

CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA ASSUNTA





Built between the 11th and 12th centuries, the Cathedral Church of Brienza in 1222 was enriched with many privileges under Bishop Ruggiero and then became a single parish in 1683 when the six parishes of the city were united to it. Countless extensions and renovations changed the original layout of the building, which underwent a final structural intervention at the end of the 1800s. After the 1980 earthquake, only consolidation and restoration work was carried out.

The church, which is built on three levels, has a longitudinal plan with three naves and a semicircular apse closing off the nave, two crypts, one located under the left aisle and the other under the sacristy, and numerous underground rooms that, until 1818, were used for the burial of the devout.

The monumental stone portal, surmounted by a niche with a bas-relief of the Virgin of the Assumption into Heaven, and the white stuccoes of the pilasters and floral elements are highlighted by the pink background that predominates on the façade; on the right side of the façade is the bell tower whose style reveals a Romanesque origin, but which, ruined by the earthquake of 1857, visibly bears the signs of the subsequent reconstruction that changed its appearance.

The interior, spacious and bright, brings out the beauty of the main altar and the 18th-century choir loft, both made of exquisitely painted wood, whose original construction had been concealed by successive layers of paint and was brought back to light by the restorations carried out in 2010; on the same choir loft are the wooden doors, also completely painted, of the ancient pipe organ.

Of clear Neapolitan manufacture is the polychrome marble altar that was commissioned by Bishop Domenico Antonio Menafra in 1729; the year of execution, the name and insignia of the commissioner are clearly visible on the base of the aedicule. The altar takes its name from the painting above it depicting Our Lady of Providence. The painting, unsigned and undated, was made by an unknown local artist, presumably Pietrafesa. Worthy of mention is the Altar of the Most Holy Crucifix, which is located in the right minor nave, at the sixth bay, and which housed the wooden sculpture of Christ Crucified until 23 November 1980. The effigy, which is the object of great devotion by the people of Burgundy and the faithful from neighbouring

towns, has been placed in the Church of the Santissima Annunziata, which serves as the parish church at this time.

A Baroque-style shrine, made entirely of painted and gilded wood, adorns the Altar of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, which is located in one of the two crypts and is framed by the ancient majolica tiled floor, probably produced in Vietri, and the 18th-century frescoes decorating the barrel-vaulted ceiling; The other crypt, larger and brighter than the first, houses the Deposition, a canvas by the well-known painter Nicola Peccheda, who painted, dated and signed the work in 1784.

The church, which was closed for about 32 years after the 1980 earthquake, was consecrated and reopened for worship in 2012, but its location in the old uninhabited village, off-centre from the new town and not fully accessible, makes its usability limited.

TEXT AND REVIEW TEXT

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PHOTOS

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