



Dear visitor, Welcome!

Entering this church receive the blessing of God through the intercession of Saint Catherine of Alexandria in Egypt, whom this church is dedicated to.

First of all let's say just few words about her. **Saint Catherine of Alexandria in Egypt** is, according to tradition, a Christian saint and virgin, who was martyred in the early 4th century at the hands of the pagan Roman Governor of Egypt. She was both a princess and a noted scholar, who became a Christian around the age of fourteen, and herself converted hundreds of people to Christianity. As a young adult, she visited her contemporary, the Roman Governor, and attempted to convince him of the moral error in persecuting Christians for not worshipping idols. The Governor arranged for a plethora of the best pagan philosophers and orators to dispute with her, hoping that they would refute her pro-Christian arguments, but Catherine won the debate. Several of her adversaries, conquered by her eloquence, declared themselves Christians and were at once put to death. Catherine was then scourged and imprisoned, during which time over 200 people came to see her; all converted to Christianity and were subsequently martyred. Upon the failure of the powerful Governor to make Catherine yield by way of torture, he tried to win the beautiful and wise princess over by proposing marriage. The saint refused, declaring that her spouse was Jesus Christ, to whom she had consecrated her virginity. The furious Governor condemned Catherine to death on the spiked breaking wheel, but, at her touch, this instrument of torture was miraculously destroyed. He finally had her beheaded. The General Roman Calendar continues to commemorate her on November 25 as an optional memorial.

The church of saint Catherine "intra muros", within the city walls, you are in, was built in the first half of the XVII century, in the typical style of the time, the baroque, on the top of the ruins of a small roman theatre, called in Greek, "odeon", partially destroying its orchestra and its scene which consisted of the southern colonnade of a Greek temple, some say dedicated to Aphrodite. In its interior, to the right hand, there is an exquisite marble statue of saint Catherine. The Saint holds in her right hand the palm branch, symbol of her martyrdom and with the other hand shows an open book reminding us that her superior intelligence combined with diligent study left her exceedingly well-versed in all the arts and sciences, and in philosophy. She also seizes with her right hand a sword that in this case doesn't want to represent the one used to behead her, but rather, the faith in God she had, capable to defeat evil, the prince of darkness who, laying at her feet, tries to push away the point of the sword from his throat. Saint Catherine is standing on the spiked wheel from the ruined engine used in her martyrdom. On the pedestal you find the date MCCCCLXXXIII (1493,) and different bas-reliefs showing Catherine standing between two spiked wheels and two executioners, her scourging, two seraphim's heads and the coat of arms of the city of Taormina. This church as you see, has got one single nave with an elegant wooden-beam trussed ceiling. On the main altar you can see an imposing painting depicting saint Catherine's martyrdom, attributed to the Sicilian painter Jacopo Vignero (XVI century). There are also some other artistic works worth mentioning: to the right of the main altar, between two big twisted columns with coiled vines around them, a wooden Crucifix of the XVIII c. To the left of the central altar, between two other imposing twisted columns, a painting representing the Triumph of the Holy Cross (XVII c.). On the same wall, further left, the Glory of the Virgin Mary with Baby Jesus and some Carmelite Saints, work of the Sicilian painter from Messina, Antonio Alberti, alias Barbalonga, meaning long beard, (XVII c.). In front, on the opposite wall, another interesting painting shows our Lady with the Holy Child with four Saints at their feet (XVI c.). Under the main portal there is a crypt fully excavated in 1977, on the occasion of the last work of restoration. Inside it they used to preserve and bury, previous mummification, the bodies of the notables and aristocrats of the town. Under the central part of the church floor there is also a big room, an ossuary or charnel-house, a sort of common tomb. On the front façade just above the broken tympanum, typical of the baroque period, between two little angels, each one sitting on the volutes of the tympanum itself, in a big niche you see another statue of the titular Saint in the same characteristic iconography: she holds the palm branch and the sword with which she is about to kill a diabolic creature, here represented by a crowned personage with long moustaches. At her left side the unfailing spiked wheel. This other statue is the work that the Sicilian Paolo Greco sculptured in 1705. At the level of the saint's head the niche is decorated with two small caryatides placed at each side, that seem to support, like they were two little corbels, the window-sill of a big window having at its top a triangular tympanum imitating a classical temple, The central portal is decorated with pink marble of Taormina and embellished at each side with two slim columns with Corinthian capitals, standing on tall bases. In this church weddings and musical concerts are regularly held.

Thank you for your visit and "may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit". (Romans 15:13)