



Liceo Scientifico e
Linguistico Statale
“Carlo Miranda”



Parrocchia
San Sossio

BASILICA OF SAINT SOSIO

THE MAIN CATHOLIC PLACE OF WORSHIP
OF THE ITALIAN MUNICIPALITY OF
FRATTAMAGGIORE AND PROBABLY THE
MOST ANCIENT CHURCH IN THE DIOCESE OF
AVERSA.



THE SAINT'S LIFE- SAN SOSIO

St Sossio was one of the first Christian martyrs, along with St Gennaro to whom he was deeply attached.

As it can be read in the hagiographic works, he was the deacon of Miseno, very popular, and he had friends in Pozzuoli, Naples, Rome and Benevento; his fame was extended among the Greek and African communities.

The Saint spread the word of the Gospel in the Roman port of Miseno and he was a point of reference for Christians fleeing persecution. In 305 he was imprisoned, he was martyred at the Solfatara of Pozzuoli during the persecution of Diocletian and he was beheaded.

In 1807, on the initiative of the bishop Michelangelo Lupoli, the relics of the Saint were transferred from the Benedictine Monastery of Naples, which had been destroyed, to the Church of Frattamaggiore. Hence the title "BENEDICTINE CITY" given to our town.

Image taken by the students of the linguistic high school «C. Miranda.»



THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

The church was built in the tenth century by some inhabitants of Miseno who had taken refuge in Frattamaggiore fleeing persecution.

The consecration took place on 12 October 1522, in 1902 it was declared a national monument and in 2006 Pope Benedict XVI elevated it to the dignity of Pontifical Basilica.



FRATTAMAGGIORE - Piazza Umberto I - Parrocchia S. Sosio

Photo found online.

THE CHURCH FROM ITS ORIGINS.

The church of St Sossio is today the result of numerous transformations and enlargements carried out over time.

The oldest evidence of the church can be found in the basilica dating back to the early Middle Ages, in a noble tombstone dated to 1295, and in the title Ecclesia Sancti Sossii documented in the Rationes Decimarum of 1310 and 1324.

Its original plan dates back to the 10th century, when it was presented as a Romanesque-Longobard basilica, but it was rebuilt at the end of the 14th century in the form of Neapolitan Gothic (Angevin forms), as documented by the ogival windows. In 1522 the church was enlarged: the side aisles were added, with different devotional altars, and the transept; in 1546 the bell tower was built.

During the eighteenth century the building was the subject of restoration and general modernization in the Baroque style: on this occasion, civic pride and religious devotion enriched the temple with works by Luca Giordano and Francesco Solimena, two great artists of the Neapolitan Baroque.

In 1894, we have subsequent restoration, directed by the architects D'Amora and Buongiorno.



...TO TODAY

In 1945 the church suffered a terrible fire that destroyed the baroque and eighteenth-century superstructures, including the precious coffered ceiling, the altarpiece and other valuable works.

The sixteenth-century portal, the chapel of St Sossio and the baptismal font were saved from the fire. Part of the ancient artistic heritage is now preserved in the Sansossiano Museum of Sacred Art which is located in the medieval crypt.

On the occasion of the seventeenth centenary of the martyrdom of Saint Sossio (305-2005), his Chapel with its frescoes and works of art was also restored, and two new and precious urns were prepared for the custody of the remains of Saints Sossio and Severino.

