



THE CATHEDRAL OF BERGAMO



WELCOME TO THE CAT

The Cathedral is the centre of the religious life of the town and of the diocese: it is the Bishop's church, the home of his "cathedra", the symbol of his ministry as a pastor and as a master. It is a living church, where the Christian community gathers to pray and to celebrate the Sacraments and where the Bishop's presence marks the most solemn days of the liturgical year and of the pastoral life of the Bergamasque Church. The Cathedral, therefore, is not just a monument: all the art treasures housed here are a symbol of faith, a means to glorify God and

CHRONOLOGY

5th cent. AD

Foundation of Saint Vincent's Cathedral on the surface of some Roman houses which are likely to have been used as domus ecclesiae by the first Christian community. It consists of a nave and two aisles and has a mosaic floor. It is 45m long and 24m wide.

897

Founding of the Chapter of Saint Vincent. The structure of the cathedral complex, including two churches (Saint Vincent's and Santa Maria Vetus), two houses (Parsonage and Bishop's residence), the Baptistry and a rest house for wayfarers (Xenodochium of Saint Cassian), may be traced back to this period.

Early 12th cent.

Romanesque transformation of Saint Vincent's through the raising of groin vaults supported by cross pillars. The canon choir is separated from the nave by means of a partition consisting of a marble base and a wall with Lombard arcading (frescoed later on).

1137

Construction of Santa Maria Maggiore in the place of Santa Maria Vetus.

1284

The Misericordia Maggiore – a charity congregation – is formed at Saint Vincent's Cathedral.

1449

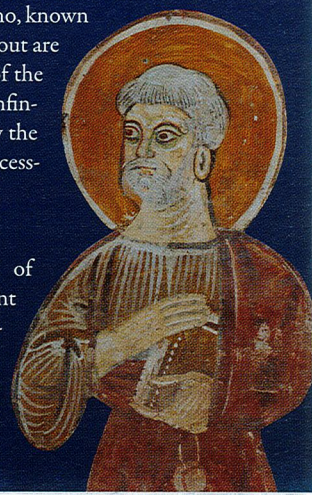
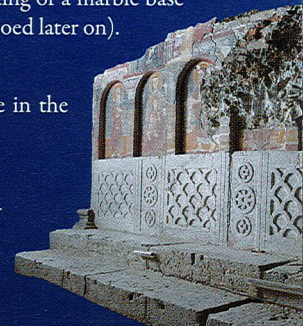
The Misericordia Maggiore congregation is entrusted with the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, which is thus separated from the cathedral complex.

1459

Bishop Giovanni Barozzi lays the first stone of the new Cathedral designed by Antonio Averlino, known as Filarete. The first operations carried out are the demolition and the construction of the nave. However, the works remain unfinished for about two centuries and only the presbytery of the ancient building is accessible during this time.

1561

Demolition of the Basilica of Sant'Alessandro fuori le mura (Saint Alexander outside the walls) and transfer of the relics and of the Chapter of Saint Alexander to Saint Vincent's Cathedral.



RIGHT-HAND SIDE CHAPELS

1 CHAPEL OF SAINT BENEDICT: altarpiece with Saint Benedict the Abbot and Saints Jerome and Louis of Toulouse by A. Previtali (1524). The wooden retable, made from a drawing by F. Alessandri (18th cent.), was changed to marble by A. Galletti in 1847. Statues of the Saints Philip and Simon by L. Pagani (1876).

2 CHAPEL OF SAINT CHARLES: Crucifixion altarpiece with Saints Charles and Ambrose by G.P. Cavagna (ca 1610). Altar by N. Salvi (18th cent.). Statues of Saints Matthew and Andrew by A. G. Sanz (1806).

3 CHAPEL OF SAINT GREGORY BARBARIGO: Holy Trinity altarpiece with Saints Gregory Barbarigo and Charles Borromeo by N. La Piccola (1763). Altar by N. Salvi (1762). Statues of the Saints James the Greater and James the Less by S. and G. Caligari (1783). Bronze antependium by A. Arrigoni (18th cent.). Painting of Saint Joseph by G. Riva (1908).

SOUTH TRANSEPT

4 Above: Saints Fermo, Rustico and Procolo by S. Ricci (1704). Below: Death of Saint Francis Xavier by F. Polazzo (ca 1735).

