

La Cattedrale



The foundation of 1100 and the extensions of the 13th and 14th centuries. There is no reliable information about early Christian churches pre-existing the cathedral. Probably there were two before August 26th 1107 when, as it is proved by the foundation stone, the

building works started. An earthquake, as the bishop Sicardo narrates several years later, interrupted the building process in 1117, which started again in 1129. It is not still clear to what extent the building was damaged by the earthquake; it is known, though, that most of the material used for the old building was re-used, including some ornamental elements such as the prophets on the sides of the main door. The original aspect of the cathedral, a Romanesque structure, is very different from the present one. The plan of the building is basilican, without a transept, with three apsed aisles, of which the central one is covered with trusses with a full view of the roof. The facade is made of brick in Romanesque style and with only one entrance.

In the XIV century, the building was modified with the construction of the gothic vaulted ceiling in the nave and the construction of the transept. At the beginning of the 14th century the Torrazzo, originally built as a town tower with a defensive aim but then become the bell tower of the cathedral, was probably finished.

Presumably from 1413 the vaults in the aisles, the vaults in the nave and the ones in the transepts are built. The painted cycle of the Old Testament was realized in these years on the vaults of the transepts and it was finished in 1430. The stories of Joseph and his brothers (south transept) and those of Jacob, Rebecca and Esau (northern transept) are

noteworthy, because they are some of the few western examples of the Old Testament being represented inside a holy place.

At the end of the century the raising of the central part of the facade began with the two scrolls and the gable featuring the cathedral today. Among the precious holy ornaments enriching the cathedral in this period there is the Great Silver Cross of 1478 and the wonderful canonic choir, carved and inlaid by Giovanni Maria from Piadena, called the Platina. The most significant artistic season of the cathedral begins in the first years of the XVI century, when they started painting the apse and the walls of the nave. The fresco paintings were started in 1506 by Boccaccio Boccaccino and continued by Gianfrancesco Bembo, Altobello Melone, Girolamo Romanino, Pordenone and Bernardino Gatti, the last one ended the cycle in 1529. The apse walls were painted by Bernardino and Antonio Campi. The altar piece representing or Lady of the Assumption was commissioned to Bernardino Gatti at the end of the century.

In the same period most of the paintings decorating the chapels of the Madonna of the People and of the Holy Sacrament were realized.

In order to respect the new liturgical rules stated by the Council of Trento, the area in the presbytery was modified at the beginning of the 17th century, creating the so-called "Piazzetta senatoria". The altar was lowered to the detriment of the vaults of the crypt below, then restored due to a collapse.

Most of the altars in the aisles and the transepts were erected or renewed in this century.

It is interesting to know that in 1629 the cattle wardens of the cathedral commissioned twelve tapestries representing Samson's stories to decorate the nave, they were made in Brussels. They are priceless artifacts which are shown to the public during special events.

the works carried out in the Cathedral in this century only completed what already existed. It is worth to remember the work of the architect Giovan Battista Zaist, who designed the background to the Chapel of the

Madonna of the People and made some changes to the main altar, enriched with polychrome marbles and elegant scrolls.

Less important, compared to the 15th and 16th century paintings, are the 19th century decorations on the walls of the presbytery events from the Gospel linked to the Resurrection painted by Giuseppe Diotti.

Nowadays we can enjoy a lovely square and we can walk around the entire cathedral thanks to a demolition action begun in the second half of the 19th century and finished by the first years of the

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20th century. The demolition regarded all the buildings close to the cathedral, which were ruining the aesthetic impact.

The foundation stone, preserved above the entrance of the sacristy, shows the date when the construction of the most significant church in town was begun: August 26th, 1107. Enoch and Eliah, whose death is not mentioned in the Old Testament, hold the inscription. It is an evident choice (similar to the foundation stone in the Cathedral of Modena) to give an idea of eternity to the cathedral.

In the year 2007 the Cathedral celebrated 900 years of life and during his visit to the diocese the bishop Dante Lafranconi wanted to give particular emphasis to this anniversary, underlining its spiritual meaning. In his message to the believers from Cremona the bishop. Lafranconi wrote:
?The cathedral, born in the 12th century, testifies the faith of the previous centuries and radiates its light on the following ones. It reminds us of the far roots of our Christian identity and invites us to discover its beauty again. We could not be proud of having such a beautiful cathedral, if we were not proud of being Christians. Although it is only a historical and artistic place of interest for many tourists, it is, like every church, the place of the Presence (1 Kings' book 8,29) and the house of prayer (Lk. 19, 46). We need to reflect upon the mystery of the cathedral as a sign of God's presence in the heart of the civil town?.

The jubilee year began on December 25th, 2006 during the celebration of

the holy Midnight Service and ended on December 25th, 2007 with the singing of the Second Christmas vespers. Beside remarkable cultural events, such as a series of historical, theological and artistic conferences or the musical events proposed by the Cathedral Choir, the liturgical calendar was rich. For example there were for different groups: sick people and sanitary workers (February 11th, 2007), priests and nuns (April 25th, 2007), congregations from different parishes in town (May 2nd), altar servers and choirs (June 2nd), priests and deacons (June 15th, 2007), charity people and volunteers (November 11th). The solemn Service on August 26th (the foundation day of the cathedral) officiated by Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi and co-officiated by Msg. Lafranconi and other eleven bishops coming from different Lombard districts was unforgettable. In the central part of the speech the bishop asked himself: ? What does it positively mean to continue building our Cathedral, that is our Church? It basically means to remain strongly attached to Christ, our cornerstone; furthermore it means to grow in the communion with all the people belonging to Christ; it means to be involved in the mission of the Church, proclaiming ? God's marvellous deeds? to the world.

The fruits of the Jubilee year, strongly supported by the bishop Dante, are the church of the Eucharistic Adoration (in Saint Girolamo, the subsidiary church of the cathedral located in Sicardo Street) and the town mission addressed to young people, which took place from 26th April to 10th May 2008.