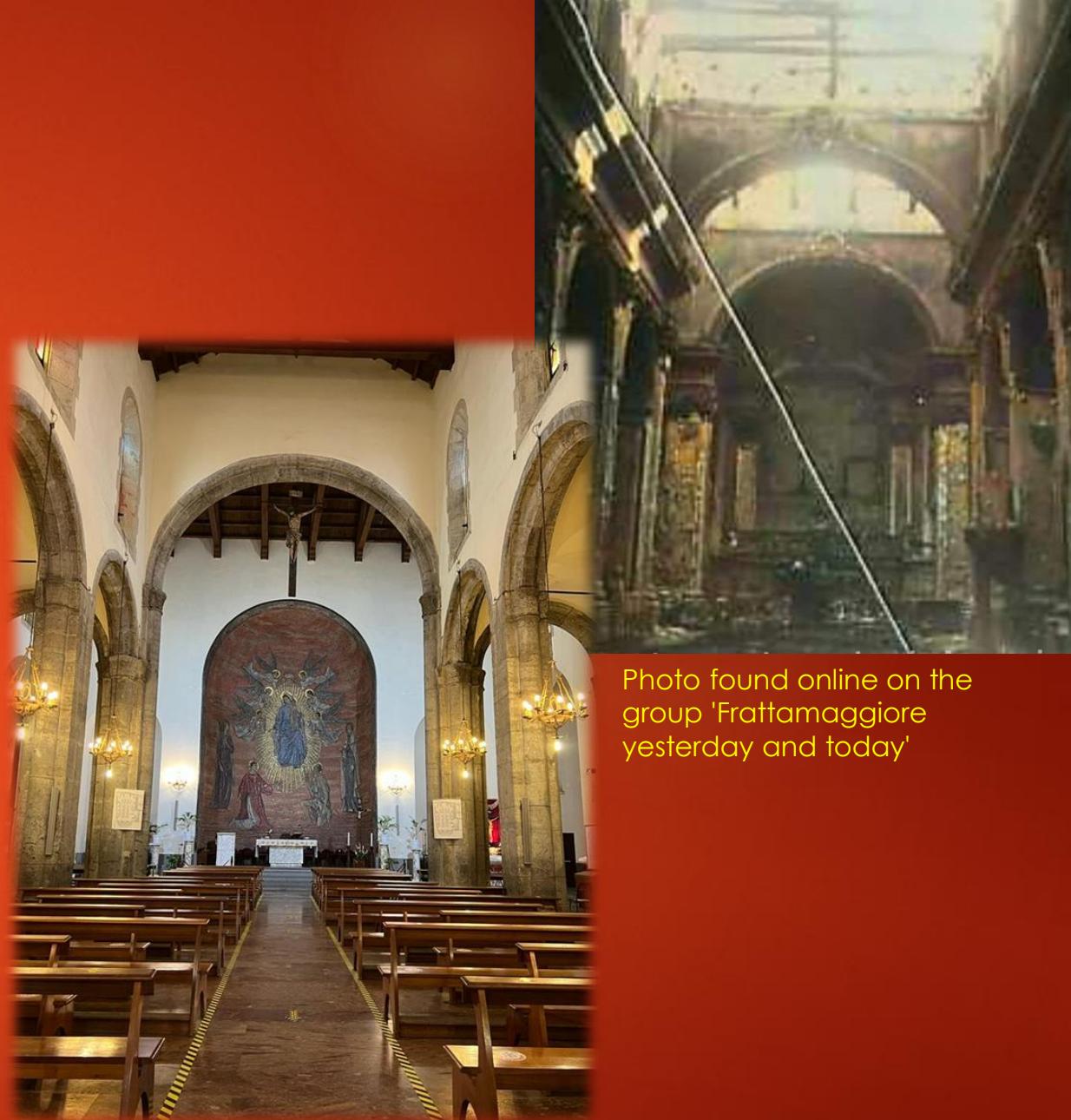


Photo found online on the group 'Frattamaggiore yesterday and today'

Image taken by the students of the linguistic high school «C. Miranda.»

THE FAÇADE

Photos taken by students of the linguistic high school «C. Miranda.»

It is possible to access the building through a space in front called churchyard, raised by a staircase in piperno.

The facade is characterized by a baroque style contrasting with the interior that is very simple.

The entrance is characterized by a valuable Renaissance marble portal, framed by two columns that support an architrave. The portal is surmounted by the papal symbol of the two crossed keys surmounted by the papal tiara. Along the entablature runs the inscription "BASILICA PONTIFICIA SAN SOSSIO" which recalls the title conferred on our basilica.

On the sides of the main portal there are two side portals in piperno, surmounted by empty semicircular niches.

The upper register of the facade has, in the central bay, a window surmounted by a curved tympanum and, in the side bays, niches that contain the statues of the patron saints of Frattamaggiore: San Sossio and Santa Giuliana.

The facade is crowned by a gable with curved motifs that connect the different heights.



PORTALS

According with the master of the doors, the sculptor Eduardo Filippo, the door of a basilica is important and it must be decorated because, as John also says in his Gospel, it is the way to the Lord, the gate of heaven.

Before the realization there were several studies, the first one was done on the architectural and iconographic composition of the images.

The whole realization of the portal lasted a year and a half due.

