



JUBILEE CHURCHES

Church of Spirito Santo
dei Napoletani





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



MINISTERO
DEL TURISMO
REPUBBLICA ITALIANA

JUBILEE CHURCHES

Jubilee journeys

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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 Spirito Santo dei Napoletani

The façade (fig.1) of this church, which the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies considered to be its reference point in the city of Rome, appears very sober. It has a cle-



fig. 1

arly neoclassical design, with its tympanum rising high above a façade divided into two sections and articulated by pilasters and some very sober decorative elements. On the portal is the scene of the *Adoration of the Holy Spirit by Angels*, frescoed by Pietro Gagliardi in the years 1880-1890, while in the stained glasswork of Oscar Guarnieri in the central window, framed between four Bourbon lilies, the dove of the Holy Spirit is prominently represented. The building of the church started in 1574 and it was opened in 1619. Initially this place of worship was dedicated to Santa Aura of Ostia, a martyr from the early centuries of Christianity, as the name of the little street in front of the church reminds us. Then it was given a

different patron, Saint Eusterius. It was only in the second half of the 16th century that a Confraternity of Neapolitans who were resident in Rome took charge of it, and since the Confraternity was dedicated to the Holy Spirit, it was given its current title. Famous architects have worked here, such as Domenico Fontana and Ottaviano Mascherino, and in later centuries, Carlo Fontana and Antonio Cipolla. In 1853 the latter created the current façade, far removed from Renaissance and Baroque models, and he subsequently carried out significant works inside the church too. As recently as the last decades of the 20th century, architects and engineers carried out substantial restoration work in the church.

The term “of the Two Sicilies”, although found in various documents dating back to the Middle Ages, only became officialised in 1816 to designate the vast swathe of Italian territory that extends to the south of Rome. In that year, after the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte, King Ferdinand IV of Bourbon was able to rebuild the state infrastructure which had been shattered by the Napoleonic experience. It was thus decided that this area, once known as the Kingdom of Sicily, and then the Kingdom of Naples, should be called the ‘Kingdom of the Two Sicilies’, the sense being that there was a Sicily beyond the Strait of

Messina (the island we know today) and a Sicily on the Italian mainland (the regions which now correspond to Calabria, Puglia, Basilicata, Campania, Molise and Abruzzo). Thus, the king became 'Ferdinand I of the Two Sicilies'. This historical note can also help us in our understanding of this church, which, when in 1861 the kingdom collapsed at the time of the Italian Risorgimento, became a stronghold of the Bourbons in exile, and for half a century served as the burial place of the last King, Francis II and his wife Maria Sofia, whose remains were subsequently moved to Naples. Inside, there is a moving plaque commemorating the death of their only child, Maria Cristina, who died when just a few months old (**fig.2**). Entering the church (**fig.3**) the colors of

the marble, the play of light, the clear framing, all combine to create an atmosphere of cordial welcome in the single nave structure. On the triumphal arch we admire the scene of *Pentecost* by Pietro



fig. 2

Gagliardi: in its clear composition we contemplate the Spirit of the Risen Jesus who descends on Mary and the apostles and is then transmitted to the entire Christian community, sent out into the world



fig. 3

to be witnesses of faith and promoters of personal and social renewal. The vault (fig.4) is strikingly beautiful, with the Holy

who preceded us marked with the sign of faith.

In the first chapel we encounter the fu-



fig.4

Spirit standing out in stucco between the coats of arms of the House of Bourbon and of Pope Pius IX, the reigning pontiff at the time of the 19th-century renovations. On the counter-façade, Pietro Pantanella's organ from 1881 stands out. In the center of the floor is a commemorative plaque honoring the Papal Nuncio, Baccaro, who died in 1738.

The side chapels help to define the internal space and accompany us on our journey towards the main altar, inspiring us through prayer and the example of the saints. The memorials of the deceased also contribute to creating a profound bond between us and the generations



fig.5

nerary monument of the Marquis Alfredo Dusmet, in polychrome marble, with a bas-relief by Pietro Canonica depicting *Blessed Giuseppe Benedetto Dusmet assisting the cholera patients of Caltanissetta in 1854*; on the left side is the monument to Edith Dusmet Oliver Orta Shields with the scene of *Blessed Dusmet wearing the veil of Saint Agatha during the eruption of Etna in 1886*. The canvas by Bonaventura Lamberti from 1720 shows *Saint Francis di Paola healing a child*.

This is followed by the *Tomb of Cardinal Giovanni Battista de Luca (fig.5)*, a solemn baroque monument carved by Domenico Guidi, dating from 1683. The deceased, deep in prayer, turns his gaze devoutly towards the altar, accompanied by the virtues of *Fortitude* with the bundle of rods used by magistrates in ancient Rome and of *Truth*, holding the hourglass of time in one hand and the mirror of the sun in the other, while with one foot dominating the world. Two cherubs, at the top, symbolize the sadness of death and the peace of eternity. The plaque praises the deceased, originally from Venosa, and describes the main traits of his personality and work: he was a distinguished jurist, who, among other things, supervised some phases of the construction of the church and left much of his wealth to the poor.

