



doors *Our Lady with the Child Jesus* (in the centre) and musical angels.

The Shrine

Built in the same year as the Apparition (1536) following a design by the architect Antonio Sormano Pace, the works lasted until 1540. The interior of the building with three naves, a crypt and a very raised presbytery is in Lombard medieval style, perhaps as a sign of veneration for the old cathedral of Savona, which in those years was destined to be demolished by the Genoese Republic. In fact to a large extent the Shrine mirrors the shape, size and elevation of this Cathedral.

The **crypt** is reached through a beautiful marble porch sculpted in relief with adoring and musical angels. The interior is decorated with polychrome marbles and stuccoes on the ceiling, carried out by Alessandro and Francesco Casella between 1616 and 1618. In the central niche is the *statue of Our Lady* by Pietro Orsolino (1560). This is the most important and frequented place in the Shrine. It is in fact **the place of the**



Apparition of 18th March 1536. This is where Pope Pius VII, at the end of his imprisonment in Savona (1809 - 1813) came to crown the statue of the Virgin; this is where Pope Benedict XVI laid the golden rose; this is where pilgrims from all over the world come every day in trustful prayer.

The high altar dating to 1760 is the work of Francesco Schiaffino and his school and is surmounted by a beautiful wooden *crucifix* from the Ligurian



school. Behind the altar is a magnificent **wooden choir** **1** with two orders of stalls carved by P. Grassi in the year 1644 (his are also the cupboards in the sacristy which date to 1643) and inlaid in the nineteenth century by the Savona family of Garassino.



The apse above the organ has frescoes of musical angels by Eso Peluzzi that were painted in the early decades of the 20th century. The **side chapels** contain an excellent collection of works from the Ligurian, Roman and Emilian schools that were painted between the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th centuries.

There are eight chapels equally divided between the two side naves and dating to the early 17th century. The first on the right as you enter the church contains the simple floor tomb of *Blessed Antonio Botta*, the witness of the Apparition. The painting is by Gerolamo Brusco.

Next is the chapel of the *Nativity of Mary* **2** with the beautiful canvas in the unmistakable style of Caravaggio, the work of the Roman Orazio Borgianni (1578 - 1616). On the right-hand wall a recent



ceramic bas-relief of *Saint Maria Giuseppa Rossello* **3**, foundress of the Daughters of Our Lady of Mercy.

The third chapel hosts a masterpiece by Domenichino (Domenico Zampieri; 1581 - 1641), the *Presentation of Mary in the Temple* **4**, a classical work of the Bolognese school. On the left wall is a bust of *Saint Giuseppe Marella* canonized in 2005.

The fourth chapel contains a *Crucifixion* **5** by G.B. Paggi (1554 - 1627) from the Genoese school.

The first chapel on the left as you enter the Shrine is dedicated to the *Annunciation* **6**. The canvas is attributed to Andrea Semino (1525 - 1595), an



artist from Genoa, and it is the oldest work present in the Shrine. On the right-hand wall is the *Deposition* by A. Botta on the Apparition in writing of the time.

The second chapel is dedicated to the *Crib* **7** with a canvas by Bernardo Castello.

The third chapel, known as of the *Visitation* **8**, offers us a wonderful marble altarpiece in relief sent from Rome by the brothers from Savona G.B. and A. Siri as a work by Bernini. Recent studies have demonstrated that work on the altarpiece was done by Matteo Bonarelli from Lucca, a pupil of Bernini's.

The fourth chapel offers us Bernardo Castello once again. He was very active as an artist in Liguria. His canvas here is dedicated to *Our Lady of the*

The square

Nine small similar chapels, built between 1622 and 1658, accompanied pilgrims who walked along the road from Savona to the **square of the Shrine**.

This lovely regular space is surrounded by the **hospices** that were founded at the same time as the shrine starting from 1537 to meet the needs of the numerous poor or sickly pilgrims. For centuries, almost up to recent times they carried out their function of hospitality for the needy.

At the end of the square, to the right, stands the Palace of the Duke of Tursi that

hosts the Museum and the accommodation. The centre is dominated by the facade of the Shrine. In the middle of the square is the Baroque style **fountain** by Giacomo Ponsonelli (1702 - 1708).

The **facade of the Church** created by Taddeo Carlone of the Ticino province between 1609 and 1611, in Finale stone, is surmounted by a tympanum and a window in the style created by Sergio Serlio divided by streaked marble pilasters and openings. It is completed by two statues of *Saint John the Baptist* and *Saint John Evangelist* and above the three entrance



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Snow. His too are the *Episodes of the life of Mary* in the webs in the ceiling of the Shrine and the *Crowning of Mary* on the counter-facade.

Hanging in the side naves are two *ships* 9 (sole survivors of about ten) which are ex-voto left in the Shrine as a testimony to Mary's assistance.