5 Altars of Saints Fermo, Rustico and Procolo by F. Juvarra (1731). Statues of the Saints and the Virtues and antependium decorations by Masters from Carrara (1733). The four angels on the top are a creation of Fantoni's workshop (1740). Big bronze urn by G. Filiberti from a drawing by F. Alessandri (1753) with silver shrine by B. Trivella (1766).

6 Saints Fermo and Rustico visited in jail by Saint Procolo, by G. B. Cignaroli (1744).



Altar of Saints Fermo, Rustico and Procolo by F. Juvarra (1731)

PRESBYTERY

7 High Altar, reassembled by M. Alessandri (1715). Tribune made of bronze and hard stones by C. Targoni (1588) with a small door by E. Salmeggia. Bronze angels by A. Fontana (1715). High-relief decorative panels by A. Arrighi and G. C. Sanz (1757). On the antependium we find bronze and iron alloy figures dating back to the 16th century.

The silver antependium of the altar facing the faithful dates back to the 17th century. The urn containing Saint Alexander's relics is a work by P. Roberti (1702) and is made of silver as well.

Above (top): canopy (1758) with the Eternal Father and the Holy Spirit by G. P. Cavagna (17th century).

The choir, by G. C. Sanz (1693-1698), is vast and full of carvings (44 caryatids and 132 cherubs and putti altogether); the Bishop's throne (cathedra) by A. Fantoni (1705) is located in the middle of the presbytery and is decorated with boxwood medallions.

Behind the altar: Madonna of the Doves by G. Cariani (early 16th century).

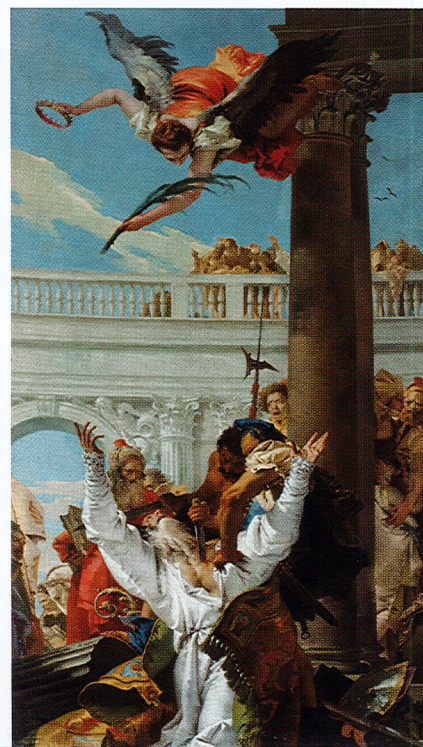
8 Martyrdom of Saint James the Archdeacon and of 40 canons by P. P. Raggi (1704).

9 Martyrdom of Saint James the Archdeacon by S. Manaigo (1744).

10 Martyrdom of Saint Esteria by G. B. Pittoni (1744).

11 Preaching of Saint Viator by F. Monti (1742).

12 Martyrdom of Saint Alexander, canvas by N. Malinconico (1694), with a surface of over 26 sq. m. Above: Saint Alexander crossing the Adda river, fresco by C. I. Carloni (1762).



