

## Heritage Choir Newsletter #5 – Rome, Italy

It's Wednesday, October 9<sup>th</sup>, during your 2019 Rome, Italy Performance Tour. During your Guided Tour of Piazza Navona you will visit Sant' Agnese in Agone Church....



As you have toured Piazza Navona it is an extraordinary urban expression of the Roman Baroque, but with an overall layout dating from the time of the ancient Stadium of Domitian (81-96 AD). The stadium, considered one of the most important structures of its era, was probably still in use as Rome entered decline, in the 5th century.

Later, among the arches of the ruined structure there arose small churches dedicated to saints Catherine and Agnes. Tradition has it that Agnes was still a child when she was martyred at this very place.

In 1123, Pope Callistus II enlarged and transformed the original oratory of Saint Agnes as a small basilica, installing the main entrance in what is now Via dell' Anima and the apse towards *campus Agonis*, the vast floor of the now vanished stadium. The term 'Campo Agone' survived as the name of the former arena floor, and in the wording – Sant' Agnese 'in Agone'.

In 1644, Giovanni Battista Pamphili was elected pope, taking the name Innocent X. He immediately undertook construction of a more imposing *palazzo* directly on the piazza, which he also adorned with a grandiose fountain designed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (Fountain of the Four Rivers). Soon after, in 1651, Innocent X decided to erect a new church, subject to Pamphili family patronage and where he himself would be entombed.

As a 17th century Baroque church facing Piazza Navona, the Church of Sant' Agnese in Agone stands in one of the busiest areas of Rome's historic city center — yet it remains a peaceful sanctuary and renowned Roman church.

The Church remains a beautiful chapel, known for its frescoed ceilings, many fine sculptures and altars, and impressive marble work. It is also a shrine to Saint Agnes, with her skull still on display to visitors and her body buried in the catacombs. The church's architecture is characterized by its massive dome, Corinthian columns, and Greek cross plan.

Next, you will visit the Pantheon..... **to be continued in next week's Newsletter.**

**Rome "Fun Fact" #5** Rome is known as the "Eternal City" and also "Caput Mundi" coming from Latin and meaning capital of the World.