



## CHURCH OF ST. MICHAEL IN ROVENNA

This point of interest is found in Cernobbio - [Path 2](#) - Stage 2

### INFORMATION

**Location:** the church overlooks a wide churchyard - that surrounds its left hand-side, too – and is located at the crossroads between via della Libertà and the start of via Umberto I.

**Paving:** the churchyard is paved with concrete flags.

**Architectural barriers:** access to the church is by a double leaf metal door (the one on the right is usually open) on the left hand-side of the building, which was made in 1982, on the occasion of don Giorgio Pusterla's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a priest, and 15<sup>th</sup> as parish priest; the space available for getting inside the church is 45 cm. Here you find a small 2m x 1m atrium, paved with Moltrasio stone slabs. By crossing the atrium you will find a 60cm x 2cm wide double leaf wooden door, with a small 1cm threshold, which opens onto the outside.

**Access:** entrance is normally through the door on the left hand-side of the church. The main portal on the façade, which is preceded by two steps, is generally closed, except during particularly important feasts and celebrations.

**Services:** there are parking places in the area, and an automated teller machine in via IV Novembre.

**Leisure and food:** there is a bar in the area.

### DESCRIPTION

(*Silvia Fasana*)

The church of St. Michael (*S. Michele*) in Rovenna, already in existence in the Middle Ages, was reconstructed in 1670 in the Baroque style, at the time when Carlo Perti Bonini, and his nephew Defendente Perti after him, were parish priests. The very simple gabled façade was redesigned in 1856 by engineer Antonio Amadeo; its only ornament is the imposing 17th century stone portal transferred from the suppressed monastery of S. Marco (*St. Mark*) in Borgovico: according to tradition, as many as fourteen oxen were needed for its transportation from Como to Rovenna.

There are statues on each side, placed in niches, attributed to Switzerland's Canton Ticino sculptor Cristoforo De Rossi; the statue to your left represents the archangel St. Michael crushing the devil and holding a scale; the one on your right the Archangel Raphael with Tobias (a figure that some authors prefer to identify as the Guardian Angel). The interior has a single nave covered by a barrel vault, with four side chapels, the oldest of which are the ones next to the presbytery, while the others, smaller, were probably added in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The floor is made of Moltrasio stone slabs (1872). On the opposite wall left of the main entrance (when facing the altar), a plaque commemorates the consecration of the church by the bishop of Como Giambattista Mugiasca of 29 September 1785, and a painting includes the reproduction of the precious "Rovenna Cross", in memory of Pope John Paul II's visit to Como in 1996.

The first chapel on the left hosts an altar surmounted by a mosaic of *Our Lady of Bisbino* (shown standing, like the marble statue that is currently being kept on the Shrine's main altar), attributed to the painter Filippo Andina (1853); it is followed by the chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary, with a marble and stucco altar by the great Baroque sculptor Giovanni Battista Barberini of Laino. A seventeenth century statue of Our Lady of the Rosary, surrounded by fifteen ovals representing the *Mysteries of the Rosary*, is located inside the niche at the centre of the altarpiece. The scagliola antependium carries at the centre a picture of the *Madonna and Child*. At the sides of the altar, two niches host one statue each, once again attributed to the Barberini: *St. George killing the dragon* and a warrior Saint, perhaps *Saint Firmus* or *Saint Victor*. A painting of the *Madonna and Child with Saints*, attributed to the realm of 17<sup>th</sup> century Emilian painting, towers from the left wall. From this chapel it is possible to access the Oratory of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, now a winter chapel, the construction whereof was financed by remittances sent by people of Rovenna who emigrated to Bologna (where, among others, the painter Michelangelo Colonna lived and worked during the 17<sup>th</sup> century).

The church is dominated by the main altar's magnificent wooden altarpiece, carved and gilded by Andrea Redaelli of Como and Paul Felice Cassina of Cernobbio, based on a drawing by Barberini (1692). It is "6.5m high, 3.60m long, and

1.60m deep". There is a statue of the Archangel Michael on the left, and one of the Archangel Raphael on the right: "ten little angels and other small statues of saints and bishops, as well as tiles reproducing biblical subjects, complete the complex figuration" (I. Fossati, *Cernobbio. Guida ai luoghi e alle cose*) (*Cernobbio. Guide to places and things*). The vault of the presbytery, which is divided into segments, is painted with *Evangelists* surrounding the allegorical representation of *Faith*, the work of painter Vincenzo De Bernardi of Claino and his pupil Antonio Rinaldi of Tremona (1866). Below the image of Faith, a scroll bears the following inscription: "Plenary indulgence granted by Pope Pius VI @ 6 May 1779, also applicable to the deceased", with a use of @ well ahead of its time, to say the least! The chapel of St. Catherine, on the right side of the church (for those looking in from the entrance), is decorated with a stucco altar, again attributed to the Barberini, as are the statues flanking it, which depict *Saint Agatha* and *Saint Lucy*, which may however have been made with the aid of other artists. The scagliola antependium, which, too, dates back to the 17th century, carries *Saint Catherine* at the centre, with *Saint Sebastian* and *Saint Roch* on either side. The late 16<sup>th</sup> century altarpiece depicts the *Madonna and Child* with *Saints Sebastian, Roch and Catherine of Alexandria*, attributed to painter Giovan Pietro Gnocchi. The painting located on the right wall of the chapel, with the *Crucified Christ between Saints Martha, Mary Magdalene (?) and Michael the Archangel* would, too, appear to be a late sixteenth century work. A chapel dedicated to St. Joseph, with an eighteenth century altarpiece dedicated to him, follows; however, the mosaic inscription "*Mater Dolorosa*" at the entrance of the chapel would lead one to think of a connection with the cult of Our Lady of Sorrow, an idea confirmed by the presence on the altar of a small statue of *Our Lady of Sorrow*, and a wooden statue of the *Dead Christ* preserved under the altar table. On the opposite wall, to the right of the main entrance (when facing the altar), a marble baptismal font was placed in 1938.