

VareseNews

Bread, milk and the Internet. The shop on Sacro Monte opens up again

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After nearly thirty years, Sacro Monte is going to have its grocer's shop again. It will be in the same place as thirty years ago, but now with the name "Negozio Polifunzionale", providing services that we couldn't even imagine thirty years ago, such as an Internet connection, and the ability to use some of the services of the Chamber of Commerce, of Varese Province and of the Regional Charter.

The inauguration ceremony was held today, 1 February 2010, before about one hundred authorities, journalists and inhabitants, who were cold, but happy to see an active shop in the village.

And active is the right word, the "Ambiente e Sviluppo Santa Maria del Monte" Social Cooperative shop has already been serving the 130 inhabitants of the village for over a month, since its actually opening. In fact, today's crowd of VIPs was almost a disturbance for the elderly gentleman counting the coins, and the young mother doing her shopping. And, before today's "official" blessing, the priest, Don Corno, reminded everyone that "I already blessed the shop a month ago", as if to say that the blessing has been working wonderfully already for some time.

The shop on Sacro Monte is not only the seventh and last "poly-functional shop" in the project carried out by the Chamber of Commerce and the Region, in collaboration with the Province, the shopkeepers' association, UNIASCOM, and the confederation of traders, CONFESERCENTI, "to provide real support to revive marginal areas, particularly mountain, and some lake zones, but also a real attempt to revitalise a place that is better known by UNESCO than by the inhabitants of Varese Province.

The shop is not only going to serve the inhabitants, but also the numerous pilgrims that climb the "Salita Sacra", and the holidaymakers that want to enjoy the village's spectacular view. Opening times of the shop are ideal: every day, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Sundays). The shop sells the food products typically found in mini-markets, but also standard products of every kind: from the extraordinary box of "Via Sacra" chocolates, each one showing a different chapel, to engraved cribs, from books of photographs, to "brutti e buoni" biscuits, from Cantello asparagus in jars, to "polenta" flours ground by hand on local mills. There is even a computer point, with Internet access and a smart-card reader, with which you can access the services provided by the Chamber of Commerce, and by the Province, and those of the Regional Service Charter. "But it hasn't been at all easy, because the broadband

doesn't come this far," commented Giancarlo di Ronco, vice chairperson of the cooperative that runs the shop.

This Varese initiative is the first of its kind in Lombardy, and it has already been so successful that the Region is going to extend it to other provinces. "It's worthwhile exporting this important experience in Varese, to create a broader project," Sergio Bellani, the director of UNIASCUM, stressed. "There are at least six provinces that would benefit."

Provinces that "discovered and applauded the first experiences, during a conference in Brescia, held last November," the provincial councillor, Bruno Specchiarelli, said. "One of the shopkeepers, Ms Di Veddasca, also took part in this conference, and she surprised the audience with the accessory services her shop provides, from distributing prescription drugs, to home delivery for the elderly.

"Now, with this shop, Sacro Monte is beginning to have the minimum conditions to become an independent village," said the Mayor of Varese, Attilio Fontana, as he cut the ribbon.

"Now other parts of Varese that need a shop like this, Rasa, for example, can follow suit" added the councillor for commerce, Giordano.

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