



CHURCH OF S. ANNA (ST. ANN)

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

INFORMATION

Location: the Church of St. Ann stands on a patch of grass in the middle of the northern flank of the Mount Ballano, in the locality of the same name, placed along the road from Argegno to Schignano

Paving: grass

Architectural barriers: 25 low steps lead to the front of the Church; a steep, cobbled and disconnected rise with three final steps leads to the left side. In order to enter the porch there are 3 steps of different height; to enter the Church we have to take another low step

Access: from the base of the square which can be reached from our route, it is possible either to go straight forward, rising 25 low steps and to enter the Church square going through 2 pillars surmounted by pots in stone, or to take on the left a short but steep and cobbled rise, which allows to reach the square through 3 steps, on the back of the Church. It is also possible to reach St. Ann from the road Argegno-Schignano

Services: parking in the surroundings area of the Church square in Piazza Capitano Peduzzi Giuseppe; bus stop

Leisure and Food: the Church patch of grass is shaded by age-old plane trees and equipped with benches; beside the Church there are two hotel-restaurants and a farm

DESCRIPTION

(Silvia Fasana)

The Church of the Virgin of Gelpio, better known as St. Ann, is mentioned for the first time in 1684 in the document of the pastoral visit of the bishop Ciceri; it was later described in the account of the pastoral visit of the bishop Bonesana in 1699, where it is said that the church had not been completed yet. According to the popular tradition the church was built after a vow made during a plague epidemic, probably in 1630, on the place of a virgin image, that is to say the Virgin of Gelpio.

According to Donato Gregorio, author of a documented study on Argegno, the church would have been built around the end of the 18th Century, after the Chapel of St. James by the Castello had been deconsecrated, thus taking away a religious reference point for the inhabitants of Argegno di Sopra, a municipal entity independent in some functions. During the centuries the church underwent some renovation work. Today it has a simple façade preceded by an elegant porch with three archways; the main door is flanked by two low windows with a gate and a kneeler, used to visit the Holy Sacrament when the church was closed.

The bell tower is dated 1824. The interior, a small baroque jewel, has a single nave with two lateral chapels.

The visitor's attention is immediately captured by the presbytery, where a rich iconographical program, drawn by the evocative "Elogio della Sapienza" of the Book of Siracide or Ecclesiastico (*Sir.* 24) and by other wisdom and Bible books, remembers the cult of Mary "*Sedes Sapientiae*". The table of the high altar, characterized by a wonderful hanging in the scagliola technique, is surmounted by a rich decorative apparel, in which the fine chromatic game among the elements in white stucco, the colored marble imitations of the columns and the central panel stand out. At the sides of the altar, the two lateral doors are surmounted by shrines with angels in stucco and precious panels, again implemented using the scagliola technique.

The presbytery vault is embellished with stuccoes and frescoes with *Storie della vita della Vergine (History of Virgin's life)* once ascribed to the artist Isidoro Bianchi (1581-1662) of Campione; this attribution is not correct according to some art historians. The iconographical program of the Virgin continues on the vault of the central nave, where, inside some ornate stucco frames, it is possible to observe a big fresco with the *Assunzione di Maria al Cielo (Assumption)*, with at the sides *Angeli musicanti (Angels musicians)* and *Angeli who hold sentences of hymns to Our Lady*. The two lateral chapels, dating back probably to the 18th Century, are embellished with rich stucco decorations; the one on the right is dedicated to St. Anthony of Padua; the one on the left to St. Ann, with the image of *Sant'Anna con Maria Bambina (St. Ann with Mary child)*. In the middle of the nave stand out two big statues in stucco of *San Gioacchino (St. Joachim)* and *Sant'Anna (St. Ann)*.