

BASILICA OF ST MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION GALLARATE



The Church of St Mary of the Assumption in the centre of Gallarate is a neo-classical style building consecrated in 1870. In 1946 Pope Pius xn conferred on it the title of a Minor Roman Basilica .

The red brick bell tower (22) was erected on a more ancient tower basement, and is 45 meters high ending with a lodge roof Some first century B.C tombstones are walled into the tower, attesting the importance of Gallarate in the Roman period.

The main façade (1) has three entries each surmounted by a bas-relief representing respectively St Carlo Borromeo during his visit to Gallarate in 1570 on the left, "The Annunciation" in the middle, and on the right Captain Annibale Caccarana demanding forgiveness to Cardinal Federico Borromeo who had excommunicated him. Above, at the sides of the wide

window, there are two niches with the statues of the two patron saints of Gallarate, St Eurosia and St Christopher. At the top there are statues of the Virgin of the Assumption and two worshipping Angels.

Inside the Basilica a very wide single nave with mosaic flooring leads to the altar. It is parted by sixteen Corinthian columns.

Overhead, (2) in the middle, there is a magnificent dome, 27 meters high and 18 meters wide. Along the walls there are twelve niches containing statues of the Apostles and eighteen bas-reliefs of the life of the Virgin.

Up high, light filters from sixteen polychromatic glass windows representing the lives of Jesus, the Virgin and the Saints: under the façade there is the wonderful window representing The Virgin's Assumption into Heaven (3).

Pictorial decorations are by Luigi Cavenaghi. In the vault can be found frescoes such as "Justice", (5) "Charity", (6) "The Coronation of the Virgin"(7). In four pendentives of the dome there are the patriarchs Abraham, Moses, Isaiah and David, and in the dome, (2) "Jesus Arisen among the Saints Stephen, Lucy, Sebastian, Eurosia, Apollonia, Calimerus and Catherine of Alexandria".

There are six chapels on both sides of the nave. The first on the left is dedicated to St Charles Borromeo with a painting by De Belly of this Saint with St Louis Gonzaga.

The next chapel is dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption (8) with a majestic sculptural group by Giuseppe Rusnati.

The pulpits (9) on either side of the nave both have bas-reliefs representing episodes in the lives of Jesus and Moses and are held by caryatids with the symbols of the Evangelists and four Doctors of the Church.

The last chapel on the left is the one of St Joseph (10) with a statue by Tabacchi and frescoes representing St John and St Mark by Cavenaghi.

The high altar on the Presbytery (11), work of Tabacchi, has an unusual white statue of Christ the Redeemer collocated in a neo classic temple

with 8 green marble Corinthian columns. These support a hemispheric cup at the sides of which two allegoric figures are on their knees, representing "Penitence" and "Innocence". The antependium represents "The Deposition from the Cross", and here you can also find two frescoes by Cavenaghi.

The Organ (12) with 424 pipes, 62 registers and three keyboards was a 1922 gift of the Gallarate people to their Provost Mons. Pietro Sommariva.

On the right side of the Basilica, there is the Chapel of the Virgin (13) with its valuable wooden XVII century statue, and nearby the great Crucifix Chapel (14) with a baroque altar dating back to the end of the XVII century.

The last chapel dedicated to St John the Baptist (15) has a valuable statue by Giovanni Dupré. Two frescoes on the sides are by Cavenaghi - St Gregory the Great and St Ambrosius.

Other parts of the Church include:

- the Vestry (16) where there are valuable relics amongst which part of a 17th century canopy, perhaps used for the coronation of Napoleon as King of Italy;

- the Most Holy Jesus' Name Chapel (17), once a penitentiary, now known as the Wedding Chapel, with a stupendous 16th century banner, "The Circumcision of Jesus";

- the new Baptistery (18) with a wonderful work of the "Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River", by Niccolò Pisano;

- the Crypt (19) with the reliques of the Saints Almachii and Theodore and the War Memorial;

- The Picture Gallery (20) where several important paintings, ancient furnishings, sacred vestments etc are preserved under the custody and care of the present Provost, Mons. Ivano Valagussa;

- The Capitulary Archive (21) where precious volumes and documents are kept;

In addition, on temporary show there is a copy of the 16th century painting by Federico Barocci, "The Last Supper," where scenes of everyday life complete moments of intense religiosity