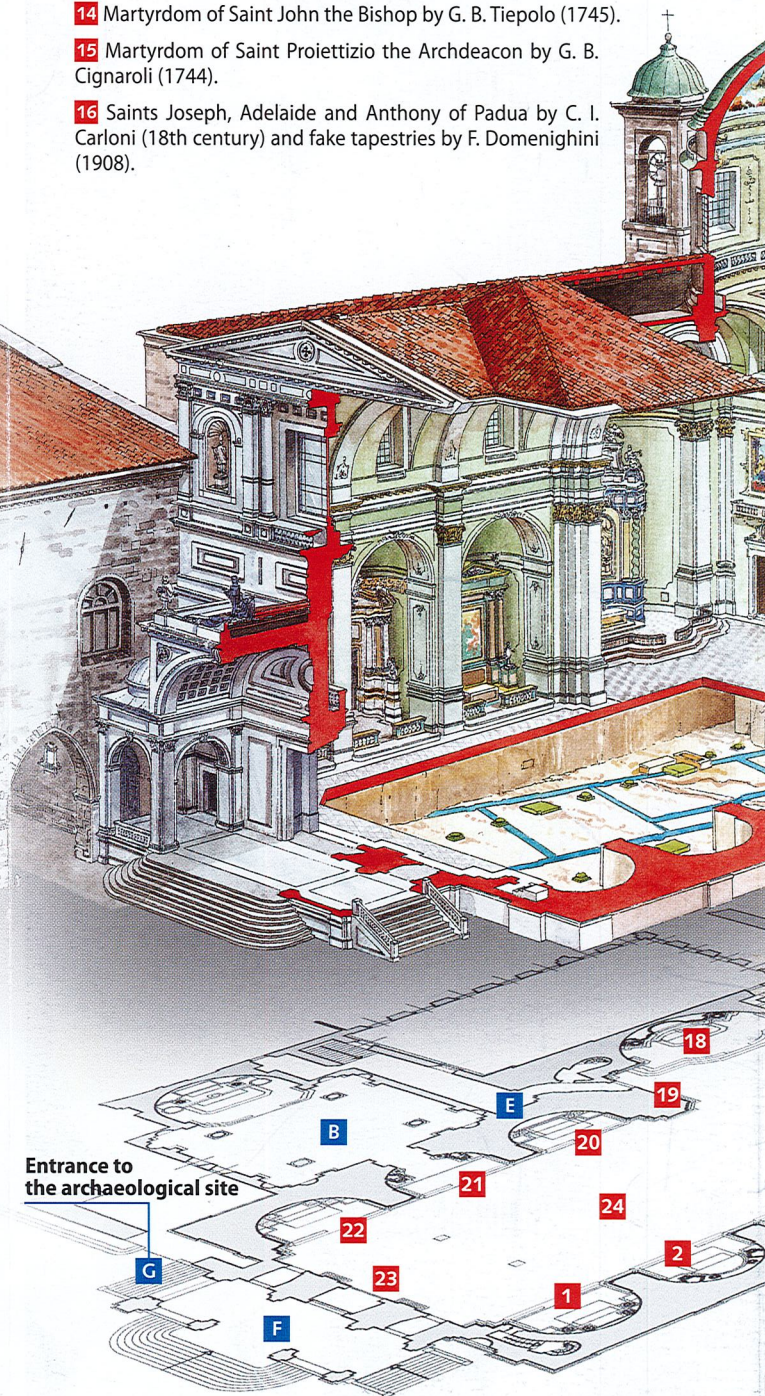
Martyrdom of Saint John the Bishop by G. B. Tiepolo (1745)

13 Episcopal consecration of Saint Narnus by F. Polazzo (1742).

14 Martyrdom of Saint John the Bishop by G. B. Tiepolo (1745).

15 Martyrdom of Saint Proietizio the Archdeacon by G. B. Cignaroli (1744).

16 Saints Joseph, Adelaide and Anthony of Padua by C. I. Carloni (18th century) and fake tapestries by F. Domenighini (1908).



Entrance to the archaeological site

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NORTH TRANSEPT

17 Presentation of Jesus at the Temple by P. Rotari (1746).

18 Altar of the Blessed Virgin of Mercy by M. Alessandri (1707), with beautiful Varallo green twisted columns. The wooden statue dates back to 1701. The marble bas-reliefs of Mary's Seven Sorrows (1710) and the two big angels holding the crown on the top (1725) are by A. Fantoni.