At the top there is the coat of arms of the Vatican basilicas, that is, the papal tiara with intertwined keys.

Photo taken by the students of the linguistic high school «C. Miranda.»



THE MAJOR PORTAL

The reliefs of the Main Portal narrate the main episodes of the Saint's life.

The door is divided into 10 panels, two of which, larger than the others, are placed at the top and they represent "The Glory" and "The Martyrdom" of St. Sossius.

In the panel of the Glory, St. Sossius is depicted kneeling while receiving the palm of martyrdom from Jesus; at the top appear God the Father and the dove of the Holy Spirit, while, next to the head of the martyr there is the figure of the Madonna just mentioned. The presence of the evangelists is due to the ability of the Saint, who was arrested and later beheaded as the only one to have been able to bring the infidels to the Sacred Scriptures.

In the panel of the Martyrdom, the Saint is kneeling in anticipation of martyrdom in the presence of St. Januarius. Above, the centurion urges to have St. Sossio beheaded.

Everything mainly focuses on these two panels; the others, smaller, complete the narrative that ends with the translation of the Saint's bones to Frattamaggiore, recognizable by the architecture depicted in the background, among which the façade of our Basilica stands out.



Images provided by maestro Eduardo Filippo.

THE SIDE PORTALS

The two side portals are much simpler and more essential than the Main Portal. They are dedicated to San Severino (on the left) and Santa Giuliana (on the right).

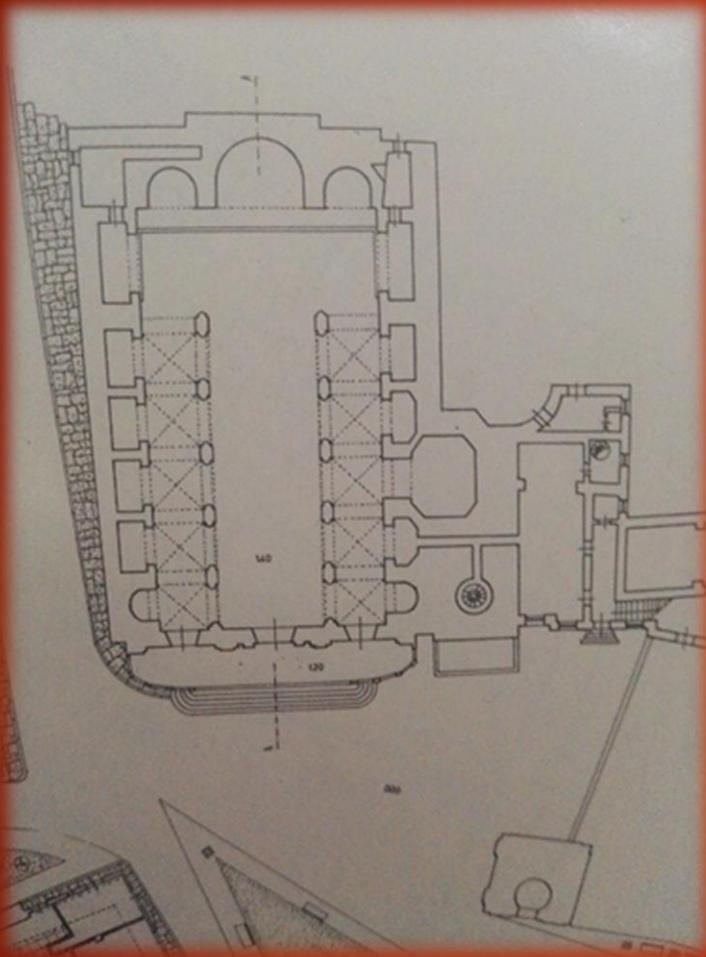
The two saints are depicted in relief, each on its own door, together with the dove of the Holy Spirit and plant shoots that cross diagonally the leaves: the vine on the left door and the wheat on the right door, as a reference to the wine and bread of the Eucharist.

The doves, also reproduced on the handles of the central portal, are a distinctive sign of the artist's language and remind us that passing through the doors of the Basilica is equivalent to entering a kingdom of peace.



Images provided by maestro Eduardo Filippo.

THE PLAN OF THE CHURCH



The Church of St Sossio has a simple plan of basilical type with wooden roof trusses.

It is divided into three naves with five side chapels cut into the wall thickness.

