



S. ANDREA IN BRUNATE

You can find this point of interest in Como 6 – Stage 3.

INFORMATION

Location: the church of S. Andrea, parish church of Brunate, is located in the town centre, on a large square with a splendid view, not far from the funicular station

Paving: the churchyard is mainly made of stone cubes; the steps at the side entrance are made of stone; the floor inside the vestibule is made of mosaic stone. Five steps lead to the side entrance; the vestibule has a right side opening

Access: the church is generally accessed from the side portal

Services: not far from the church there is the Como – Brunate funicular station. The parking spaces available are few and almost all for residents. ATM and Pharmacy in Via Pietro e Maurizio Monti

Leisure and Catering: the Funicular itself is an opportunity for recreation. Bars, trattorias and restaurants in the area.

DESCRIPTION

(by Alberto Rovi, Ambra Garancini, Silvia Fasana)

The church of S. Andrea, originally the home of an Augustinian female monastery renowned for the personalities of the blessed Maddalena Albrici (1390-1465) and the legendary Santa Guglielma, has a grandiose concrete façade modelled in eclectic lines, designed by Engineer Stampa as part of the expansion (1927-1932) which redefined the religious space by enlarging it into a pseudo-octagonal shape, and concluding it with an airy dome, enclosed in an octagonal lantern. In the dome there is a fresco of the *Glory of Saints* by Raffaele Albertella (1934), who also painted the *Symbols of the Evangelists* in the pendentives that support the dome itself and, in the elongated sails that enclose them, the *Nativity*, the *Last Supper*, the *Crucifixion* and the *Resurrection*. Devotional subjects are placed on the four major pillars: *St. Joseph*, *The Guardian Angel*, *St. Aloysius Gonzaga*, *St. Agnes*. In addition to the classical marble angels-stoups (1937-1938). On the right side is the tombstone of Maddalena Albrici (early sixteenth century), similar in quality to Rodari's works in Como's Cathedral, already dispersed, but recovered by the architect Piero Clerici. The right side chapel (1936) is dedicated to the Blessed, which contrasts with the side entrance to the church, framed by a beautiful Baroque stone portal, formerly the main portal of the ancient church that was renovated in 1676. The presbytery and the two side chapels that precede it - carrying traces of seventeenth-century paintings, minimal in the one on the right dedicated to the Madonna of the Rosary, still substantial in the one in front (*Stories of St. Vincent Ferrer*) - remain rededicated to the Sacred Heart (canvas by C. C. Tagliabue, 1932, within a multilinear marble frame, early eighteenth century), with a statue of *the dead Christ* under the canteen. The vault above the intermediate space, which connects the presbytery and nave, bears a *Glory of St. Maurice* between lunettes with scenes of monastic virtue (Felice Gennari da Palestrina, 1890). But an even older fragment, from the late 1400s, depicts, according to popular devotion, *Santa Guglielma*, identified by a local tradition with the legendary figure of an English princess and queen

of Hungary, an exile and miracle worker in Brunate, who was never recognised as a saint by the Church. Another interpretation identifies the Saint with Guglielma called "la Boema", or "di Milano" (thirteenth century) historically active in Chiaravalle Milanese as a religious reformer, who died in a sanctimonious spirit and burned post-mortem, so that the disappearance of her remains would prevent the spread of the heresy professed by her followers. At the feet a nun and a devotee are kneeling, mostly interpreted as Blessed Maddalena Albrici and the commissioner of the painting. Those who identify Guglielma di Brunate with the "Bohemian", instead, interpret the two characters as Maifreda da Pirovano and Andrea Saramita, the two most important followers of the "Bohemian". Be that as it may, and given that at the moment no historical document proves the identification with Guglielma the Bohemian, the effigy of the legendary and mysterious Santa Guglielma was for centuries – and until the second post-war period – the destination of a "pilgrimage of milk": in fact, mothers and pregnant women came to it, especially from nearby Brianza, to ask for protection during and after childbirth and in particular for the gift of milk for their children.

The frescoes in the presbytery are by Gian Paolo Recchi and his nephews Raffaele and Carlo (1679-1682), restored by Leonardo Camporini (1998/1999): they represent a plastic *Annunciation* flanking the ancient apse window, recovered with the afore mentioned restoration (architect Darko Pandaković), the *Glory of Saints Andrew and Maurice* on the vault, in the lunettes (another recovery) the *Martyrdom of St. Maurice*, on the right, and *Sant'Andrea*, opposite, almost lost. In the four pendentives you can recognize the medals with *St. Michael the Archangel*, *St. Bartholomew*, *Blessed Maddalena Albrici*.

On the left side of the church (looking at the façade) two marble plaques recall: «Here / in Brunate / lived / at the nurse and in childhood / Alessandro Volta / with Elisabetta Pedraglio / whose husband Lodovico Monti / maker of barometers / infused him with his first love / of science / which gave him / the battery» (the text of which would have been attributed to Maurizio Monti) and «Brunate / homeland of the Monti children/ Maurizio historian Pietro philologist / to Alessandro Volta / who in these balsamic auras / opened the mind / discoverer of the battery / in the first centenary / D.D.»