The next altar is dedicated to the *Crucifixion (fig.6)* painted by Pietro Gagliardi. A typical *Neapolitan nativity scene* was recently set up here. In the nave we can

admire a series of stucco reliefs with episodes from the life of Saint Francis di Paola.



fig.6

And thus we arrive at the sanctuary area, where Gagliardi frescoed Saints Ferdinand and Teresa, Cristina and Sofia.

The main altar (**fig.7**), covered in dark and yellow marble, was built to a design by Carlo Fontana in 1719. The flag of the



fig.7

Knights of the Holy Sepulcher testifies to the care that this association currently exercises in serving the church which

is now entrusted to them. On the small dome, in the *Glory of the Holy Trinity* by Giuseppe Passeri from 1707, can be seen the divine dove hovering (**fig.8**) as if at the beginning of creation. The altar, in this way, reminds us that here, on the sacrificial table of the Eucharist, the world is always being renewed. *The four Evangelists* and the *Annunciation* in the apse are also the work of Gagliardi's brush. Here, under the light of Guarnieri's stained glass windows, the tombs of the Bourbon kings were located before their move to Naples in 1984. Their little girl remains, however, to remind us of

the unpredictable ebb and flow of history which sees the birth and death not only of private individuals but also of noble hou-



fig.8

seholds, of kingdoms and structures, of peoples and entire civilizations. On the right-hand side, a *Madonna with Child* in biscuit and embroidered silk from the 18th century testifies to the extraordinary brilliance of Neapolitan craftsmanship. Balancing out the bust of Pius IX is that of Saint Vincent Pallotti, an illustrious son of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

In the area on the left, the chapel dedicated to the patron saint of Naples shows the *Martyrdom of San Gennaro* (St Januarius) in Luca Giordano's extraordinary masterpiece (fig.9). This canvas, from 1705, is the last work of the great artist and presents itself almost as a synthesis of his pictorial style. Dramatic splashes of light, contrasting colors, tormented shapes ... these are the means the master uses to express the dramatic moment of the death of Gennaro, bishop of Benevento, and a victim of Diocletian's persecution. The episode, dating back to the year 305, profoundly marked the life of Naples and the memory of the martyr is important to people of the city to this day, forming an integral part of its history. The

artist invites observers to make a journey from bottom to top along three parallel diagonals: in the lower area a soldier at rest gives a sense of 'normality' to the event, as if it were the most natural thing in the world to kill an innocent man; next

to him, to the right, an uphill line begins, made up of two women and a boy who are horrified and questioning themselves about what is happening; our gaze rises again, towards a soldier busy preventing anyone from disturbing the executioner who, equipped with a sword, is preparing to bring the fatal blow down with force on Gennaro's neck; other decapitated heads



fig.9

have already rolled away on the left hand side, in a flurry of horses and riders that blends in with the rocky landscape. The martyr, dressed in liturgical vestments as if for the most solemn celebration of his life, spreads his arms wide in a sign of his

total willingness to face death because of his faith, while from above an angel hands him the palm of martyrdom, the definitive recognition of his belonging to Christ. The golden light, at the top left, illustrates the triumph of paradise that awaits San Gennaro. Thus from a dark atmosphere the scene culminates in the splendor of divine iridescence.

Framed in a precious dark marble cornice, on which the dove of the Holy Spirit can clearly be seen above while a cherub is visible below, is the next fresco - the *Madonna and Child* by Antoniazio Romano (fig.10), known as the *Madonna del Fulmine* (Our Lady of the flash of lightning), dating back to the last decade of the 15th century. Mary, sitting on a marble throne whose curves are also highlighted, turns her gaze towards the observers below inviting them to enter into communion with her Son, who in turn gives his blessing. Jesus is sitting on a cushion and the Virgin holds him out as if from a windowsill. With her right hand Mary holds the Divine newborn, while with her left she indicates him as the Way, the Truth and the Life. The colors used by the painter are those that are traditionally used to identify the Madonna: the red dress, to indicate her human origin of

flesh and blood, the blue mantle that alludes to the celestial mission with which she was clothed and the white veil of her purity. The nakedness of the Child is the sign of the truth of the incarnation and of his poverty in offering his life for the salvation of the world. Finally, the gold of the halos is the color of divinity: gold, being



fig 10

the most precious material, does not corrupt and reflects light, characteristics which are eminently appropriate for the sphere of the divine. Even the two marble details have a precise meaning: the Holy Spirit, from above, sends down the rays of his grace which will guide the entire life

of the Messiah and his most holy Mother, while below, the cherub, angel of wisdom, indicates to us that in the incarnation of the Word, divine wisdom has reached the summit of its revelation.

Saint Thomas Aquinas among the faithful is the next painting, completed by Domenico Muratori in 1720. The great Dominican saint momentarily leaves the pulpit, which we see at the top right, to immerse himself in the miseries of the people below. The people crowd round the serene figure who blesses them, while on his chest shines the sun of truth for which he was a ti-

reless searcher. The funeral monument of Pietro Corso, found here with the bust of the deceased, dates back to 1680.

Looking back at the whole church we note one last, very recent, work from 2005: the painting by Antonio Nocera which depicts the *Christus patiens* next to the altar, highlighting the suffering of the One whom the prophet Isaiah had called “the man of sorrows” (cf Is 53, 3). By his wounds we have been healed. San Gennaro and the other saints shared the path of the slain Lamb: now, triumphant with him in glory, they accompany our earthly pilgrimage along the same path.