciliation and host events aimed at nourishing the faith with experiences of prayer.

### Women Patrons of Europe and Doctors of the Church

This is a pilgrimage that involves stopping in prayer in those Roman Churches linked to Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein), Saint Brigid of Sweden, Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus, and Saint Hildegard of Bingen.

# The Church of San Paolo alla Regola

The ancient church of *San Paolo alla Regola* welcomes us with its harmonious baroque façade (**fig.1**) created by Giacomo Cioli and Giuseppe Sardi. Its lively rhythm of concave and convex lines reminds the visitor almost of a living being, and seems to replicate the movements of the waves in the nearby Tiber.

Indeed it is the river which gives the church its title: the word '*regola*' is a pop-

ularized version of the word '*arenula*', a soft sand that the Tiber deposits on its banks during floods. We have confirmation of this in a document from 1186, in which Pope Urban III calls the church *Sanctus Paulus de Arenula*.

The current complex is clearly Baroque. The architect Giovanni Battista Bergonzoni, towards the end of the 17th century, reorganized the previous structures on this site where, according to tradition, Saint Paul himself preached the Gospel. The apostle, as was his custom, ad-

ressed himself first of all to Jewish listeners, and, in fact, this area lies close to what would later become the Jewish Ghetto, and was inhabited - or in any case frequented - since early times, by Jewish people. Paul, although condemned to a form of house arrest in Rome, "spent two whole years in the house he had rented and welcomed all those who came to him, announcing the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, with all frankness and without hindrance." This is what the last page of the Acts of the Apostles tells us (Acts 28, 30-31).

An authoritative tradition indicates that this is the place (or one of the places) where all this happened. Here lies the "house"

where Paul lived and from where he perhaps sent some of his letters. During the Middle Ages the entire area was called *Contrata Pauli*. Indeed the great apostle appears in a medallion (**fig.2**) and the related inscription refers to him: GENTIUM DOCTORI DIVO PAULO COLLEGIUM SICULUM TER. ORDER S. FRANCISCI (To St Paul, Teacher of the Gentiles, from the Sicilian College of the Third Order of St Francis).

In 1619, due to the efforts of King Philip IV of Spain, the care of the church was



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fig.2

entrusted to the Franciscans from Sicily, who took it over from the Augustinians. Recent archaeological excavations have brought to light the different stratifications of the ancient and medieval environments, between the 1st and 13th centuries, and reveal the construction of a church dedicated to St Cesareo, according to a plaque from 1096 with a list of relics now walled up next to the main altar. The interior of the church (fig.3-4) is structured in the shape of a Greek cross,

that is, with the four arms of equal size, surmounted by a dome. In the resultant corners there are four chapels.

The first chapel on the right is dedicated to Saint Rosalia. The saint, an Augustinian nun and patroness of Palermo, somehow acts as a bridge between the followers of Saint Augustine and the new management of the complex by the Sicilian Franciscans. Cristoforo Creo painted the altarpiece. In the fading space of a

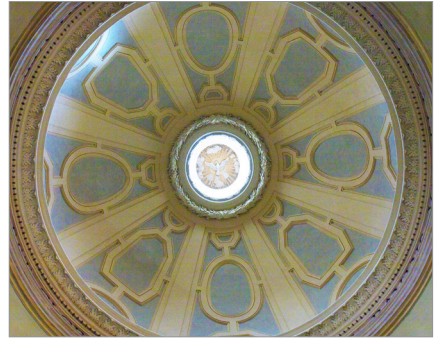


fig.4



fig.3

golden and luminous cloud, three saints are depicted in different poses: Saint Clare turns her gaze to the observer; Saint Rosa is deep in meditation; while Saint Rosalia, holding a pilgrim's staff, contemplates the Virgin Mary and the baby Jesus. At her feet lie a scepter and crown, signs of her royal origins. In the same chapel can be seen the *Martyrdom of Saint Erasmus* by Biagio Puccini: the scene is 'forced' inside an oval frame which is unable to contain the energy of the lines and colors that define the martyrdom of the saint, while little angels from above offer him the palm branch and a wreath of flowers in a violent swirl of strokes of light.

The chapel of St Francis follows. The canvas, which depicts the stigmatization of the saint, is by Michele Rocca known as Parmigianino, signed and dated 1695. The angels support Francis in the stigmata – the grandiose and terrible experience of participation in the wounds of Christ.

