



**FONDAZIONE
INTERNAZIONALE
MENARINI**

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**THE MONUMENTAL COMPLEX
OF
SANTO SPIRITO IN SASSIA
IN ROME**

**NEW TRENDS
IN CARDIOVASCULAR THERAPY**

FEBRUARY 19-21, 2015





A BRIEF HISTORY

Fondazione Internazionale Menarini with the Patronage of the International Society of Cardiovascular Pharmacotherapy organizes the international Symposium *New trends in Cardiovascular Therapy* in the Monumental Complex of Santo Spirito in Sassia in Rome from 19 to February 21, 2015.

The entire structure is considered the most relevant complex of Roman Renaissance buildings. It is bordered by the adjacent Vatican city, Borgo Santo Spirito, via dei Penitenzieri, via di Porta Santo Spirito and the Tiber to the east.

It is part of the quarter Borgo which became the fourteenth historic Roman district between 1585 and 1590. The large area includes also Castel Sant'Angelo, the ancient Mausoleum of Emperor Hadrian, used as Vatican's Archive, museum, and later converted by the popes into their fortress and refuge connected to Vatican by the *Passetto* corridor.

Until 1929 also the Vatican City was part of Borgo when Mussolini, on behalf of the Kingdom of Italy, signed the Lateran Pacts and donated the area to the Holy See of Pope Pio XI.

Borgo takes its name from the Saxon term *Burg* meaning a village located outside Rome. It was so called by the great number of Anglo-Saxon pilgrims, most from Wessex in the south of England, ending here to venerate the holy tomb of the first pope, the Apostle Peter. He was martyred here, at the foot of the Vatican hill, in 64 or 67 A.D. during the first anti Christian persecutions under the reign of Roman emperors Claudius and Nero.



The first Christian emperor, Constantine the Great, built a Basilica over Paul's burial place and legalised Christianity along with all other religions and cults in the Roman Empire issuing the *Edict of Milan* in 313 A.D.

The complex was built on the ruins of the villa of the prominent Roman woman Agrippa Major, mother of Caligula. The numerous remains of the ancient house are today still visible in the basement of the Hospital.

The origin of the complex dates back to the fifth century when Pope Symmacus erected an *Hospitium* for foreign pilgrims, namely an hospitality refuge with the right of accommodation. In 726, arrived on pilgrimage to Rome, Ine, the Saxon king of Wessex, who founded on this ancient hostel the *Schola Saxorum*, to offer aid and assistance to pilgrims from his realm visiting and living next to the tomb of Saint Peter. The *Schola* consisted in several buildings with a *xenodochio* (from Greek *Xenodochêion*: *xénos* 'stranger' and *déchesthai* 'to welcome'), a free hospice for foreigners,



pilgrims and sick and a church entitled to S. Mary with a cemetery.

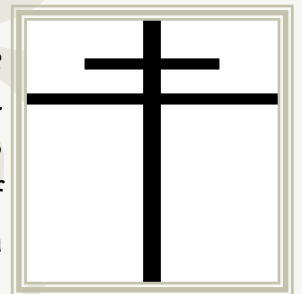
Over the years the hostel fell into abandonment and suffered serious fires and pillage due to historical events and greatly diminishing of pilgrims and donations.

In 1198, Pope Innocent III rebuilt the hospital making it famous and placed the institution under the protection of the French Order of the Holy Spirit and the management of Guy the Montpellier, a Knight Templar from Provence. The Order brought the hospital back to the top and enlarged it with the architectural intervention of Marchionne d'Arezzo. It became the *Arcispedale di Santo Spirito in Sassia* or *Saxia* in memory of the Saxon community once living here. The rules were defined by the *Liber Regulae*, the oldest set of clinical rules that exists.

Over a great many years, the structure was active as hospital to provide care to the infirm, the sick and the needy mostly affected by infectious diseases such as malaria. It also worked as Foundling Hospital for the poor and sick waif and orphaned children fed and cared by wet nurses. It was particularly famous as refuge and orphanage for the large number of abandoned and illegitimate babies called *esposti* or *proietti*. By wish of Pope Innocent III, a *rota proietti* (Lat. *Proiectare* 'to expose'), a baby hatch, was installed in the outside wall of the hospital, similar to the first one built in Marseilles in 1188. It was a revolving cylinder, covered by a grating, with a large hole where the woman could abandon their children in secret instead of killing them. This was probably the oldest foundling wheel in Italy and was permitted until 1923 when the use was abolished.



The complex nuns from the Order of S. Tecla received the foundlings and marked them on the left foot with the two-barred cross, symbol of the Institution of S. Spirito. The babies were then registered as *filius m. ignotae* (child of unknown mother) which produced over the year the Roman insulting expression "*fijo de na mignotta*" (son of a bitch).



