

To underline the Christian elements of the Pantheon, Pope Boniface began a tradition that was revived in 1995 and continues to this day. It's a spectacular event commemorating Pentecost: a shower of red rose petals is released through the roof during a special Pentecost service.

The square in front of the Pantheon was a meeting place for Renaissance artists, which perhaps explains the decision of one of the most famous of them all, Raphael, to be buried there. He died in 1520, having left instructions that he should be interred at the exact spot where the last ray of sunlight disappears. Other notable graves inside the Pantheon include those of two Italian monarchs: Vittorio Emanuele II and Umberto I.

Most of the altars inside the Pantheon were commissioned by Pope Clement XI in the early eighteenth century; most are adorned with paintings and frescoes, including Melozzo da Forlì's *Annunciation* in the chapel of the same name. Another prominent artwork is also one of the newest: it's an icon of the Madonna created by Genevieve Garnier in 1959, recalling an earlier work commissioned by Pope Boniface for the church's consecration with Mary as Panagia Hodegetria (All Holy Directress).

The marblework on the floor and walls is exquisite; the stones used represent the power of Ancient Rome, with different colours of marble originating from different parts of the empire.

Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**The Lord is truly risen, alleluia.
To him be glory and power
for all the ages of eternity, alleluia, alleluia.**

FIRST READING **Acts 10:34. 37-43**

PSALM **Psalms 117**

RESPONSE **This day was made by the Lord;
we rejoice and are glad.**

Or **Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!**

1. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his love has no end. Let the sons of Israel say: "His love has no end." **R.**
2. The Lord's right hand has triumphed; his right hand raised me up. I shall not die, I shall live and recount his deeds. **R.**
3. The stone which the builders rejected has become the corner stone. This is the work of the Lord, a marvel in our eyes. **R.**

SECOND READING **Colossians 3:1-4**

Or **1 Corinthians 5:6-8**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!
Christ, our passover, has been sacrificed;
let us celebrate the feast then, in the Lord.
Alleluia!**

GOSPEL **John 20:1-9**

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Christ our Passover has been sacrificed,
alleluia;
therefore let us keep the feast with the
unleavened bread
of purity and truth, alleluia, alleluia.**

Next Sunday's Readings:

Acts 4:32-35
1 John 5:1-6
John 20:19-31

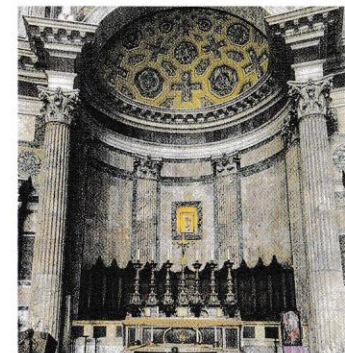


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SUNDAY BULLETIN



A CHURCH FOR AN EMPIRE: THE PANTHEON



It's on almost every tourist's list of must-see monuments: but how many of the tourists who visit the Pantheon realise the place where they're standing is a functioning Catholic Church and that it's been so for 1400 years? One of the most distinctive landmarks of the Eternal City – the wow factor of the Pantheon – is its huge *cupola*. Built almost 2000 years ago, to this day, it's the world's largest unsupported concrete dome and has spawned a whole host of copies – starting with the famous *Duomo* in Florence.

There's often a queue to get into the Pantheon, but that's fine as you can take in its distinctive exterior, on which you'll make out the word "Grippa". It's a reference to the Roman statesman who commissioned the building, which was constructed on the site of an even earlier temple to "all the gods" – hence the name "Pantheon".

Once you're inside, the first thing you'll want to do is simply marvel at the interior, and especially that dome: it's awesome, particularly considering its age. It's a perfect hemisphere, 142 feet in diameter, with a hole, or oculus, at the apex. The oculus works as a huge sundial: the light moves across the interior throughout the day, and at solar noon the light is on the axis of the main door. On 21 April, the anniversary of Rome's foundation, the light creates a circular sunbeam that represents the majesty of the emperor, who would traditionally enter the building on that particular day and time. According to Roman folklore, rain never falls through the Pantheon oculus: but that's a myth, says its rector Mgr Daniele Micheletti. In fact the floor below the aperture is slightly concave to avoid flooding, with a series of drainage holes.

It was in the seventh century that the building was converted from a pagan temple to a Christian church. To guard against its past, Pope Boniface had twenty-eight cartloads of relics of martyrs removed from the catacombs and placed in a burial site below the main altar. The church was consecrated to the Virgin Mary and all the martyrs and named *Santa Maria ad Martyres* (St Mary and the Martyrs). Its status as a church throughout the many centuries since has helped make the Pantheon one of the best-preserved Roman buildings anywhere in the world – some of its marble was removed and taken to the British Museum, but, in general, its interior is intact.

Churches of the Eternal City



Today we start a new series in which Joanna Moorhead takes us on a virtual tour of Rome's churches. We start with the Pantheon: built almost 2000 years ago, its concrete dome is still the largest unsupported structure of its kind in the world.

31 MARCH 2024

EASTER SUNDAY OF THE
RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK I