



BAPTISTERY OF S. GIOVANNI (ST. JOHN) OF GALLIANO

You can find this point of interest in Cantù - Path 1 - Stage 1

INFORMATION

Location: the baptistery of S. Giovanni (St. John) stands close to the Basilica of S. Vincenzo (St. Vincent) in Galliano, just a few meters from where the right nave stood. It was probably linked to the same church by a porch.

Access: through the entrance on the facade, besides the pronaos.

Paving: the foreground of the baptistery, covered by a pronaos, is cobbled; the surrounding area is grassy and stone slabs show the original perimeter of the church, as was built at the order of Ariberto da Intimiano (11th century) and the link with the baptistery. The interior is paved in stone; the gallery of the *matroneum* is paved in stone as well, as are the stairs.

Architectural barriers: the fenced area is accessed by four stone steps. There is another step to enter the baptistery. The east apse, in front of the entrance, is one step higher, that become two at the center. The *matroneum* is accessed by two flight of stairs, of thirty-two steps each, situated on both sides of the entrance.

Services: parking available; bus stops; the Cantù hospital is situated in the neighbourhood, in via Domea 4.

Leisure and Food: a small stone fountain in front of the Basilica. Bars, restaurants and shops are available nearby.

Altre informazioni: for opening times, call 031.701393 (Parish of S. Paolo – Secretary) or 031.717446 and 031.717491 (Municipality of Cantù).

A bronze model of the Basilica and of the baptistery, built by Claudio Caimi, was placed in July 2007 near the entrance of the Basilica, The model was donated by the Cantù Lyons Club, in order to enable visually impaired guests to appreciate the architectural details of the complex.

Related monuments: Basilica of S. Vincenzo.

DESCRIPTION

(*Silvia Fasana*)

According to some scholars, the baptistery dates back to the 11th century, that is, in the same years when Ariberto had the Basilica of S. Vincenzo (St. Vincent) enlarged; the hypothesis is supported by analogies in construction techniques and in the style of the two buildings. Another theory, on the contrary, would place the date of construction between the 5th and 9th century, thus before the Basilica.

The baptistery lost its function in 1582, when San Carlo Borromeo, the archbishop of Milan, moved the vicarage to the church of S. Paolo.

The building, oriented towards the east, has a quadrilateral square plan, with four apses; the west apse is opened by a short entrance corridor; before the corridor, the pronaos opens on the outside and links the baptistery with the area of the basilica. An octagonal lantern crowns the building.

Inside the baptistery, at the centre of the baptismal hall, where the four apses open, supported by four pillars, is placed a monolithic tub. In front of the entrance, in the east apse, an altar is placed, holds a slab in Musso marble, with a refined engraving of the *Chrismon*, formed by the two letters of the Greek alphabet Chi [X] and Ro [R], that are the abbreviation of the name of Christ, and, on the left and right side, by the first and last letters Alpha [A] and Omega [Ω], overwritten by a jeweled cross. The *Chrismon* is inscribed in a

circle, on which two doves stand, holding olive branches in their beaks. Thus the complex is rich in christological symbols. The engraving dates from the 6th-7th centuries, and probably comes from the original early christian church.

At the entrance, within the walls, on both sides, two narrow flights of stairs open, that lead to the *matroneum*, a large corridor opening on the baptismal area below through arch openings, two on each side. The original frescoes, except some remains, have been lost.