The Institution was always subject only to the Pope's authority and therefore it was granted a number of privileges, exemptions and indulgences, so much that during its period of maximum prosperity hosted up to 300 infirm and 1000 patients.

During XIV century, the institution suffered strong decay after the move of the papal residence to Avignon (1309-1377), for the plague of 1348, the



earthquake of 1349 and the lack of donations and economical papal support.

Towards the end of 1400, the Complex knew a period of great architectural, artistic and economic rebirth thanks to Pope Sixtus IV, born della Rovere, general minister of the the Franciscan Order of Friars Minor and famous for renewing the Sistine Chapel. During his pontificate, S. Spirito owned the largest properties in Europe, many buildings in Rome and many farms in the countryside.

In 1471 the Hospital suffered an imposing fire and Sixtus IV called the Florentine architect Baccio Pontelli to rebuilt it between 1474 and 1477 (Baccio Pontelli was the designer of the Cappella Sistina and the painter Perugino portrayed him in the Vatican's fresco *The delivery of the keys*).



On each building many coat of arms of several popes are marked to remind their contribution to the Institution, particularly those of Sixtus IV with the oak tree and the one of S. Spirito Order with the double-barred cross of Lorraine and the dove of the Holy Spirit descending from above.



In XVII and XVIII centuries, other two reconstructions followed and the last was carried out in 1926.

Since 2000 the Monumental Complex has become one of the main congress centres of Rome and it houses conventions, shows and art exhibitions. The Hospital is still in use with newly built facilities on the Lungotevere in Sassia 1, near the ancient buildings.

The new centre was designed by the two architects Gaspare and Luigi Lenzi in 1920-33 and it is part of the Rome public Healthcare Centre (ASL E). It provides emergency cares, hospitalisation with a capacity of 200 beds and many special outpatient services.

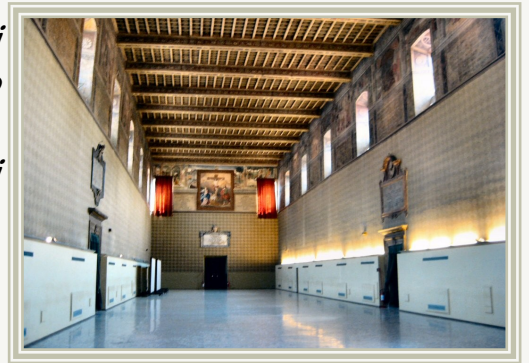




THE BUILDINGS OF THE ANCIENT COMPLEX

CORSIA SISTINA

It is the Sistine Ward, the oldest part of the complex and used as Hospital until the recent eighties. It is 120 metres long, 12 metres large and 13 metres high and divided into a majestic *tiburio* (octagonal tower) and two large halls called *Braccio di Sopra* (Upper wing) and *Braccio di Sotto* (Lower wing). They were renamed in the nineteenth century *sala Lancisi* and *sala Baglivi* in honour of two famous doctors and anatomists working here in XVII and XVIII centuries. Once, the patients laid in canopied beds and were entertained by the sound of a pipe organ performed daily in the ward. Wheeled bed, called *carriole*, were added to the wards when sometimes the number of the hospitalised patients grow up due to the epidemics. From this comes the typical Roman insulting expression “*li mortacci tua e de tu nonno in cariola*” (To your lousy dead ancestors and to your grandfather laying in *cariola*).



The walls of the two wards are finely adorned with a cycle of about fifty frescoes of XV century commemorating the history of the hospital, its rebuilding, the biography of the founder Pope Innocent III and the life and deeds of Pope Sixtus IV della Rovere who restored the complex.

The octagonal tower was the original entrance of the hospital and is decorated with niches containing the twelve statues of the apostles and with two orders of double and triple lancets. The ceiling is covered with wooden decorated panels. A marble altar is installed in the centre, attributed to the Venetian architect Andrea Palladio and carrying inside a painting by Carlo Maratta. One of the two Renaissance marble portals at the side entrance is known as *Portale del Paradiso* (heaven's door) and both were carved out by the Lombard architect and sculptor Andrea Bregno. It is 10 metres high, 5 metres large and was recently restored.



The above shell-shaped lunette is decorated with the coat of arm of Pope Sixtus IV held by two winged cherubs, while in



the two lateral columns appear many symbols connected to the Christian religion, to medicine and ancient curative practices.