The naves are marked by pillars in piperno surmounted by round arches. Above them there are polychrome glass windows.

Photo taken from the publication of Giuseppe Gravagnuolo and Pio Crispino: "Il centro storico di Frattamaggiore", 1988.



Image taken by the students of the linguistic high school «C. Miranda.»

THE BAPTISM FOUNT (1478)

As soon as you enter the Basilica, in the first chapel on the left you can admire the Baptismal Font built in the 15th century. In the background, a canvas with the Baptism of Christ contributes to the development of the theme of Baptism.

Image taken by the students of the linguistic high school «C. Miranda.»

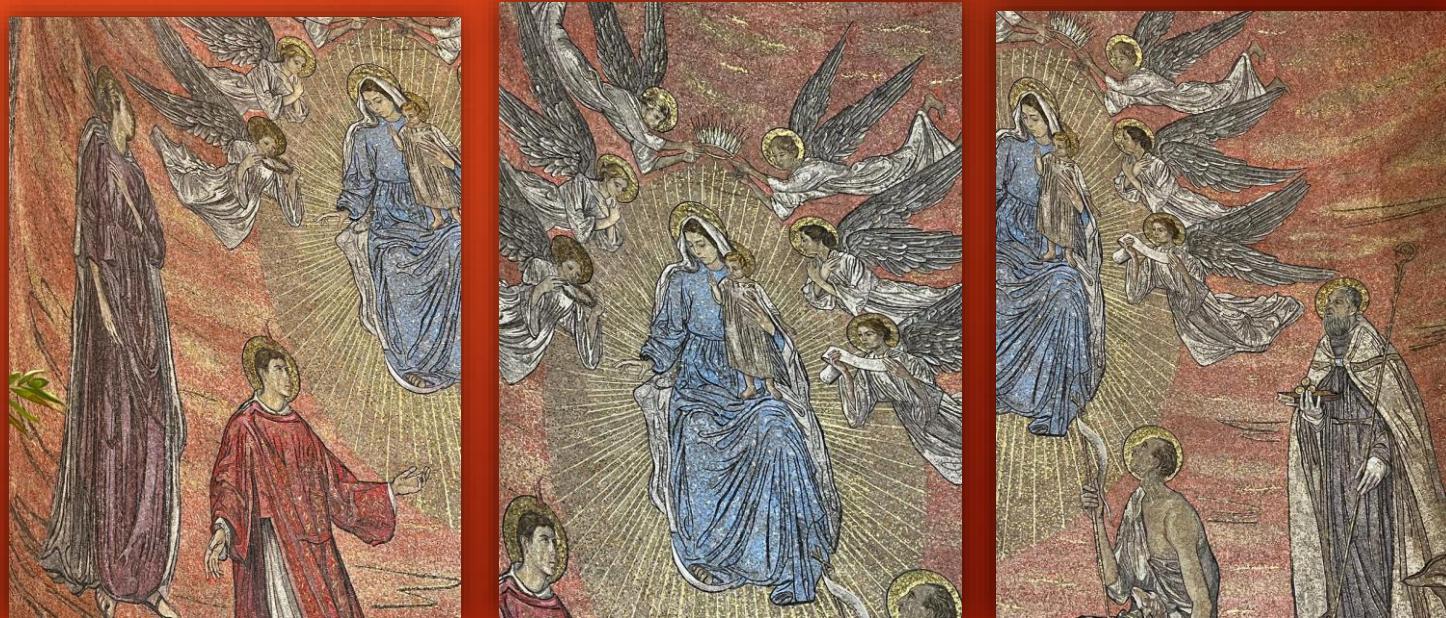


At the bottom of the nave opens the apse, preceded by a triumphal arch. The wall of the apse houses a majestic mosaic depicting the "Glory of the Virgin", the work of the architect Enrico Gaudenzi, made in 1955. The 20th century mosaic presents the Madonna with a child as 'Queen of Angels', around whom there are three angels on each side who are about to crown her.

Below, on the left there are San Sossio (kneeling) and Santa Giuliana, the two saints compatriots of the city of Frattamaggiore; on the right San Giovanni Battista (kneeling) and San Nicola di Bari.

THE APSE

Photos taken by the students of the linguistic high school «C. Miranda.»