The next altar is dedicated to the Crucifixion. Another oval by Puccini can be seen, this time showing *Saint Bonaventure and Saint Thomas Aquinas*. While Bonaventura is writing, his body rises from the armchair with

the pen still in his hand as he seems to be drawn into an intense ecstasy by the angels. The celestial messengers hold his symbols, the crozier and the cardinal's hat. Behind him Thomas seems to be opening a door. (Opening a door into mystery and immersing oneself in that mystery itself is the ultimate meaning of theology). Behind Thomas, finally, there



fig.5

is Saint Augustine, the great master to whom all thinkers, especially philosophers and theologians, have looked and continue to look.

The Oratory of Saint Paul, (**fig.5**) "DIVI PAULI APOSTOLI HOSPITIUM ET SCHOLA", which may correspond to the previously mentioned 'house' of Paul, was designed by Antonio Muñoz in 1931. The 20th-century mosaic by Eugenio Cisterna shows the apostle in chains. Inscriptions - with passages from his letters - remind us that from this place he addressed the proclamation of the Gospel to the whole world: "I suffer to the point of wearing

scenes from the life of Saint Paul. From the left, his *Preaching*, in the center his *Conversion* and, finally, his *Decapitation* which took place in Rome on the road to Ostia during the persecution of Nero (64-66 AD). In the first scene Paul is standing, with the book of the Word of God in one hand and the other pointing towards the sky; behind him a small temple and the pyramids can be seen, characterizing the pagan and syncretistic environment of



fig.6

chains like a criminal. But the Word of God cannot be chained" (cf II Tim 2, 9).

In the sanctuary area we note the high altar rich in polychrome marble, an organ from 1763, the tabernacle for holy oils dating from 1535, and the walnut choir stalls. The apse (**fig.6**), frescoed by Luigi Garzi, is surely the visual summit of the pictorial decoration of this building, with its

Rome at the time. The audience is made up of humble people, caught in different poses. A runaway horse diagonally cuts across the second scene, which shows the guards caught by complete surprise, while Jesus, against whom the soldiers' spears can do nothing, bursts in from above and covers Paul with the cloud of his presence. In the episode of



fig.7



fig.8

martyrdom, the sword blow of the Roman soldier is at the center of the composition, balanced by the figures of two other soldiers controlling the crowd which had gathered. Among them stands a particularly distressed woman, bathed in light. This may be Plautilla, a Roman matron who, according to tradition, witnessed the beheading. The writing at the top, in the center, echoes a phrase from the Gospel according to John (12, 24) “[The seed] falling to the ground produces much fruit”, which summarizes Paul’s entire journey: the seed of his word, the seed of his conversion, and the seed of his blood.

The sacristy is frescoed by Ignazio Stern. On the outside door, a further painting by Biagio Puccini can be seen: *Mary offering the Child to Saint Clare*. The next chapel is dedicated to the *Madonna delle Grazie* (Our Lady of Graces, fig.7). The fresco of Mary breastfeeding the Child dates back to the beginning of the 15th century. Symbolically all of us can see ourselves in the scene of that Son, who receives the milk of grace from Mary.

The chapel of Saint Anne features an altar with spiral columns and an alabaster frontal, while on the tympanum flies the dove of the Holy Spirit and angels scatter roses. The canvas (fig.8), by Giacinto Calandrucci, is a balanced composition that accentuates the sense of familiarity with which the Child willingly goes to his grandmother’s arms, while the little Saint John at the bottom right is waiting with his little lamb to be able to an-



nounce Christ to the world. Behind Mary, in the same visual area as the child John, a character appears with the cross: it could be St Lawrence or, in any case, a witness to that Paschal mystery which had been taking shape in the life of the Savior since his childhood. The elderly Joachim is shown reading, studying to understand the Word of God, and Saint Joseph is pictured enraptured in contemplation. Above the Eternal Father blesses and protects the earthly family of his Son. On the vault is the powerful image of *Saint Anne in glory* (fig.9), a work by Salvatore Monosilio.

Giacinto Calandrucci, the artist of the painting above the altar, also worked in the chapel of St Anthony of Padua while the *Miracle of the Foot* is by Giacomo Diol. In this painting he Franciscan saint reattaches the foot of a young man who had cut off his own foot to punish himself for kicking his mother. This is interpreted as a sign of that journey, following the Redeemer, which we are all called to undertake, and here depicted by an anonymous painter. The message is one of lifting ourselves up and starting again if our steps get lost in the dark and inconclusive paths of sin.



fig.9