

CHURCH OF SAN CATALDO_PALERMO
VIEW FROM VIA MAQUEDA (TOP);
PLAN (RIGHT); BIBLIOGRAPHY SOURCE: Kubach H.F., *Romanesque Architecture*, NY, 1975.

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ORDINE EQUESTRE DEL SANTO SEPOLCRO
DI GERUSALEMME
LUOGOTENENZA PER ITALIA-SICILIA



ORDINE EQUESTRE DEL SANTO SEPOLCRO
DI GERUSALEMME
SEZIONE DI PALERMO



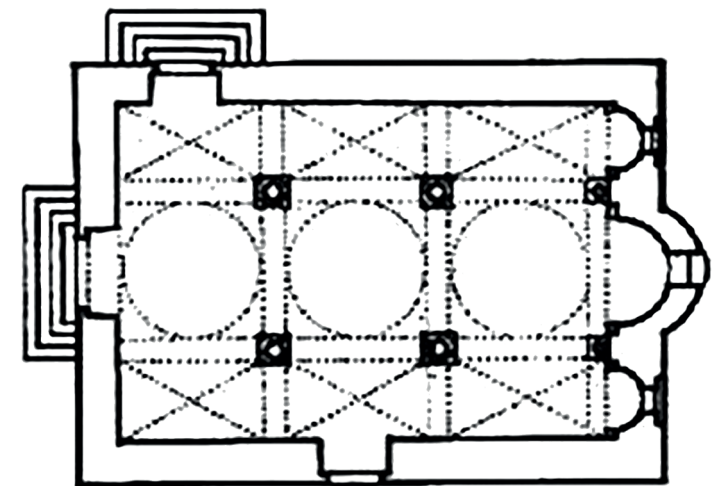
Arcidiocesi di Palermo
Ufficio Beni Culturali ed Ecclesiastici

CHURCH OF SAN CATALDO

The church of San Cataldo stands on the same stereobate of the church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio, called the Martorana. The church, commissioned by Majone di Bari, admiral and great chancellor of King William I around 1154, arose as a private chapel of a sumptuous palace no longer existing today. Around 1160 the great admiral Sylvester of Marsico became the owner of the church, who in 1161 had his daughter Matilde buried there, to whose memory a tombstone remains today. In 1182 William II donated to the Benedictine community of Monreale the church and the annexed buildings, and kept them until 1787, when the

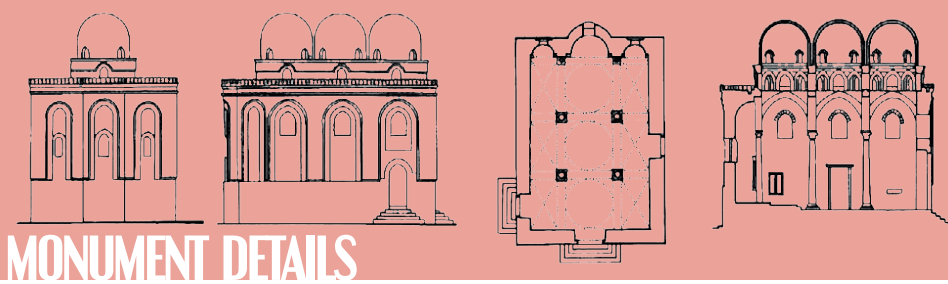
rooms were used as offices of the royal post, and in the chapel, in appalling conditions, all the correspondence of the Kingdom of Sicily was handled. The Benedictine monks used it as a gancia for the care of the sick and restored it, decorated its interiors with stuccoes, by the will of Archbishop Giovanni Roano in 1679. The stuccoes were removed during the nineteenth-century restoration by the architect Giuseppe Patricolo who was also the architect of the color solution of the extrados of the three small domes that have become the symbol and cultural tourism sign of the City of Palermo.

SINCE 1937 THE CHURCH HAS BEEN ASSIGNED TO ORDER OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM, WHICH TAKES CARE OF ITS MAINTENANCE, THE OFFICIATURE OF THE ORDER ITSELF AND THE TOURIST-CULTURAL WELCOME.