THE SAINT'S BIG CHAPEL

On the right side aisle there is the chapel dedicated to the Saint, built in the nineteenth century, which houses the relics of Saints Sossio and Severino. It is decorated with golden stucco, silver lanterns, marble inlays and precious marble.

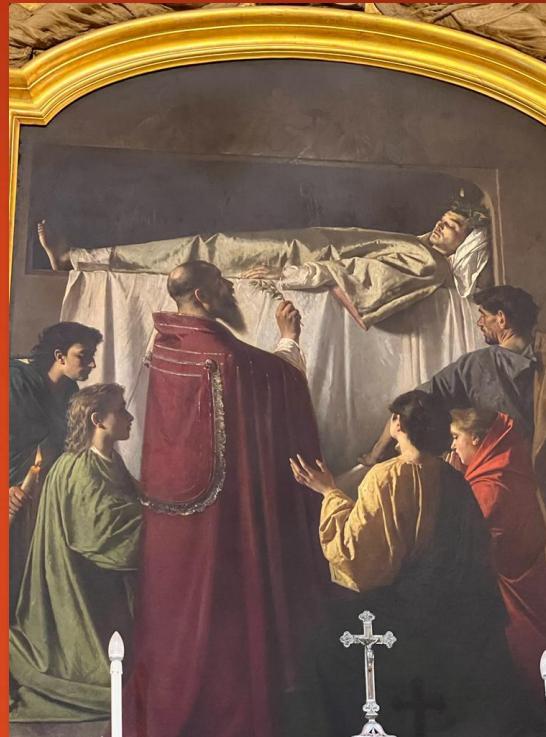
The large chapel miraculously survived the fire of 1945.



Photos taken by the students of the linguistic high school «C. Miranda».

THE BURIAL OF SAINT SOSSIO

On the altar of the chapel, decorated with polychrome marble, there is a painting depicting «The burial of San Sossio», a work of Federico Maldarelli. The painting is of great visual impact: it is set inside a Christian catacomb, where it is visible the loculus in which the lifeless body of the saint deacon is laid, lying on a white linen sudarium of Neo-Pompeian style. The Saint has the flame on his head, according to the Sansossian iconography, and the head is only leaning on the body because the martyr was beheaded.



On the side walls of the Chapel there are two canvases by Francesco Saverio Altamura dedicated to Saint Sossio and Saint Severino. The painting on the left wall depicts the Meeting of Saint Sossio and Saint Gennaro, the one on the right wall depicts Saint Severino on the banks of the Danube while receiving the relics of Saint Giovanni Battista.



Francesco Saverio Altamura, "San Sossio and San Gennaro", Chapel of Saint Sossio.

