



1



2

The Restoration of Santa Chiara al Pantheon

The French Papal Seminary in Rome was built on the ancient remains of Agrippa Baths. The 150th anniversary celebrations in 2003 provided the chance to carry out conservation work on the inside of the seminary church, Santa Chiara al Pantheon.

Santa Chiara al Pantheon Church in Rome is part of the French Papal Seminary architectural complex.

This institution was set up in 1852, when the French clergy decided it needed a new seminary in Rome to accommodate French-speaking students, so the following year Father Louis-Marie Barazer de Lannurien was commissioned to find a suitable site.

This was no easy matter, due both to the lack of suitable buildings for this purpose and the large amount of money involved.

A few months later after inspecting numerous sites, Lannurien decided to buy the building hosting the old Irish College in Via degli Ibernesi. The first French students entered the seminary in October 1853. The building soon turned out to be inadequate and Father Lannurien's successor decided to extend the Seminary.

This was around the time when the roof and vaults of Santa Chiara Church had already collapsed. The church stood alongside the old and abandoned Clarisse Convent. The complex had been built on the part of Campo Marzio where Agrippa Baths were once located. Opened in 12 B.C. by Emperor Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa and supplied by the Aqua Virgo aqueduct, they were Rome's first public baths and when Agrippa died they were handed over to the people of Rome.

In the Middle Ages the baths were completely destroyed and the bricks and rubble used to construct other buildings. However, one can still see the remains of the vaults of the old baths in the cellars of the French Seminary.

In 1856 Pope Pius IX finally allowed the Seminary to buy the ground where the church and the convent stood. In 1859 a Papal Bull officially acknowledged the French Seminary and the next pope, Leone XIII, named it a Papal Seminary.

The original building of Clarisse Convent was in a terrible state of disrepair due to damp and neglect, so the old properties were gra-



3 4

*Photo 1.
The outside façade of
Santa Chiara al
Pantheon Church.*

*Photos 2, 3 and 4.
The Mapei-Antique line
was used for restoring
the render around the
base, in order to ensure
the structure was
dehumidified properly.*

*Photo 5.
The drawing shows
what the
neighbourhood
of Santa Chiara al
Pantheon Church used
to look like back in
Roman times; the
highlighted structures
are currently included in
the French Papal
Seminary complex,
which the church
belongs to.*

dually replaced by a unitary architectural complex between 1883-1890, designed in Bramante-style. The church was eventually rebuilt in 1857. Work was completed in November 1861 and the church was consecrated as both Immacolato Cuore di Maria and Santa Chiara in 1881.

Mapei's Work

To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the founding of the French Papal Seminary in 2003, the rector, Father Yves Marie Fradet, and the other brothers decided in conjunction with the Rome Fine Arts Commission to carry out a series of operations required for the structure and wall surfaces of Santa Chiara al Pantheon.

The works were carried out over the period stretching from March 2003 to March of the following year and involved reinforcing the church and restoring the interior coating work. Mapei's Technical Assistance Division was contacted for this part of the work and it carried out a number of inspections to assess the real state of the church interiors.

The technicians suggested starting work by reinforcing the walls as well as the lower

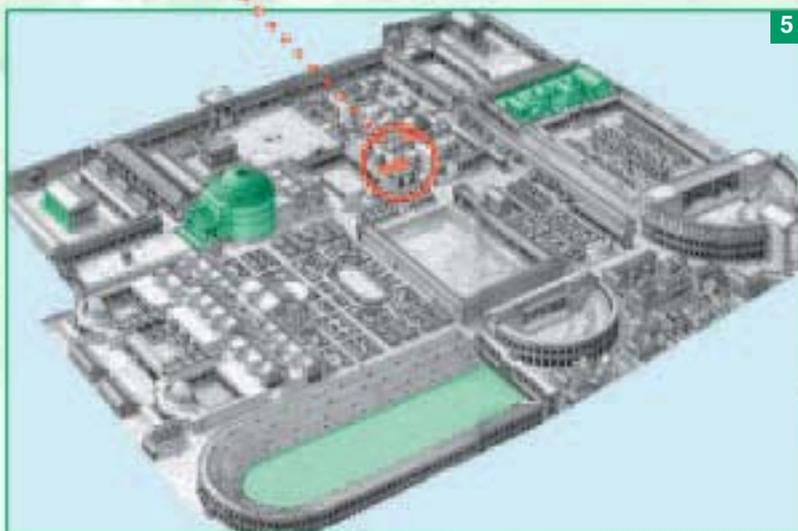
vaults and the floor of the apse.