19 Above: Deposition by M. Brida (ca 1745). Below: Passing away of Saint Joseph by F. Polazzo (ca 1735).

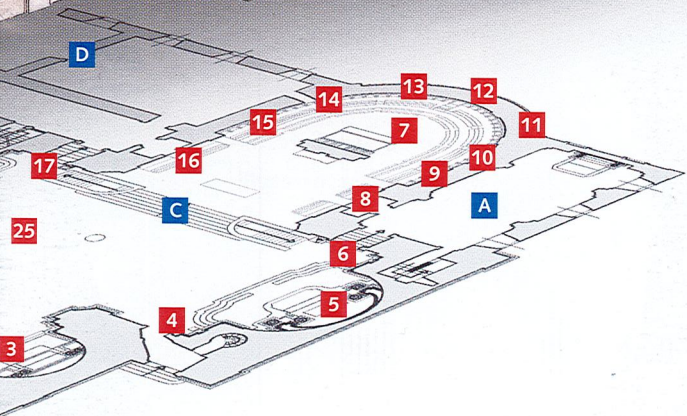
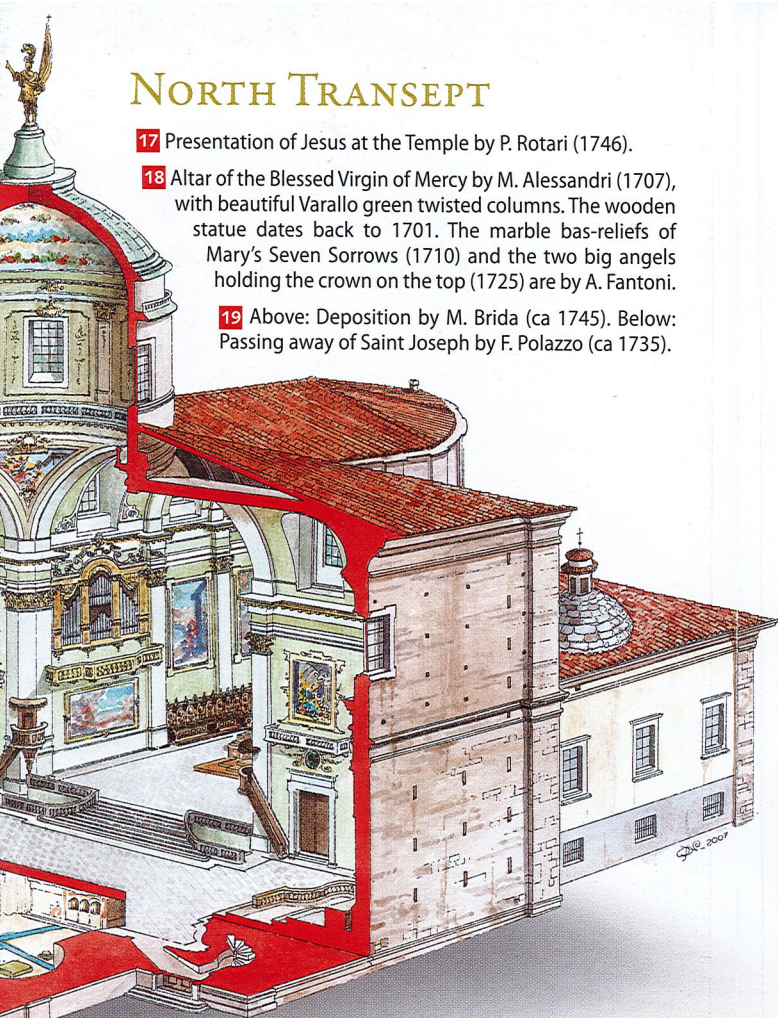


Illustration by Damiano Nembrini
Photos by Marco Mazzoleni

LEFT-HAND SIDE CHAPELS

20 **CHAPEL OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL:** altarpiece of Saints Peter and Paul with the Virgin and Saint Barnabas in adoration of the Holy Trinity, by F. Polazzo (ca 1737). Statues of Saints John the Evangelist and Jude Thaddeus by G. C. Sanz (1775).

21 **FORMER CHAPEL OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST:** the top of the altar, dating back to the 18th century, and the altarpiece of the Baptism of Christ by D. Creti (1733) were removed in 1856 to create an access to the Chapel of the Holy Crucifix (B) and are now kept in the sacristy. Statues of Saints Peter and Paul by G. Caligari (1783). On the left: Saint Charles Borromeo by G. Manzù (1946).

22 **CHAPEL OF SAINT CATHERINE:** altarpiece of the Madonna in Glory with Saint Catherine of Alexandria and Saint Jerome, Doctor of the Church, by G. B. Moroni (1576). The wooden retable by F. Alessandri, dating back to the 18th century, was changed to marble by A. Galletti in 1848. Statues of Saints Thomas and Bartholomew by F. Barzaghi (1875).

NAVE AND DOME

23 **COUNTER-FACADE:** Saint Alexander destroying the idols and Saint Grata picking up Saint Alexander's head by P. P. Raggi (1704). Above: Saint Alexander raising a dead man and Decollation of Saint Alexander, frescoes by G. B. Gariboldi (1766).

24 **VAULTS:** on the vaults of the nave, of the transept and of the presbytery: tempera-painted (1762) and frescoed (1766) biblical scenes by F. Ferrari – David killing Goliath, Sacrifice of Jephte's daughter, Samson defeating the Philistines.

25 **DOMES:** Glory of Saint Alexander, large fresco by F. Coggetti (1853). On the pendentives: the four Major Prophets – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezekiel – by C. I. Carloni (1762).

