



JUBILEE CHURCHES

Church of
Santa Maria Addolorata





DICASTERY FOR EVANGELIZATION
SECTION FOR FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS
REGARDING EVANGELIZATION IN THE WORLD



MINISTERO
DEL TURISMO
REPUBBLICA ITALIANA

JUBILEE CHURCHES

Jubilee journeys

Church of Santa Maria Addolorata

©Dicastery of Evangelization
Section for Fundamental Questions
regarding Evangelization in the World

00120 Vatican City

Texts edited by Mons. Vincenzo Francia
All rights reserved

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 Santa Maria Addolorata

Built right next to Rome's **Coppedè district**, which is famous for the almost fairy-tale atmosphere of its Art Nouveau (or Liberty) style buildings (fig.1), the



fig.1

Church of Santa Maria Addolorata in Piazza Buenos Aires partly reproduces this style, with its evocative history.

The church is a very expressive and effective example of the *neo-Romanesque* style, which was in vogue between the end of the 19th century and the start of the 20th century. It is a style which, inspired by the early Christian and Byzantine era, is characterized by a systematic use of round arches, marble and rich, symbolic mosaic decoration.

It was in those years of the early twentieth century that Father José León Gallardo began the construction of the building. 'Don Gallardo', as he was known, was

born in Buenos Aires in 1871, and had been entrusted with the pastoral care of the Salario district of Rome. After purchasing the land, in 1910 he laid the first stone of the church which was completed in 1930. In the meantime, Pope Benedict XV had granted it the title of "Argentine National Church". The architect of the building was Giuseppe Astorri.

On the left stands the four cornered *bell tower* which rises to seven levels interspersed by double and triple lancet windows.

The *façade* (fig.2) is divided into a *pronaos* with columns and arches and an upper decorative area. It is enhanced with mosaics, the work of Giovanni Battista Conti dating back to 1914, which recall the rhythms and subjects of medieval art.

At the top, we see the depiction of the *Paschal Lamb* reposing on a book closed



fig.2

by seven precious seals, flanked by the allegorical figures of the four Evangelists, while below twelve sheep graze in the garden of paradise. These are symbols drawn in particular from the Book of the *Apocalypse* and offer an image of hope which has universal significance: "You are worthy to take the book and to open its seals, because you were slain and you redeemed for God, with your blood, men of every tribe and language and people and nation" (*Rev 5, 9*). It is lovely to think that this was the first South American national church in Rome.

The splendor of the high level mosaic is echoed in the area over the arches below, where, in a festive play of spirals, two peacocks appear – alluding to immortality – quenching their thirst at an amphora on which the cross is depicted in triumph, between the Greek letters *MP* and *ΘY* (*Meter Theou* = Mother of God). Thus, the role of the Virgin Mary alongside her redeeming Son is immediately highlighted.

The atrium through which we enter displays a mosaic of the *Argentine flag*, once again highlighting this character of a national community rooted in its history but open to the world, as reiterat-

ed in the *plaque* placed here in 1983 on the left-hand wall, in memory of the founder Don Gallardo. Next to the plaque, there is a small bronze image of the Virgin Mary by José A. Benaservas, while various coats of arms and plaques are also displayed which



fig.3

recall important events which have occurred over the years.

The interior (fig.3) consists of a worship space divided into three naves by splen-

did, fluted marble columns with Ionic capitals.

The central nave, with a trussed roof, is sur-



fig.4

mounted by a **gallery (fig.4)** with Corinthian columns, and this, in turn, is decorated with balustrades imitating the medieval form.

The side aisles are covered with richly decorated wooden panels and are further brightened by marble inlays along the walls. Geometric figures and antique ornamental designs recur on the floors, frames, secondary altars, and elegant furnishings.

The right nave, after the staircase leading to the gallery and the organ, opens into the *Chapel of Nostra Signora della Mercede* (Our Lady of Mercy), the Virgin Mary as liberator of slaves (**fig.5**).

An enchanting mosaic, created in the 1970s by the Italian Mosaic School of Montepulciano, depicts Mary with the

Child Jesus appearing on the clouds of heaven, in a blaze of divine glory symbolized by the color gold and triumphant over the uncertainties of history which are represented by the crescent moon under her feet. Mary, dressed in a golden tunic and covered by a blue cloak, together with her Son, offers believers the coat of arms of the Mercedarians, a religious order founded in 1218 by Saint Peter Nolasco with the aim of freeing slaves. This coat of arms appears often in this church (for example, it can be seen on the pews) because for a period the building was administered by the Mercedarians, who brought it to completion after the premature death of Don Gallardo. In the same chapel five small statues act as a 'crown' around the Virgin *Redemptrix Captivorum*: these are the images of Saint Rita of Cascia, Saint Joseph and Saint Anthony of Padua - all universally known figures, and Saint José Gabriel del Rosario and Saint Maria Antonia de San José (known as Mama Antula), figures particu-



fig.5

larly committed to the evangelization and development of the Argentine people. The *altar* once again imitates styles from antiquity and is enriched with panels with figures of Saints.

