



FONDAZIONE BANCA DEL MONTE DI LOMBARDIA

Pavia e la sua provincia



3-Basilica of San Pietro in ciel d'oro

The Romanesque basilica of San Pietro in ciel d'oro built in the 12th century in tiles and stones, stands on the outline of a more antique church. This must have had a wooden ceiling entirely covered of gold: hence the curious denomination San Pietro in ciel d'oro or *in a Golden Sky* which remained to indicate the present basilica. Originally outside of the urban area, it was incorporated into the centre of the city at the beginning of the 13th century, following the widening of the walls.

Cited by Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio, the church owes its fame to the presence of the remains of Saint Agostino and the philosopher Severino Boezio.

A gravestone placed on the façade quotes the passage of the Divine Comedy that narrates the illustrious burial.

In the Middle Ages the church was object of frequent pilgrimages, as testify the glazed plates of oriental production inserted in the walls at the top of the facades, gift of the pilgrims returning from the Holy Land.

The facade, hut shaped, is divided in three parts by buttresses, and is decorated on the upper part by a blind lodging, surmounted by small braided arcs.

The portal is enriched by stone bas-relief; in the skylight the crowned character that stands by the angel in prayer is, according to tradition, the Longobardion king Liutprando. The sovereign, to whom is granted the transfer of the remains of Saint Agostino in Pavia, is buried inside the church, as is reminded by a gravestone placed on the base of a column at the end of the right nave.

The space inside is divided into three naves, finished by three semicircular apses, delineated by powerful columns on which sculptured capitals lean, with representations of complex symbolic significance of which sagittarian centaurs, chimeras, and griffins. The vaulted cover, cross shaped is the result of 4th century remodelling.

At the end of the minor nave on the right, a fragment of mosaic, residue of the precious pavement of the Romanesque church, presents representations of symbolic nature.

On the presbytery, the monumental Arc of Saint Agostino can be admired, made by lombardian masters around the middle of the 14th century on the order of the Agostinian priests.

It is divided into three floors: the basement with the figures of the apostle and of the Virtue, the small temple with the statue of the saint lying down surrounded by Agostinians and the series of bas-reliefs representing miracles and episodes of the life of the saint. On the right side, two quadrangular forms are a reminder of the transfer of the remains into the city of Pavia and the basilica of San Pietro.

The remains of the Saint can be found today closed in a silver casket Longobardian made, placed inside the major altar.

The image of the saint is also present in the fresco of the basin apse, a false mosaic gold background that represents Christ on the throne between Saint Agostino and the mother Monica on one side and San Pietro, owner of the church, on the other. The painting was completed in 1900. The crypt of renovation, guards the remains of Severino Boezio, philosopher of the 5th century, last representative of the Roman administration of the city, condemned to death by the gothic King Teodorico, because suspected of treason. Against the end wall is a well from which at one time gushed waters believed to be miraculous. The sacristy deserves a visit, richly decorated by 5th century frescos with "a grotesque" motifs.

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