



## CHURCH OF S. STEFANO (ST. STEPHEN)

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

### INFORMATION

**Location:** the Provostship Church of S. Stefano (St. Stephen) overlooks a large precinct opening onto Via della Chiesa.

**Paving:** the precinct is paved with stone slabs: at the centre, in front of the Church's main entrance, there are nine white marble slabs engraved with the coat of arms of Cardinal Ildefonso Schuster, Archbishop of Milan from 1929 to 1954 and beatified on 12 May 1996 by Pope John Paul II.

**Architectural barriers:** there are three alternative ways of access to the precinct, which is limited on the east and south sides by a gneiss balustrade. From the west (the route suggested by our path) one has to climb 10 stone steps, as opposed to the 7 steps needed from the south; the east side connects at ground level with the adjacent square, which hosts a parking area, separated from the precinct by four small stone pillars – approx. 1 metre high – holding an iron chain, which however leaves some free space near the edge of the Church. To access the sacred building one has to climb another 3 steps.

**Access:** the side entrances are usually open.

**Services:** a large parking area is available in the immediate surroundings; automated teller machines along Via Mazzini; Chemist in Via Mazzini.

**Leisure and food:** bars and restaurants in the area.

### DESCRIPTION

(Silvia Fasana)

The Provostship Church of S. Stefano (St. Stephen) (known in the local dialect as *Gésa granda*, i.e. the big church) owes its current appearance to a radical reshaping and restructuring, carried out between 1728 and 1752, of an existing building, already referred to in the 13<sup>th</sup> century as being dependent from the Pieve of Incino.

Legend has it that the area currently occupied by the main Church was originally a vineyard owned by the Pelliccione family. After great insistence, they donated the vineyard to the parish, subject to the binding condition that all vine plants were to be uprooted on the same night. Thus, after a night of feverish work carried out by the entire population, all plants were pulled up and construction was started.

In 1819 the bell tower was added, although the project by architect Giuseppe Bovara originally included a second belfry, too.

The eighteenth-century two-order façade, in Lombard Baroque style, marked by pilaster strips, shows a pleasant alternation of concave and convex. The impressive main entrance, surrounded by columns and surmounted by a curved tympanum, is flanked by the two minor entrances, each with its own triangular tympanum pediment. In 1907 the statues of *St. Stephen* and the *Blessed Miro*, placed inside richly decorated niches, were added to the façade.

The interior features a single nave and four side chapels, and is a true feast of marbles, stuccoes and gilding.

When entering the Church, the first chapel on the right hosts a much venerated 16<sup>th</sup> century wooden crucifix, already admired by St. Carlo Borromeo during his pastoral visit; the second chapel houses a statue of *St. Anthony the Abbot*, by Elia Vincenzo Buzzi (1767). The first chapel to the left of the entrance is dedicated to St. Bernard, while the second to Our Lady of the Rosary, with statues, once again the work of Buzzi (1761). All chapels contain rich and elaborate marble altars.

Above confessionals constructed in marble and wood against the walls of the nave, in-between the chapels, stands the pipe organ, the work of the famous Serassi Brothers (1828), restored by Natale Balbiani from Milan at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The presbytery, which has a polygonal apse, is dominated by the temple shaped main altar, characterized by an interesting altar frontal made in scagliola stone.

The presbytery vault is decorated with eighteenth-century frescoes depicting the *Trinity*, the *Glory of St. Stephen*, and, in the webs, the *Four Evangelists*; most of the frescoes which embellish the vault of the nave and the side chapels' walls

are the work of painter Mario Albertella, director of the School of Professional Milanese Christian Art, who completed them around 1925.

To the left of the altar, a chapel holds numerous relics bequeathed by Msgr. Camillo Fino, provost of Canzo and formerly Notary responsible for the authentication of relics in the Diocese of Milan.