



At present, Badia's church is a small building of Latin cross shape, with apse and porch, protected by a huge modern tower-bell which dominates the valley. Its complex is the result of many re-stylings, the last of which took place in 1965.

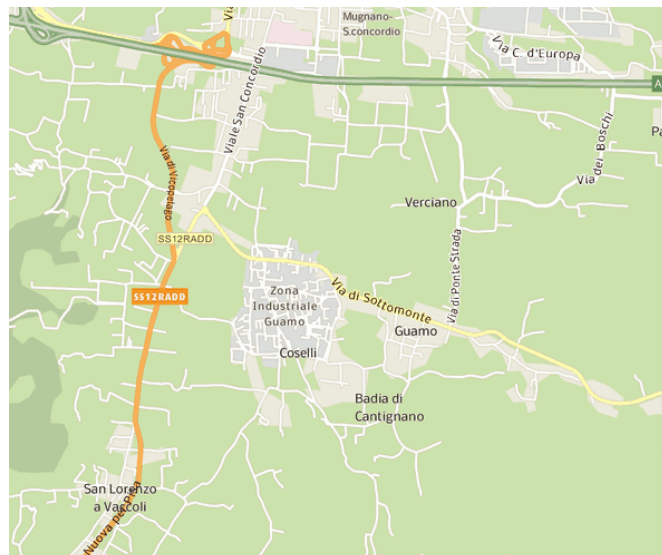
Of the church's great historical heritage very little has come down to us. The most precious thing we can still admire is a masterpiece of the famous Lucca painter Agostino Marti: an oil on panel with bezel and dais (predella) painted in 1520, which represents the Virgin Mary with her Child and two Saints, S. Bartholomew (protector of our village) and S. Martino (protector of the city of Lucca).



How to reach us

BY CAR: get the exit "Lucca Est" of the Highway A11 and then follow the traffic signs to Guamo and Vorno. On the way to Vorno, you'll find the church on the left side of the road, in Badia di Cantignano.

BY TRAIN: once arrived at Lucca's railway station, move to Piazzale Verdi (5-10 minutes on foot). Once there, get the bus to Vorno-Capannori; (check bus timetable online at www.lucca.cttnord.it)



Badia Di Cantignano



The origin of the name of the village is probably Roman and it is likely to derive from Latin name "Cantinius" (later "Cantinianus" and eventually "Cantignano"). Cantinius was the name of the Roman colonist to whom Rome had assigned/allotted the lands which are nowadays known as Badia di Cantignano.



Where today we can see the modern church, in Roman times there was most

likely a thermal complex, as testified by several archaeological discoveries found during the excavations back in 1965-1966, wall decorations and the shape and structure of the apse. All of these elements, in fact, show many similarities with other Roman thermal sites such as those in Rome and Pompeii.



Also dating back to the Roman period is the black and white mosaic we can see outside the church, on the wall framing the top of the small door on the left side of the transept, as well as the four-colored mosaics found two meters beneath the presbytery and the four rough columns, probably part of the original thermal baths.

Other things found during the excavations which testify to the presence of a thermal area are: hand-crafted marble and stone items, fragments of plaster painted in the Pompeian style, coloured glasses, lead and brickwork pipes and brickwork floors.



There also came to light, buried in the ground over the previous Roman mosaic, 13 graves, all made of stone, without



any kind of decoration or inscription, which contained rather well preserved skeletons and bones; they were found, besides,

walled inside two small niches, two caskets: the former - lead-made - containing an intact human heart, the latter - stone-made - containing a wooden chalice and a seal. Much has been conjectured about their provenance, the most plausible version of the facts is the following: after barbarian incursions and their conversion to Christianity, the Lombards brought to Lucca Benedictine monks from Bobbio (Piacenza), gifting them the lands of Cantignano. Upon the ruins of Roman thermal baths, the monks built the original church and the enclosed coenoby.

The Benedictines brought along with them two relics, which were put on the main altar of the church. Historians established that the graves underneath the presbytery were nothing but the cemetery of the Benedictine abbots.



About the existence of a Benedictine abbey in Badia di Cantignano there are no doubts: many ancient documents from local archives (either civil or ecclesiastic) mention it, particularly the documents in Camaldoli (another well known Benedictine abbey in Tuscany). The first document which refers to the land of Cantignano is from 783 B.C..

Besides, even if these documents didn't exist, to prove the existence of a Benedictine abbey in Cantignano it would be enough to focus

on the several traces we can still observe nowadays: the name of the village, "Badia" (deriving from "abbazia", Italian term meaning "abbey"), has survived through all these centuries; the early medieval walls of the apse, of the transept and of a part of the northern side of the church building; the marble frieze (probably originally part of choir's transenna) dating back to VIII century, now conserved in the left wing of the transept; the monofora and the door on the left side of the transept; finally, the rare Lombard paintings, discovered in 1965-1966, upon the walls of the church, a unique example of wall paintings, since they were made directly on the stone of the walls, rather than on the plaster.



Among the curiosity of the church, we can surely enumerate the figures of two Lombard royals (a queen and a king), painted on the pillar which supports the triumphal arch of the apse. They are supposed to be the king and the queen reigning when the first abbatial church was built.