

## Renovation work and curious anecdotes on the Basilica of San Vittore, in Arcisate, which turns 500

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This year, we are celebrating the **500th anniversary of the Provostal Church of San Vittore, in Arcisate**, and in the same year, **major restoration work**, to return the walls of the church to their former splendour, is in progress.

The work is discovering curious news and details about the church's history. "The renovation of the external walls of our Basilica is bringing to light several decorations and significant details, which reveal important and curious aspects of our history of faith," said **Don Valentino Venezia**.

The discovery of a plaque on the adjacent wall of the baptistry led to the bringing to light of a processional cross over the letters "ISZI", which means 1521, **the date when the construction of the existing collegiate church began**. The consecration of the basilica, excluding a number of additions made during the following centuries, probably took place in 1525, as one of the plaques testifies: "On 29 November 1525, I, Antonio Melegnano, the Bishop of Lodi and Suffragan of the Right Reverend Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, the Archbishop of Milan, have consecrated this church, in honour of the Holy Martyr Victor of Milan."

The origins of the complex of San Vittore and the adjacent Baptistery of San Giovanni probably date back to the 5th century, as suggested by an epigraphic testimony discovered during refurbishment work of the presbytery, which was carried out in 1745. However, the first written mention of the provostal church dates back to 1095. Contemporary with this document was also the bell tower, along the north part of the front of the church.

**Two recent outdoor findings** testify to the existence of two presbyteries, already in 1252 and 1256: the plaque of Ogerio da Borezio, on the southern side, and the tombstone of Arderico de Peracio, an inhabitant of the village. This was an interesting discovery, because it indicates that, already in 1252, there was a community who celebrated mass.

On the external wall of the current altar of the “Virgin Mary of the Rosary”, the date of its construction was found to be ‘J811’, that is, the year 1811. It was built, together with the altar of the Crucifix, at the behest of Cardinal Odescalchi of Como, now the Blessed Pope Innocent XI, in order to accommodate the remarkable marble altars of the Baroque period, which were placed here as real papal altars. In the date, the use of the letter J to indicate the number 1 can still be seen. It is a recurring peculiarity in other dates in the centre of Arcisate, and was probably a decorative technique typical of a local craftsman.

**The inscriptions on the portal and the entrance pronaos are also significant.** The former, which is located above the main door, is taken from the book of Genesis and is flanked by a fresco depicting two angels. The phrase is connected to Jacob’s visionary experience, in which God told him that all those who enter the House of God are invited to be aware of the sacredness of the place. The latter, which is on the facade of the church, commemorates Saint Victor, the martyred soldier and **patron saint of Arcisate**, who dedicated his life to the Lord.

“This year will be an opportunity to rediscover our basilica and to celebrate this community, which renews its faith every day, becoming a joyful community made up of living stones, still capable of proclaiming and witnessing to the Gospel,” Don Valentino concluded.

Translated by Charlotte Ovalle and Giorgia Perinelli

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