



CHURCH OF S. ANTONIO (ST. ANTHONY) WITH *HOSPITALE**

* partially lost building

You can find this point of interest in Cantù - Path 1 - Stage 2

INFORMATION

Location: the church of S. Antonio (St. Anthony) is in via Daverio 21

Access: the main access is through the front door opening on the churchyard; the side entrance is open only at the time of the celebrations of the Saint's Feast, in January.

Paving: the church prospets on a churchyard of rectangular shape, bordered on the long side by via Daverio, cobbled and delimited by a band paved in stone. The two sides not bordered by buildings are delimited by small iron poles, about 8 meters high, holding an iron chain. In front of the main entrance is a half-rayed circle, cobbled as well in polychrome stones, with a monogram of the Greek letter Tau (T), which is a characteristic of the iconography of Saint Anthony and of the related hospital Order. The steps are in stone; inside, the paving is in polished tiles.

Architectural barriers: there are three passages not delimited by the chain, in correspondence with the corners of the churchyard. The access to the church is from the main door, by descending three steps. The presbytery is one step higher than the floor of the church.

Services: parking available; bus stop in via Achille Grandi

Leisure and Food: bars, restaurant in the neighbourhood; shops and supermarkets

Other information: the church is open only for religious services. For opening times call 031.714570 (Parish of S. Teodoro – Secretary).

DESCRIPTION

Mentioned in the *Liber Notitiae Sanctorum Mediolani* by Goffredo da Bussero, the church of S. Antonio (St. Anthony) stood outside the city walls, along the ancient via Canturina, coming from Como, close to the Roggia Maietto, a small water course. The early structure of the sacred building dates back to the second half of the 12th century; the apse was most likely added in the 14th century: on the outside it presents a crown of little Gothic arches in bricks; other interventions were made on the facade in the same period, and subsequently in the baroque era.

The facade is shaped as an asymmetrical hut, since it leans to a building on the right side; it is open by a Gothic portal in bricks, delimited by a round arch and by a pointed arch superimposed. Over the portal opens a rose window, also in Gothic style, bordered by bricks, and, higher, a cross shaped window. The bell tower is situated in the right back of the church, and its construction is usually dated back to the 18th century.

The interior has a single nave, and is at a lower level than the street. The internal walls were once covered with frescoes, but now just a few survive, dating back to different periods, between the end of the 13th and beginning of the 15th century; their style recalls various experiences, from the byzantine world to the Lombard school of the 14th century.

In the counter facade, on the right, there is a modest fresco of **Our Lady of the Milk**, painted at an unknown date. The Madonna seats on a wooden seat, while the Child holds an apple, symbol of the original sin, defeated by His death.

On the right wall there are traces of frescoes of *Our Lady in throne with Child* and (possibly) *Santa Caterina d'Alessandria (Catherine of Alexandria)*, crowned but without her wheel, with a figure at her side offering gifts; above, in a niche, stands a great statue of *Sant'Antonio (Saint Antony)*, in sand stone, that was originally placed on the facade, of the 14th century.

Further on, on the wall, at the sides of a second niche with a polychrome statue of *San Rocco (Saint Rocco)*, are two saints on the right, and, on the left, another figure, with plagues, that some scholars identify with *San Lazzaro (Saint Lazarus)*, the patron of infected people and beggars.

At the half of the left wall opens a lateral entrance, surmounted by a half moon decorated with an *Annunciation*. On the left of the entrance are the remains of a fresco representing the plate of a scale over which one soul is deposed, waiting to be weighed; it has been interpreted as a fragment of the painting of *San Michele Arcangelo (St. Michael Archangel)*. On the right is a figure identified as *San Giovanni Evangelista (Saint John the Evangelist)*.

The presbytery is introduced by an acute arch, bearing at the centre a wooden *Crucifix*; the polygonal apse is covered by a Gothic vault, with terracotta ribs. Over the stone altar is a polychrome, late Gothic, statue of *Sant'Antonio (St. Anthony)*, made in fig wood.

The church had an *Hospitale* (hospital) annexed, which assisted pilgrims and sick people; its remains, structured as a courtyard, are leaning towards the south side. The hospital was initially cared for by Augustine nuns, then passed in the 15th century to the French canons of St. Anthony of Vienne, in the 17th century became a dependence of the monastery of S. Maria (St. Mary), where the bones of the nuns were moved, as proved by a headstone of 1689 conserved in the church. After the monastery was closed, the structure underwent various changes of functions; now it has been divided in private homes.

At the beginning of this century, the dedication to St. Anthony has been extended to the current hospital of Cantù.