

FRANCAVILLA AL MARE

3) San Franco – the exterior

Piazza S. Franco, 66023 Francavilla Al Mare (CH)

In the heart of the old part of Francavilla there is the monumental church of Santa Maria Maggiore, more commonly known as San Franco after the patron saint of Francavilla. The original building was a national monument built in the thirteenth century and destroyed under German occupation during winter 1943-1944. A competition was held by the Sacred Art Commission to rebuild the church and it was won by Ludovico Quaroni, a professor at Rome University, the new church was rebuilt and consecrated in 1957.

The exterior is unusual and quite bare with its brick walls, the white stone base and the essential reinforced concrete corner pillars.

The actual size of the mighty church appeals too. It has an octagonal perimeter with different length sides, perched on the edge of a hill surrounded by pine trees and it is consequently visible for miles around.

On one side there is a bell tower, built with concrete pillars and a brick wall at the bottom. On top of the bell there is a lithe spire and a cross in wrought iron.

At the front of the church a design in coloured stone and terracotta of the Virgin Mary and child sits above the cantilever roof which is engraved with various images. Two symbolic statues sit by the door, a lion holding a snake between his jaws and a host spouting water. These plastic works of art were made by Andrea and Pietro Cascella.

The white stone body of the parsonage extends to the right while on the right hand side there is a hexagonal tank with metal sides and a mosaic style bottom which substitutes the baptistery indicated on the original design by Quaroni.

Abruzzo Audioguide