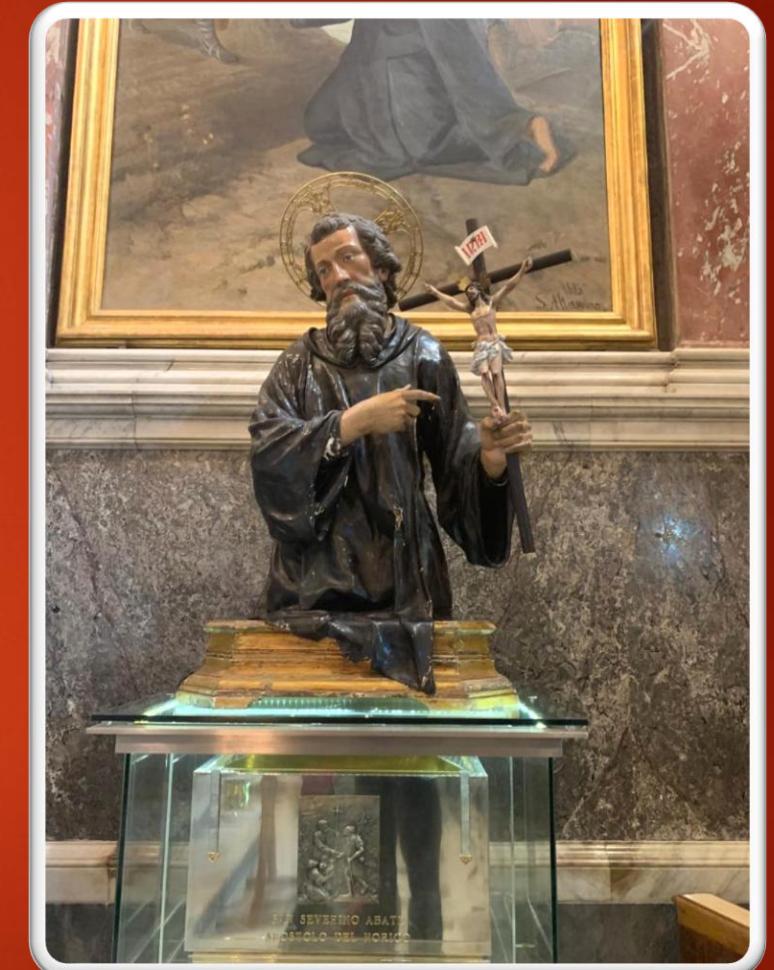
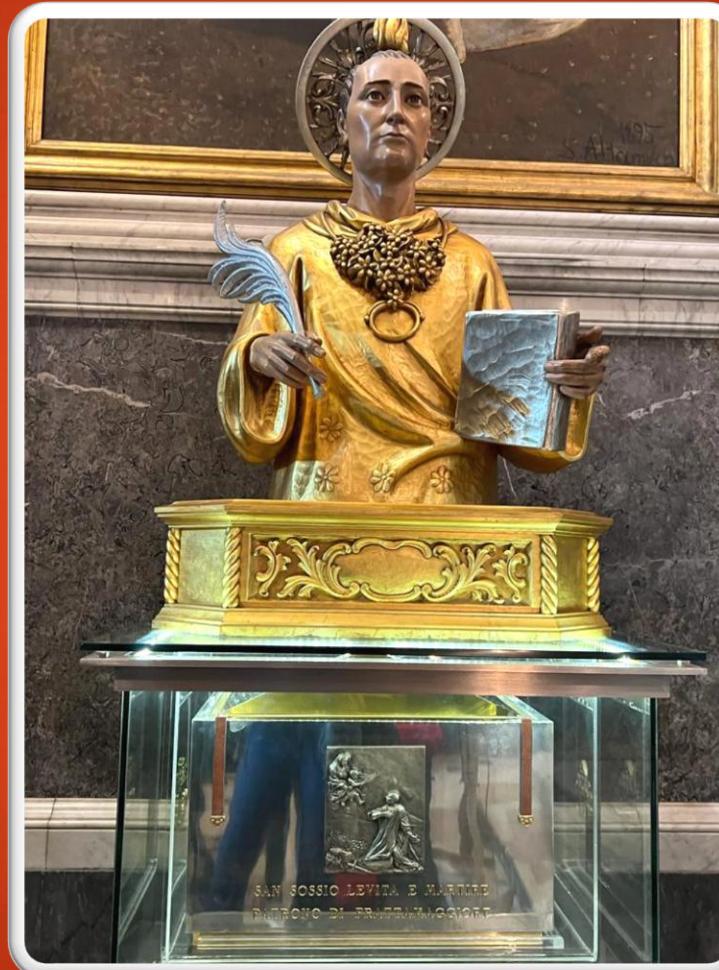


Francesco Saverio Altamura, "St. Severino receiving the relics of St. John the Baptist on the banks of the Danube", Chapel of Saint Sossio.

THE BUSTS OF ST SOSSIO AND ST SEVERINO

Inside the Chapel, the urns housing the bodies of Saint Sossio and Saint Severino are completed by two wooden sculptures depicting the busts of the Saints:

- ❖ on the left the bust of Saint Sossio, made in 1985 by Gregor Vincenzo Mussner in painted and gilded carved wood;
- ❖ on the right the bust of Saint Severino, made at the end of the nineteenth century in molded and painted papier-mâché.



Photos taken by the students of the linguistic high school «C. Miranda».

THE BRASS GATE

The closing of the hat is a precious brass gate, a work of the Casanova Institute of Naples, which is located in an arched opening. It is attributed by local scholars to the silversmith Vincenzo Catello.

The gate, which follows the style of the brass door of the treasure of Saint Gennaro, in the basement is characterized by decorative elements with plant branches; in the upper lunette protrudes the relief of Saint Sossio.

The thick decoration is mainly made of lost wax.



Image found online.

THE CRYPT

Under the Basilica, along the entire length of the nave, there is the crypt, now transformed into the Sansoxian Museum of Sacred Art.

The crypt houses the decorations that adorned the basilica before the fire of 1945.