A **CHAPEL OF SAINT VINCENT** (1697): altar by the Manni brothers (1703); altarpiece by C. Ceresa (17th century); on the sidewall: martyrdom of Saint Lawrence by Roman School masters (1705). Since 2000 this Chapel has also been dedicated to Blessed Pope John XXIII and some personal belongings of his are kept in there. The statue of Pope John XXIII is by A. Verdi (1989).

B **CHAPEL OF THE HOLY CRUCIFIX:** frescoes by A. Guadagnini (1862), statues by I. Fraccaroli (1866) and stuccoes by L. Pagani. This chapel houses the Blessed Sacrament and is therefore a place of prayer and of complete silence.

C **BISHOPS' CRYPT** (created from the transformation of the Baroque "scurolo" in 1979): marble sarcophagi by B. Cassinelli and Rising Christ by P. Brolis.

D The **SACRISTY** is not open to the public and houses paintings by E. Salmeggia, J. Palma the Younger, A. Maganza, P. and F. Ronzelli, A. Cifrondi, G. Cotta, Fra' Galgario, F. Capella, G. Raggi, M. Picenardi, F. Coggetti, G. Riva; large fresco on the vault by F. Ferrari (1760) and marble bust of the canon M. Lupo by A. Gelpi (1785). Silverware: Cross by Ughetto (1386). Textiles, embroideries and laces from the 16th to the 20th century. A number of valuable canvases, textile and silverware works are on display at the **DIOCESAN MUSEUM ADRIANO BERNAREGGI**.

E **MADONNINA DEI CANONICI:** Byzantine painting dating back to the 15th century.

F **FACADE:** bronze statue of Saint Alexander by P. Sozzi; marble sculptures of Saints Fermo and Rustico by A. Rota; medallions with Saints Peter and Paul and bronze statues representing Faith and Hope by L. Pagani (1898). On the dome, Saint Alexander in gilded copper by C. Broggi (1851).



THE MARTYRDOM OF SAINT ALEXANDER

The high altar catches the eye of the visitor, turning it to the paintings of the choir. The largest and most ancient canvas is located in the middle: it is a monumental painting by Neapolitan artist Nicola Malinconico (1694). Here martyrdom is seen as an extreme test of faith. The author set the decapitation of the Saint – which took place in the 4th century – on a stony stage. The martyr has refused to offer sacrifices to pagan gods because he wants to become a witness of Christ. That is why we can see a destroyed stone idol near him. The strength and determination coming from his fervent faith divert his attention from what is happening to him. He is ecstatically concentrated towards the sky and towards God, who is surrounded by angels on a pile of clouds. The gestures of the bystanders reach their peak of expressiveness in the female figure in the foreground – Saint Grata. She is sumptuously dressed and dramatically desperate, ready to perform an important duty after the martyrdom: picking up the head and the dead body of the Saint to give him a proper burial.

1689

Bishop Daniele Giustiniani consecrates the new Cathedral, which is dedicated only to Saint Alexander and is built according to a design by Carlo Fontana. The two Chapters of Saint Vincent and Saint Alexander are joined in that of Sant'Alessandro Maggiore once and for all.

1697

Consecration of the Chapel of Saint Vincent.

18th cent.

Construction of the side altars; internal decoration.

19th cent.

Completion of works: 1851 building of the dome; 1866 construction and decoration of the Chapel of the Holy Crucifix; 1889 inauguration of the façade of the Cathedral; 1897-1898 creation of the façade sculptures; 1898 definitive location of the Baptistry opposite the Cathedral.

1906

Construction of the Bishops' crypt. Elia Fornoni finds some remains of the ancient Saint Vincent's Cathedral.

1979

Transformation of the Baroque "scurolo" ("dark vault") into a new crypt for the burial of Bishops, according to Bishop Giulio Oggioni's will.

2004-2008

Archaeological excavations lead to the discovery of the Roman urban fabric and of the early Christian and medieval remains of Saint Vincent's Cathedral. Renovation works in the interior of the Cathedral: the chromatic shades are brought back to those of the eighteenth century.



CATHEDRAL OF BERGAMO

to teach mankind the truth that leads to heaven. It welcomes you with its impressive baroque interiors, as in a heavenly dream. You will not only find valuable artworks, but also the peace and the calm breath that only holy sites are able to offer. Do not haste to spot a masterpiece or to discover some amazing details. Whether you believe in God or you are just looking for a hope, respect this house as if it were your own home, as if it rekindled a never-ending sense of nostalgia: this is the very reason why it was created.



www.cattedraledibergamo.it

www.museobernareggi.it