

THE NEW CHAPEL OF THE MIRACLE



This chapel designed by Tommaso Mattei, was built in 1693 to contain the relics of the Eucharistic Miracle of 1263. The facade was completed in 1863 by Virginio Vespignani.

On the main altar there is a beautiful canvas depicting the miracle, a work

of Francesco Trevisani done at the beginning of the 18th century. Under the painting, inside a golden shrine, three of the four stones stained by the miraculous blood which flowed from the host in 1263; the fourth is visible under the large cupola in a precious reliquary created in 1940.

THE GROTTA OF ST. CHRISTINA

From the luminous Chapel of the Miracle one enters the darkness of the Grotto of St. Christina made up of a large vestibule with the Chapel of the Body of Christ and by the ipogea Basilichetta.

Here one can see the altar, a fine 8th century piece, upon which, according to tradition, the Eucharistic miracle took place.

The ceramic altarpiece showing both the scene of Calvary and the miracle, is by Benedetto Buglioni and was done in 1496.

On the arch which brings from the vestibule to the

ipogea Basilichetta, there is a fresco probably dating from the 13th century.

This Basilichetta is a medieval enlargement of the primitive memorial *ad corpus* over the tomb of the martyr-saint Christina. This is the primitive place of the Basilica's cult which was made by destroying part of the catacomb.

In front of the apse there is a stupendous fourteenth century statue by B. Buglioni of the saint in the sleep of death. The frescoes on the ceiling are from the 16th century while that of the apse, depicting St. Peter, is of the 15th century.

From here one can go down to the tomb of the martyr underneath; a simple 4th century sarcophagus, which was found during the archeological excavations of 1880. These excavations helped to throw light on the existence of the primitive Christian community of Bolsena which had in the amazing development of its catacombs (datable from the end of 3rd century - first twenty years of the 5th century) the most significant expression of its faith and devotion.



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foto: Di Sorte



Bolsena

The Basilica of Saint Christina

stampa: ambrosini - acquapendente (vt)



Questo Santuario è particolarmente venerato, non solo per il culto verso Santa Cristina Vergine e Martire il cui sepolcro, qui conservato, i fedeli cristiani della città e dei paesi vicini fin da remota età son soliti onorare con generosi omaggi, ma anche e soprattutto per il ricordo del notissimo Miracolo Eucaristico.....

(Paolo VI)

HISTORICAL NOTES

On July 24, one year at the beginning of the 4th century, the 11-year old Christina died a martyr during the last persecution of Emperor Diocletian. She was buried in the catacombs of the primitive Christian community of Bolsena just outside the city near the southern border of ancient Volsinii,

and in this area the basilica dedicated to her was built.

Archeological and monumental remains testify that the cult has been known since the IV^o century while any written documentation on the early christian community is scarce. Only in 494-495 is there mention of a bishopric of Volsinii and there is no mention of a cult dedicated to Christina before the 8th century.

In 1115 Count Bernardo donated the Church of St. Christina in Bolsena to the Bishop of Orvieto and from that moment on there are many written mentions of the monument, but the archeological testimonies remain the most important for the datation of the basilica's origins.

Over the centuries the monumental complex has undergone many changes; actually it is made up of three different and distinct nuclei:

- the Basilica with a Latin cross plan and three naves, dating from medieval times,
- The New Chapel of the Miracle - built in 1693,
- the Grotto and Catacombs of St. Christina, dating from the 4th and 5th centuries.

THE BASILICA

The characteristic facade of the Basilica reveals its complex interior. The prospectus of the medieval church is a jewel of Renaissance architecture commissioned by Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici and the community of Bolsena between 1493 and 1495 and built by the Florentine sculptors Francesco and Benedetto Buglioni.

On the left there is the bell tower built probably between the 13th and 14th centuries. The interior has three naves with a Latin cross floor plan and a "capriata" roof. According to tradition the reconstruction of the church was due to the devotion of Matilde di Canossa and of Pope Gregory VII to Saint Christina. The Basilica was consecrated by Pope Gregory on 10th May 1078.

In 1925 excavations in the right nave brought to light the remains of a paleo-Christian building.

There is a 15th century wooden crucifix of the Umbro-Tuscan school in the same nave.

Further on is the entrance to the Chapel of the Most Holy Sacrament where the precious 15th century tabernacle by Benedetto Buglioni can be admired. The frescoes date from the 15th and 16th centuries.

Next is the chapel of St. Lucy (Santa Lucia) with frescoes by Giovanni de' Ferraris from Mondovì done in the end of the 15th century. A ceramic bust of the saint by B. Buglioni is on the altar.

The main altar of the presbytery is constructed from 10th century marble fragments; it acts as the background for the precious polyptych by the Senese painter, Sano di Pietro which dates from about 1450. The ambo is a pluteus of the 6th century.

In the left nave is the chapel dedicated to St. Christina where her relics and a precious wooden sculpture of the 15th century Senese school are conserved.

Through a marble doorway dating from the 11-12th centuries one arrives to the New Chapel of the Miracle, also known as the Chapel of the Sacred Stones.