MUSEO STORICO NAZIONALE DELL' ARTE SANITARIA

It is the National Historic Museum of Healthcare Art and was inaugurated in 1933 on a former anatomical museum. The museum includes the precious historic-medical collections of Generale Mariano Borgatti, Prof. Giovanni Carbonelli and Prof. Pietro Capparoni, once located in Castel Sant'Angelo. The centre originated with educational purposes of art and history healthcare and



now it is a mausoleum of general medicine including a library and an historical archive. It is divided in nine rooms and houses precious relics of healthcare art as mortars, anatomical-pathological preparations, a collection of waxworks manufactures, ancient obstetrics and gynaecology instruments, two devices for anaesthesia, microscopes, the first stretcher of the Red Cross and the China grinding machine to crush the bark of China tree to produce quinine to treat malaria. Furthermore it also contains a big amount of documents about diseases and pharmaceutical preparations of the past. Interesting are the settings of a typical pharmacy of the past and of an original alchemical laboratory.

ANTICA SPEZIERIA

It is the ancient pharmacy where the friars prepared the medicaments. Located next to Lancisi ward, it was also theatre of many pharmaceutical researches in particular on China tree powder to treat malaria that caused most death and disability. It houses a rare collection of precious herbs and spices jars.





BIBLIOTECA LANCISIANA

It is a rich library founded in 1711 by Dr. Giovanni Maria Lancisi, professor of anatomy and physician to the Pope. It was born within the hospital to encourage the education and updating of the physicians and surgeons, to promote professional confrontation and medical research.



It is considered the most important Italian medical library and it includes 20.000 books and 375 manuscripts from the 16th to 20th centuries. Books of grammar, rhetoric, politic, philosophy, theology, maths, natural history, surgery and legal medicine. It also hosts original scientific instruments as the globes of the monk and cartographer Vincenzo Coronelli, two armillary spheres and a sight.

PALAZZO DEL COMMENDATORE

It was the palace of the director in charge of the Spedale di S. Spirito and called *Commendatore*. It was erected under the pontificate of Pius V from 1566 to 1572 by the architects Nanni di Baccio di Bigio and Ottaviano Nonni called Mascarino. As it was dedicated to the famous Commendatore Bernardino Cirillo it is also known as Palace of Cirillo. It overlooks a courtyard bordered by a double loggia with arches and columns and hosts a big clock counting only six hours, a typical Roman way to measure time during Middle Age. In this way the day was divided in four parts, six hours each. It has the shape of a cardinal's hat and the dial is framed by the figure of a snake touching its own tail, symbol of eternity. A bronze salamander signs the hours. It is surrounded by the ancient coat of arms of the hospital, the double-barred cross with the dove of the Holy Spirit.





CHIESA DI SANTO SPIRITO IN SAXIA

The church of the Holy Spirit Hospital in the Saxon district was originally dedicated to the Virgin Mary and its bell tower of Baccio Pontelli confirms its medieval origin.

It was rebuilt many times and, after the Sack of Rome, architect Antonio da S.Gallo il Giovane restored it between 1538 and 1545 on behalf of Pope Leone IV. Its late Renaissance facade, on two orders, and the big staircase were completed by Ottaviano Mascherino under Pope Sixtus V in 1590.



The interior still houses an icon of the Holy Virgin donated by King Ine, many late Mannerist works and several precious frescoes and stuccos. The polychrome wooden ceiling is a masterpiece of Antonio da Sangallo and is marked with the coat of arm of Pope Paolo III.

The Church is today the centre of the Divine Mercy, officially instituted with a decree, in 1994, by Cardinal Camillo Ruini. Its altar preserves the relics of Saint Pope Giovanni Paolo II in a copy of the chiselled silver ostensory painted by Raffaello in the fresco *La disputa del Sacramento* in the *Stanza della Segnatura* inside the Vatican Palace.





HOW TO REACH THE MONUMENTAL COMPLEX OF S. SPIRITO IN SASSIA IN ROME

From FIUMICINO AIRPORT

Take the bus or the train to reach the central train station *stazione Termini*;
take the underground linea A, stop Ottaviano – S. Pietro.

From CIAMPINO AIRPORT

Take the bus or the train FM4 Ciampino-Roma to reach the central train
station *stazione Termini*;
take the underground linea A, stop Ottaviano – S. Pietro.

By CAR

After leaving the highway, drive into the Ring, called Raccordo Anulare, and
then follow the sign Centro, Aurelia, Città del Vaticano;
drive along the Vatican walls and once in via della Conciliazione turn left into
Borgo S. Spirito after passing Hotel Columbus.
Parking area are available in the nearby Terminal Gianicolo

By UNDERGROUND

Linea A, stop Ottaviano – S. Pietro

By BUS

From the train station *stazione Termini*

- nr. 64, stop in Largo Porta Cavalleggeri ;
- nr. 40, stop in via delle Traspontine.

From piazza Venezia

- nr. 64 and 40, stop Largo Argentina;
- nr. 46, stop Lungotevere in Sassia;
- nr. 571, stop Lungotevere in Sassia;
- nr. 916, stop Lungotevere in Sassia.

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