The Museum

Inaugurated in 1959 to preserve and develop the large historical and artistic patrimony that had accumulated over the centuries, it was restored and reopened to the public in 1988. It was once again refurbished and



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extended and since the year 2009 by rotation exhibits liturgical ornaments, materials 10, silverware 11, ex-voto, paintings and sculptures. Of particular interest is the crown donated by the Vatican Chapter with which Pius VII solemnly crowned the statue of Our Lady on 10th May 1815. A large hall exhibits works by the local artist Eso Peluzzi mostly regarding daily life in the hospices.

For contacts and information about the Museum:

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THE APPARITION

On Saturday 18th March 1536 Our Lady appeared to a peasant of the area, Antonio Botta, as he was going to work in his vineyard. After reassuring the shocked witness, the "Lady" dressed in white and glory invited him to go to his confessor that he should exhort the people to prayer, penitence and a change of life.

"If it were not for the few prayers and good works done by the Brothers, the world would be even worse than it is" Mary says to Antonio Botta, member of the Confraternity of St Bernard. Twenty days later, Saturday 8th April, in a subsequent apparition in the same place, Mary entrusts Antonio Botta with the **message** that characterizes the Shrine and its works "**Mercy and not justice**".

These words of Mary remind us of the Gospel of Jesus: "*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful*" (see Lk. 6, 27-38).

The history of the Shrine of Savona starts from this message. It immediately became the object of pilgrimages from all over Italy and a place of heavenly miracles and blessings. The devotion to the Mother of Mercy who appeared in Savona crossed the National frontiers and has spread over the centuries to all continents.

Since 2008 the Shrine has been proclaimed the National Shrine of the Confraternities of Italy.



On 17th May 2008 His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI came on pilgrimage to the Shrine and on that occasion he gave the Mother of Mercy the **Golden Rose**, a sign of special distinction offered by recent Pontiffs to some Marian Shrines. The Pope's visit to the Shrine is remembered by a bronze plaque on the right-hand wall by the presbytery.



Shrine of Our Lady of Mercy

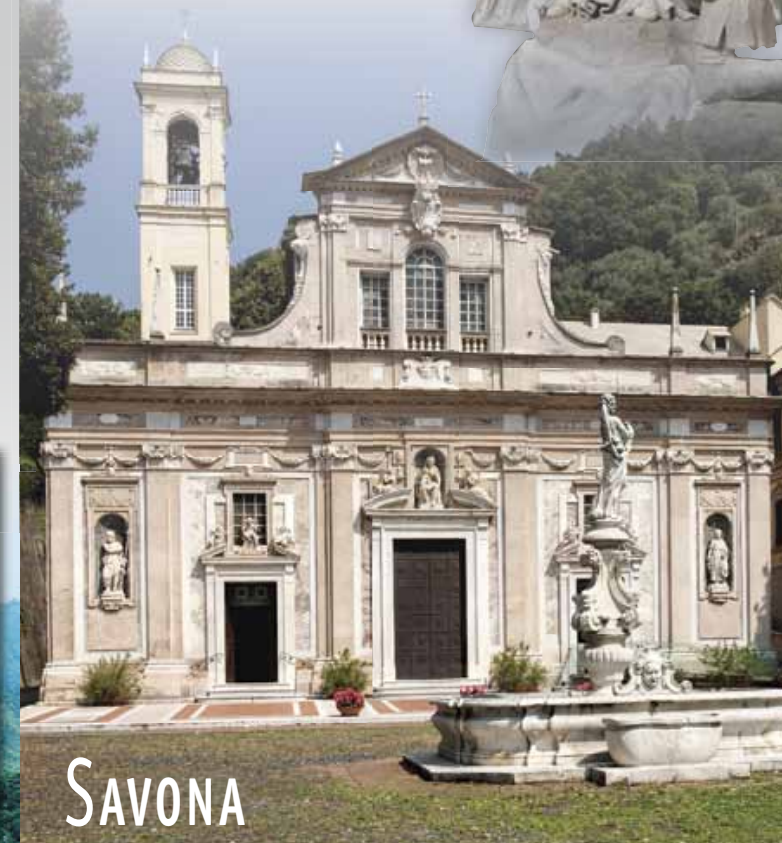
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Times of Holy Masses

Winter time *Weekdays and eves of feasts:* 9 am - 4.30 pm
Sundays and Holydays: 9.30 am - 11 am - 4.30 pm
Holy Rosary: 4 pm

Summer time *Weekdays and eves of feasts:* 9 am - 5.30 pm
Sundays and Holydays: 9.30 am - 11 am - 5.30 pm
Holy Rosary: 5 pm

SHRINE BASILICA Our Lady of Mercy



SAVONA



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