



SANCTUARY OF THE BEATA VERGINE DEI MIRACOLI (BLESSED VIRGIN OF MIRACLES)

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

INFORMATION

Location: the Santuario della Beata Vergine dei Miracoli (Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin of Miracles) is in Piazzale XXV Aprile, at the end of the Viale alla Madonna, close to the Cemetery.

Access: through the front door, usually open.

Paving: the church prospets on a half-moon shaped, cobbled churchyard, delimited externally by a narrow flowerbed with low bushes, and by another cobbled stripe where iron poles (40 meters high) and small stone pillars (60 meters high) are fixed, holding an iron chain. Both stripes end in correspondence with the edges of the facade, at about three quarters of the circumference, starting from the right. In front of the central door a small half-moon is found, in black and white, with the monogram M V (Maria Vergine, Virgin Mary). The revolving door is paved in stone, as well as the interior of the Sanctuary.

Architectural barriers: the churchyard is slightly descending, converging towards the main entrance. To access the churchyard, there are two lateral passages on the right (slightly higher than street level) and on the left (larger, but take care of the small poles) of the facade, not delimited by the chain and the flowerbed.

In correspondence of the front door there is a wide revolving door with two openings.

Services: parking available; cemetery; chemist's in via Brighi.

Leisure and Food: bars and coffee shops; a green area with benches in front of the Monument for the fallen gunners, on the corner between Viale alla Madonna and via Cesare Cantù.

Other information: the church is usually open. For opening times, call 031.701393 (Parish of S. Paolo – Secretary) or 031.717446 and 031.717491 (Municipality of Cantù).

DESCRIPTION

(Silvia Fasana)

In the place where today the Sanctuary stands, outside the ancient gate of Campo Rotondo, in the 16th century there stood an ancient wall, where a popular image of a breastfeeding Madonna had been painted, called "Santa Maria Bella".

According to local lore, in May 1543, the Virgin Mary appeared to the young girl Angiolina, who went to pray before the sacred image to ask for the end of a terrible famine that was ravaging the area, inviting the Madonna with her family to reap an abundant harvest.

Following up this miracle, the fame of the revered image spread rapidly in the areas of Como and Milan, so much as – between 1554 and 1555 – a church was built on the site, as confirmed by two headstones positioned inside it, on the left wall.

The facade, built in an eclectic style, where baroque elements prevail, was built (1900-1901) in Portland cement based on the design of Italo Zanolini; in the upper side, a great rayed niche hosts an imposing statue of *Maria Assunta (Our Lady of the Assumption)*.

The interior has three naves; the central nave ends in the presbytery, while those on the sides end with two chapels, the left one dedicated to Sant'Antonio (Saint Antony), and the right one to Santa Teresa (Saint Theresa) d'Avila.

The anterior part of the church, up to the line of the altars, is a 19th century reconstruction, based on a project of the architect Giacomo Moraglia, because of a collapse that happened in October 1837. With a square plan, it appears almost empty, a sort of vestibule that prepares the visitor to the magnificence of the presbytery and chorus, decorated with frescoes that follow precise iconographic cycles. It is a true theatrical scene, that surrounds the miraculous image of the Mother of God, in a triumph of colours.

The decoration of the walls and of the dome of the presbytery is one of the latest works of Giovanni Mauro della Rovere, in art the Fiammenghino (1637-38). The structure of the composition and the iconography are complex: besides the two Epiphanies narrated in the Gospels, where Mary presents her Son to the pagans (*Adorazione dei Magi*) and to the Hebrews (*Le Nozze di Cana*), that are painted on the walls on the two sides, around the superior arches *Prophets* and *Sybils* are represented side by side, to indicate continuity between the classical age and the biblical tradition, waiting for the birth of Christ from the Virgin Mary. The apex of the cycle is the image of the Assumed Mary, of the 19th century, positioned at the centre of a crown of playing angels at the centre of the dome over the presbytery. The chorus, instead, is decorated with stucco and with a cycle of paintings illustrating *Storie dell'infanzia di Gesù (Hystory of the early life of Jesus)*, painted by Giovanni Stefano Doneda (il Montalto) with the collaboration of his brother Joseph (7th-8th decades of the 17th century).

Under the arch between the presbytery and the chorus stands the altar, built in white and gray marbles in neoclassical style, finished in 1852 on the design of the painter Pompeo Calvi. The Madonna is seated on a wooden throne of late Gothic style, with a tri-cuspidal dossal; on her sides two angels are playing instruments. It is a devotional painting, of popular style, dated not later than the half of the 15th century, even if it has been heavily repainted.

In the left nave of the Sanctuary is a beautiful *Incoronazione della Vergine (Crowning of the Virgin)* by Camillo Procaccini (approx. 1610), originally positioned in the parish of S. Paolo, while the right chapel shows the *Apparizione di Cristo a Santa Teresa (Christ appears to Saint Theresa)*, painted by the French painter Charles Grandon (1714) and donated to the Sanctuary in 1777 by the reverend Torriani, copy of the painting of Giovan Francesco Barbieri (il Guercino), an artist from Emilia.