Next, we encounter a *bronze medallion* dedicated to Saint Raymond Nonnato, who also belonged to the Mercedarian order. This commemorative medallion matches another with the image of the order's founder, Saint Peter Nolasco, on the wall of the left nave.

The chapel in the lateral apse offers the visitor an image of the *Heart of Jesus* inspired by a famous painting by Diego Velazquez.

The sanctuary area is imposing (fig.6), with its richly carved marble altar rails, a *lectern* by Duilio Cambellotti and an *ambo*. A solemn *canopy* supported by four granite columns with bronze capitals covers the *high altar* in golden onyx. On the altar front a Byzantine image reproduces the traditional scene of the *déesis*, (the prayer of intercession that the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist address to Jesus).

The apse stands out from the entire structure of the church, and it is here that the scene of the *Pietà* is depicted. Against the backdrop of city walls, Mary holds the body of Jesus taken down from the cross and placed into her lap. The work is beautifully balanced and harmonic - not only between the vertical and horizontal lines, but also between the simplicity of the expression and the richness of the details, between monumen-

tal classicism and poetic feeling. Mary is captured in her eternal reality, in an absolute and timeless beauty. On her beautiful face there is no wrinkle or tear, just as the body of Jesus does not show the signs of the terrible suffering endured but only a slight hint of the wounds undergone. The whole drama is internal. Seen from the front, Mary appears thoughtful, absorbed in the contemplation of the divine



fig.6

plan that gives salvation to the world, but which remains unfathomable in its mysterious depth. Her arms are open to share in this plan and to intercede for humanity. Angels accompany the Virgin Mary and Jesus, creating a protective halo around them, while four of them bear the symbols of the Passion: starting from the left, the scroll with the condemnation

pronounced by Pilate, the nails and the soldier's spear, the column of the flagellation, and the crown of thorns. In the background can be seen the glorious cross which, with its light, illuminates the



fig.7

entire scene. The angels pay homage to the Cross from above, holding the palm of martyrdom and the crown of glory. Below, a phrase from the famous prayer of the *Stabat Mater* sums up the meaning of the participation of each of us in the sacrifice of Christ, which continues to be offered on the altar and in the life of the world, and in the sentiments of the immaculate heart of Mary: "Oh Mother, source of love, let me feel the strength of your pain so that I can weep with you".

In the upper part of the apse, Christ in Glory is revealed above the clouds of

heaven, blessed by the hand of God the Father from above, indicating Him as the Son to be listened to. Jesus, dressed in the white tunic of the high priest and covered by the red cloak of royalty, raises his right hand in the act of speaking and with his left holds the scroll of his teaching. Next to him, in an act of adoration and supplication, the two Mercedarian saints, Peter Nolasco and Raymond Nonnato ...the former, to the right of Jesus, holds the book of the rule of the order he founded; the latter, to the left, holds the consecrated Host in his hand, while at his feet is the cardinal's hat, (Nonnato having been elevated to the cardinalate). The scene is completed with a group of slaves who cry out for freedom and, on the other side, a family of humble people. Two angels hold the coat of arms of Argentina and that of the Mercedarian Order. These apse mosaics were executed by Marco Tullio Monticelli based on drawings by Giovanni Battista Conti.

The next chapel is the *Blessed Sacrament Chapel* which is soberly decorated. Particularly beautiful is the *relief* of two eagles and the cross rising from an amphora, while in the altar frontal two deer quench their thirst at the waters that flow from the cross. On the left, a small case for the holy oils can be seen.

The cross is also the protagonist of the *sculptural group* (fig.7) we encounter in the left nave: Jesus hanging from the cross is supported by the physical, spiritual, and psychological closeness of Mary.

Heading towards the exit, we cannot fail to notice the harmonious and solemn *counter-façade* (fig.8), in the center of which is the beautiful pipe organ dating from 1920. On the right is the *Chapel of Our Lady of*

thanks to the commitment of his brother Ángel and the Mercedarian Fathers.

The church of Santa Maria Addolorata, a flower of the Argentine nation, is a real hymn to liberation.



fig.8

Luján (fig.9). The Patroness of Argentina is surrounded by flags and coats of arms of the various provinces of that nation, together with the mortal remains of Don José León Gallardo, transferred here in 1964 from Genoa, as the plaque on the floor recalls. It was in the Ligurian capital, that the holy founder of this church passed away in 1924, but his work was to continue



fig.9

May the journey of the Jubilee teach us to share Mary's tears and to dry them every time we see them appear in the eyes of our brothers and sisters. She continues to exercise her role of motherhood and example, so that every pain opens up to life and hope ... a Good Friday that announces and prepares for Easter morning.