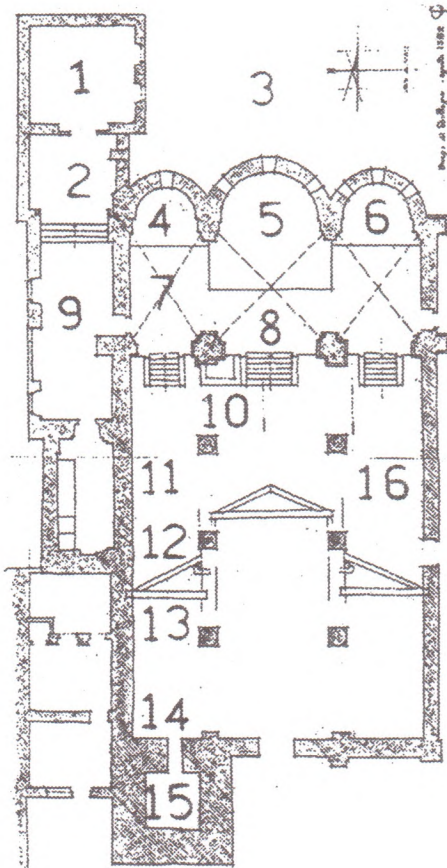




# BASILICA OF SAINT JAMES'S IN BELLAGIO

It is one of the best examples of Romanesque - Lombard architecture. Its construction goes back to end of the Tenth century and the beginning of the twelfth. The oldest description extant dates from 1580 in the deeds of the pastoral visit of the Bishop of Como Feliciano Ninguarda commented by the historian Santo Monti. In 1657 Saint James's was canonically erected into an autonomous parish with a territory separate from the mother church of Saint John's. On this occasion the Sfondrati family obtained the right of patronage over the new parish and set out to transform the entire building of Saint James's, both inside and outside, into a Sixteenth century style, spoiling its whole artistic beauty. In the first decades of this century it was restored to its original architectural lines, as they are seen today. In 1904, with a ministerial decree, it was declared a "national monument".



- \* 1) Sacresty - built during the church's restoration.
- \* 2) This is part of the sacresty. It holds a ciborium of extremely high artistic and historical value. It was donated to the parish in 1985 by the Rockefeller Foundation when the Church of the Capucines was reduced to a lay condition.
- 3) The three apses seen from the outside highlight the architectural beauty of the complex. Note that the middle apse and the one toward the square were totally rebuilt during the restoration: the one to the North is original.
- 4) Chapel of Saint Ursula. The mosaic is the work of the firm Castemari of Venice. It goes back to the first decades of 1900.
- 5) The ancona above the tabernacle is in gilded wood, a work by the local sculptor Domenico Pini.
- 6) Chapel dedicated to Saint Anthony: the mosaic, again work by the Castemari firm, replaced a fresco ruined by dampness.
- 7) This is the seat of the cantors. The pipe organ is a "Bossi and was completely restored in 2013 after two years of work. The other organ is a three - keyboard electronic Viscaut.
- 8) The celebration altar was set up by the firm Sampietro with Musso Marble slabs in 1985 in accordance with the liturgical canons approved by the Office of the Superintendent of Monuments. It goes back to the same period as the presbitery space.
- \* 9) Part of today's sacresty. It holds the original of the "Madonna delle Grazie" traditionally attributed to Foppa.
- 10) The ambo rebuilt during the church's restoration under the guidance of Mr. Perrone. The symbols of the evangelists, retrieved on the bell tower's wall, were part of the old ambo.
- 11) The canvas of the Deposition is the work of school of Perugino. It was donated to the parish.
- 12) The Dead Christ under the altar table shows Spanish influences; according to tradition, it belonged to a Spanish settlement in the place known as "Pian di Spagna" at the tip of Lake Como: during a flood of the Adda river it was swept away into the lake; some fishermen from Bellagio found it and put it up for adoration in their own church.
- 13) This is an "archaic crucifix" donated to the parish: but it has nothing to do with the complex of the church.
- 14) The Baptistry as it can be seen now is the result of several interventions that took place after the church was restored: the Venetian-school mosaic (see above) represents the Baptism of Christ of the canvas by Borgognone in the church of Melegnano; the basin's support is by the sculptor Daverio of Bergamo; the general arrangement as it appears today goes back to 1986.
- 15) The bell tower. According to reliable sources, the lower part was built earlier than the church. It was one of the towers of the village's system of defenses toward the North. The church was built up against it and the tower, reaching just about to the roof of the church, was transformed to a bell tower (so says Ninguarda). In about 1700, when the church was transformed to a Sixteenth century style, the bell tower was raised in the shape it has today and it was also plastered like the rest of the church. In 1990 it was restored as it is today.
- 16) The tryptic of the altar has image of Our Lady taken from the fresco attributed to Foppa. The figures of Saint Sebastian and Saint Rocco are a copy of the paintings by Foppa.

\* - NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC