

Excursions into history and culture

The Lagazuoi area

Mount Lagazuoi was a theatre of operations during the 1st World War and the Italian Alpine troops were lined up against the Austrians.

The Italian positions on the ledges underneath the peak of the mountain were in effect for two years a key point of the first order on the Dolomite front. The same ledges took the name of the sector commander, the then Captain Martini.

The top of the mountain was strongly garrisoned by the Austrians. So as to conquer the position the Italian commander planned and carried out a gallery tunnel inside the mountain with its starting point at the " Martini ledges".

More Info: http://www.dolomiti.org/dengl/Cortina/ce/Esc_Laga/

1st World War in the Dolomites: <http://www.grandeguerra.dolomiti.org/EN/dettaglio0.htm>

The parish church of Saint Leonardo in Pedraces

The parish spreads out in a sunny position on the slopes of the west side of the Croda of Santa Croce. Saint James refers to pilgrims and travellers, while Saint Leonard is the protector of carters and farmers. Considering the presence in the area of many ways and many important mercantile routes, the ecclesiastical patrons for the sunny Alta Badia were chosen as Saint James, as well as Saint Leonard, the latter being the protector of animals, carters and farmers. The patron of the apostle 'Sancti Jacobi' is mentioned in the first document which speaks of the church and could refer to a previous religious building, harking back to the Romanesque period, being built between 1100 and 1150. A document cites the 'ecclesia Sancti Jacobi de Badia' in a (brief) letter of verification of 1347.

As the building of the present church progressed , the cemetery was entirely preserved, the structure at whose base there had been a former temple. It was consecrated in 1379, of which we have certain knowledge and demolished only in the area past the curvature of the vault. The year 1478 was underway when the commission of bishops at Bressanone consecrated the church, in the meantime enlarged. The three altars were erected in honour of the Saints James, Leonard and Bartholomew. A new consecration of the altars occurred seventy years later acting on the order of the Prince Bishop

Christoph Fuchs. The records of the pastoral visits carried out in the years 1572 and 1577 speak of two collaborators (one for La Val and one for Badia).

We may deduce that this curative centre for the soul covered a wide area. It is believed that the parish included almost one hundred mountain homesteads, of which many were already listed in the founding book drawn up in 1288 at the time of Prince Mainardo the 2nd of the Tyrol. Four statues have been preserved from the antique Gothic altar doors which are today positioned on the frontispiece of the main altar: the Saints Peter and Paul as well as Silvester and Rocco, typical late Gothic carved sculptures by the so-called 'Danubian' school, nowadays recovered in white and seeming to be porcelain figures. The last two mentioned were on show for a time on the side altar of the S. Croce sanctuary. It is believed that the sculptures come from the workshop of the noted carver Ruprecht Potsch of Brunico (statues by the same sculptor are preserved in Corvara).

The present day church, which may be thought of as among the most beautiful and noble Baroque religious buildings in the entire diocese, was erected in the years 1776-1778 in place of the former, in the Gothic style. Franz Singer from Götzens constructed it (died 1789), son of the stucco worker Hans Singer.

The singular quality of the Badia church is made up in essence of the theatrical nature of its form, accentuated by the gentle ascendance of the building's floor, which is such as to bring into relief the effect of asides and scenes of the choir (presbytery) in such a particular way as to give the faithful the real sense of participation at a sacred event during the celebration of religious rites...a real 'theatrum sacrum' in the sense of religious devotion in the 18th century.

Source: "La chiesa parrocchiale di Badia" by Karl Gruber

The parish church of Saint Catharina in Corvara

In Christian art the Saints are placed within an aura, with luminous rays emanating from the head, following closely the ways of the Pagan artists. They underlined the presence of the main characters in a work by using a 'halo', painting their heads on to a blue, green or golden background. This method was used in an effort to express the commonly held belief that certain people radiate a fascination, which is wholly special. Is there light in the background because they are enlightened?

As far as the Saints are concerned, this is the enlightenment of faith.

One of these 'enlightened figures' is the patron of the church, Saint Catherine of Alexandria. The Saint is placed on one of the oldest frescoes (from around 1400), on the left hand wall of the nave, on the left of the door and at the top of the altar. The martyrdom of the Saint is painted on the external of the ante of the triptych of the main altar. The beauty of the painting, especially for the landscape representation gave birth to a legend according to which it was the great Tiziano Vecellio who was the author of this renaissance work. However, the experts attribute the work to an excellent painter of the so-called 'Danubian school' of the Albrecht Altdorfer circle (about 1520).

On the altar-step, on the lower part of the altar Saint Antonio Abate, Saint Sebastian, Saint Rocco and Saint Leonard are painted, while on the central casket there are, carved in wood, the statues of Saint James the elder, of Saint Catherine, of the Madonna with child, of Saint Nicholas and of Saint Florian.

The frescoes are attributed to a painter from the master Leonardi of Bressanone circle (mid 15th century). On the vault of the apse the Saint apostles Peter, Paul, Andrew and James are placed.

Around the old parish church there is the burial ground. According to tradition the deceased also form part of the Christian community. Death is not to be ignored, masked or excluded. By bearing in mind the reality of passing away, we learn in a deeper way about our existence.

Source: "The Churches of Corvara and Colfosco" by Martin Lecher