Section with stone fragments of the destroyed Baroque apparatus.
Image found on the website of the Basilica of San Sossio.

VINTAGE PHOTOS (from ISA archive sources)

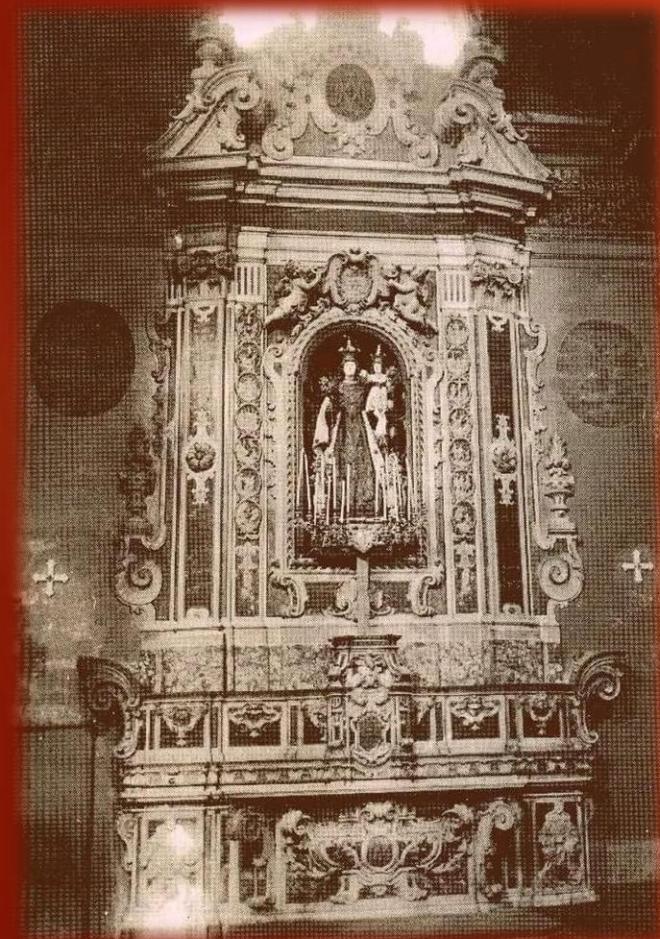
The main altar in the 40s of the twentieth century



In this rare photo of the main altar, taken in the '40s (first disastrous fire of 29 November 1945), we admire a glory of angels that overcomes the high altar in the apse area, and we notice an oval with the inscription, "De excelsis misit ignem in ossibus meis" [trad.: He set fire to my bones] from Lamentationes 1:13 of the Holy Bible. (cf. documentary material by Dr Francesco Montanaro).

VINTAGE PHOTOS (from ISA archive sources)

THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ALTAR of Our Lady of the Rosary



In the photo on the left we admire the splendid eighteenth-century altar of Our Lady of the Rosary, originally located in the chapel of the same name, as it appeared in the 40s of the last century before the destructive fire of 29 November 1945. In the photo on the right we admire some of his artistic marble remains preserved today in the Sansossiano Museum.

(cfr documentary material by Dr Francesco Montanaro).



LA CHIESETTA DI SANTA MARIA DELLE GRAZIE



Attached to the Basilica is the small church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, accessible from the back Via Trento (once called Chiazza Pertuso) and communicating with the interior of the basilica through the Sacristy. This church was originally a small chapel dedicated to prayers for the souls in Purgatory, as can be seen from the two wooden doors with the image of the souls in Purgatory praying to Our Lady of Grace.



On the main altar there is a statue of the sides of which there are noteworthy frescoes, unusual in their kind. As far as the sculptural apparatus is concerned, we can admire the statue of San Gennaro, placed on the left, and that of San Liborio, placed on the right. In the seventeenth century the small church was destroyed by fire and then rebuilt.

Photos taken by the students of the linguistic high school «C. Miranda.»

OUR OPINIONS ON THE EXPERIENCE

This experience has been useful for our cultural education and it has allowed us to appreciate the historical and artistic heritage of our territory, which we often take for granted. It is really important to find out about these treasures in order to protect them.

Visiting this basilica made us feel a great sense of belonging to the culture of past times, realizing that it is much closer to us than we thought.

A CURA DI:
CAPASSO MARIA TERESA, CONTE MARIA PIA,
PAGANO ANNA

