



AULA BATTESIMALE BIABSIDATA (THE TWIN APSE BAPTISMAL HALL)*

* building totally or partially in ruins

You can find this point of interest in Ossuccio - Path 1 - Stage 3

INFORMATION

Location: the ruins of the Twin Apse Baptismal Hall are located on the left handside of the church of S. Giovanni Battista, on rocky butress at the East end of the Island.

Paving: the footpath leading to the church begins as a grassy track running alongside the church for approx. 15 metres, then turns into a stone platform (be careful because there is no protection at the end).

Architectural barriers: information on accessibility is available in the description of Stage 3.

Access: it is a partly fenced archaeological site, it is therefore advisable to observe it from the outside.

Services: -

Leisure and food: the surrounding green plateau is equipped with benches and small wooden tables for anyone wishing a break. On the left side of the church there is a small fountain. A bar and a restaurant are available on the island.

DESCRIPTION

(Drawn from the descriptive panels on site and in the *Antiquarium*)

«The oldest religious building on the Comacina Island is probably the baptismal hall».

«The first baptismal building probably dates to the fifth century. It was a single room (approximately 16×7 m) aligned East-West. The lateral walls converged into a single apse.

The floor of the apse was adorned with mosaics depicting marine scenes. Only one fish figure has survived. The nave was paved with cocciopesto (mortar mixed with powdered brick).

The baptismal font used for the immersion of adults was an octagonal pool built of bricks mixed with cocciopesto and clad with marble. The underlying rock, which prevented the construction of a water drainage system, is probably why the font had to be placed in an off-centre position. The two square rooms discovered under the church of S. Giovanni were probably associated with this building.

Two graves date to the same period. The first (an arcosolium) was placed in a niche hollowed out of the western wall of the apse, the second lies almost in the centre of the room».

«The dimensions of the niche of the arcosolium have led scholars to believe that this was the original location of Bishop Agrippinus's grave stone [approximately + 617]. It was taken to the church of S. Eufemia in Isola (Ossuccio) in 1169 after the destruction of the baptismal hall. There it was used as the altar table until 1875. It can now be seen to the left of the choir».

«The construction of the twin apse hall dates to the Early Middle Ages. During this period the nave was paved with Moltrasio stone slabs; the mosaics of the two apses were re-laid and the walls were frescoed with geometric designs that can be dated between the eighth and ninth centuries.

In 1169 the baptismal room and all the other buildings on the island were demolished».

The existence of this building is particularly significant, as it testifies the importance of the Island as the "cradle" and core for the spreading of Como's Christianity.