MAPEGROUT THIXOTROPIC*, a fibre-reinforced cementitious mortar, was used for these operations. This product is a ready-mix mortar composed of high-strength cement binders, graded aggregates, special additives and synthetic fibres specially designed for the cortical repair of damaged concrete structures on either vertical or horizontal surfaces. In this particular instance, a 5 cm layer was applied, reinforced with metallic meshes at the intrados (web size 10x10 cm and diameter of 8 mm).

The Mapei Technical Assistance Division was also consulted about removing the crumbling render and repairing it around the base, where it was advised using products of the MAPEI-ANTIQUE line to ensure the structure was dehumidified properly. In this specific case, MAPEI-ANTIQUE RINZAFFO* salt-resistant pre-packed mortar was used, ideal as first coat in the restoration of damp stone, brick and tuff masonry. After this had been applied, MAPEI-ANTIQUE MC* pre-packed dehumidifying mortar was then applied on, a product especially recommended for the restoration of buildings severely damaged by soluble salts. The work was completed by applying MAPEI-ANTIQUE FC* pre-packed sulphate-resistant fine mortar.

Mapei's Technical Assistance Division also helped with the management of the coating operations. First PLANITOP 560* was applied to ensure a very smooth finishing layer. Then SILEXCOLOR PRIMER*, a modified potassium silicate-based primer, was applied on it. After the primer was completely dry, SILEXCOLOR PAINT*, a silicate-based vapour-permeable protective and decorative paint, was applied to create a particularly attractive look.

The repair work also involved removing and repositioning the floor made of slabs of multi-coloured Carrara marble, installed using traditional techniques: the work was required for installing a new under-floor heating



5



6



7



8

Photos 6, 7 and 8. Mapei products were used for protecting and decorating the old church walls. The surfaces were first treated with Planitop 560 to ensure a very smooth finishing. Silexcolor Primer was then applied. After the wall base was completely dry, a coat of protective, decorative Silexcolor Paint was applied to endow the surfaces with a particularly attractive look.

Photo 9. The repair and conservation work also involved the wall frescoes, which had been damaged by rising damp and ageing.

system fitted with coils. The old washable colours were removed and about 280 m² of nineteenth-century frescoes were restored. The eighteenth-century wooden choir and all the wooden and mechanical parts of the organ designed by Frazat (one of only four of its kind in the whole world) were also repaired. The Mapei products, recommended and then used, were a real success with the Fine Arts Commission and met the client's requirements in every way, despite certain difficulties encountered when carrying out the works, due to the different degrees of absorption of certain walls as regards the colouring.

RM



9

***Mapei Products:** the products referred to in this article belong to the "Building Speciality Line" range. The technical data sheets are available on the "Mapei Global Infonet" CD/DVD and from the website: www.mapei.com.

Mape-Antique FC: cement-free light-coloured fine mortar for finishing dehumidifying mortars applied on stone, brick and tuff masonry.

Mape-Antique MC: pre-packed, cement-free, light-coloured dehumidifying mortar for the restoration of damp stone, brick and tuff masonry.

Mape-Antique Rinzafo: light-coloured salt-resistant cement-free pre-packed mortar to be used before applying Mape-Antique MC, Mape-Antique CC and Mape-Antique LC dehumidifying mortars on stone, tuff and brick substrates.

Mapegrout Thixotropic: controlled-shrinkage fibre-reinforced mortar for the repair of concrete.

Planitop 560: white lime-cement based finishing compound for very smooth finishing of both fresh and cured interior and exterior cementitious renders and concrete surfaces; it can be applied from 0 to 3 mm thick.

Silexcolor Paint: silicate-based, vapour-permeable protective and decorative paint system for cement- or lime-based renders in interiors and exteriors.

Silexcolor Primer: modified potassium silicate-based primer in water solution.



TECHNICAL DATA

S. Chiara al Pantheon Church, enclosed in the French Papal Seminary complex, Rome (Italy)

Work: reinforcement of the concrete structures, dehumidifying of the render around the base, protection and decoration of the wall surfaces.

Years: 2003-2004

Customer: French Papal Seminary

Works Management: BB.AA. Fine Arts Commission, Rome – arch. Barbato

Works Director: Father Yves Marie Fradet

Consultant for the Static Reinforcement Works: Prof. Eng. Michetti's Office (supervisor: Eng. Perfetti)

Project and Works Management: Studio Dettagli (arch. Massimo Monteleone and arch. Paolo Marciari)

Contractor: Edilcor, Genzano (Rome)

Mapei Distributor: Univex, Rome

Mapei Co-ordinator: Leonardo Butò; photos by Pino Mancini