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MONUMENT DETAILS

The planimetric system has three naves, the central one of which is twice the width of the lateral ones and is divided by the latter by bare columns of different heights on which pointed arches are set, thus forming three spans.

A different tread floor emphasizes the presbytery area, constituting a sort of bema. The side aisles are covered by cross-ribbed vaults, the central one with raised hemispherical domes; the three apses by semi-domes contained in the wall.

A refined and elegant workmanship of the wall design shows sharp archways with an

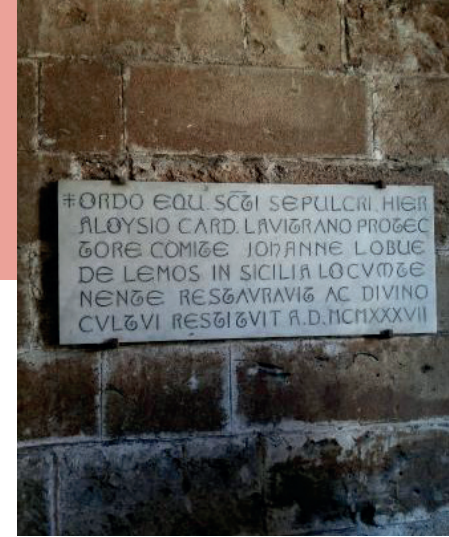
interesting corner solution that enrich the compact volume of the building in square calcarenite blocks.

The recessed rings include three windows on each side.

Only the volume of the central apse is visible from the outside, curving the Arabian cimasa that crowns the building. Outside, the three typical hemispherical red domes, with small windows, are set on a single rectangular drum in which the slender windows open up.



CHURCH OF SAN CATALDO_PALERMO
INTRADOS OF THE DOMES; ELEVATIONS, PLAN AND SECTION OF THE CHURCH (TOP)



CHURCH OF SAN CATALDO_PALERMO
MARBLE PLAQUE OF ASSIGNMENT TO THE
ORDER, 1938



CHURCH OF SAN CATALDO_PALERMO
DETAIL OF THE MARBLE INLAY FLOORING



CHURCH OF SAN CATALDO_PALERMO
INTERNAL VIEW

The outer wall is characterized by light acute arches that animate slightly, but without overwhelming it, the geometric and compact mass of the building, defined by a graceful ornamented in fretwork, which introduces a note of precious elegance in the mathematical setting of the cube. The interior, unadorned by mosaic elements, shows at best the Sicilian-Norman constructive scheme, especially in the joints of the sharp-edged domes.

The six columns that support the pointed arches of the aisles have ancient capitals of bare. The natural lighting is ensured by a retablo of slender windows archiacute along the entire perimeter of the architectural volume, in correspondence with the spans of the three apses and above the entrance portal.

The central nave is also equipped with additional lighting sources consisting of similar windows placed in the drum and alternating with the corner earphones, as well as above the sixth of the domes, in line with the angular pendentives. The opus sectile flooring is interesting and precious, with inlays of contemporary mosaics for the construction of the church, which make it the main chromatic resource, in which intertwining decorative results of Roman-Cassinese- Islamic fusion shine.

Made of marble inlay, it develops with geometric aniconic motifs in which the wide ribbon is dominant, which interweaving, creates various shapes that often have their center or in the eight-pointed star or in porphyry discs. First of all the characteristic element is the Greek-Byzantine which contains the central quinconce and, around it, elements of a slight Islamic matrix with geometric figures with broken lines, but strongly contained and limited by the bands around the stone and long lozenges of porphyries.

The Sicilian floors, in fact, of the Norman age express ways and forms of koinè fatimita, but they are still contaminated by the artistic needs of the Latin and Byzantine Mediterranean cultural basin where oriental and Omayyad and Abbasid Muslims come together. Particularly elegant and original is the monobloc altar, in white marble, decorated with a thin incision with the Agnus Dei set in a Greek cross surrounded by the symbols of the Four Evangelists.