

## MONUMENTA

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### *Sesto Calende, S. Vincenzo* \*

I. Spinelli is the only author who has noticed the existence of this monument, which lies in the fields a short distance from the abbey of S. Donato.

II. In the acts of the pastoral visit of the bishop of Pavia of 1595, Spinelli found and quotes a passage which proves that this church was formerly a convent of nuns.<sup>1</sup> In 1595 it had already ceased to have a separate existence owing to the calamities it had suffered in the wars, and its goods were given to the abbey of S. Donato. The church, however, continued to be officiated as a dependence of S. Donato until 1780, when it was finally suppressed. In the Ambrosiana at Milan, in that very valuable transcript of ancient documents known as the *Codice della Croce*, I had the good fortune to find an inedited document which throws light upon the early history of the convent, and happily gives us the year (1102) in which the church was consecrated.<sup>2</sup> It may, consequently, be assumed that the abbey was founded somewhat before this date. The edifice appears to have been made over and baroccoized in the early XVIII century. On the wall is a destroyed inscription of 1729, and the altar bears the date of 1732.

\* Testo ripreso integralmente da: A.K. PORTER, *The lombard Architecture*, Yale University press-H. Milford, New Haven-London 1915-1917, vol. I, p. 11.

<sup>1</sup>Ad quam [ecclesiam sub titulo sancti Vincentii] et monasterium quodam ut dicitur ibi ad eamdem ecclesiam [...] constructum permanebant moniales et iterum visa fuerunt quedam vestigia et fundamenta monasterii et ut item dicunt fuit monasterium [...] tempore belorum vastatum fuit. (Spinelli, 145).

<sup>2</sup>I transcribe the most important part of this document: Anno ab incarnatione domini nostri Ihesu Christi milleximo centesimo secundo mense iulii indicione decima. Dum in Dei nomine intra clausa modoeciensis ecclexie bernardus romane ecclexie insignis cardinalis atque legatus domni apostolici pascalis, nec non et grosolanus uenera-

III. The edifice is extremely simple in character, and consists of a single-aisled nave and an apse. The upper part of the nave walls has been rebuilt in the barocco period, but with the exception of the apse, the church has evidently always been roofed in wood. Like the nave, the apse was somewhat raised in the barocco period. This apse, however, is the best preserved part of the edifice, and still retains its widely splayed windows, albeit walled up. The masonry is extremely rough, and recalls that of the choir of S. Donato. Uncut bits of stone, pebbles, bricks and a few roughly squared blocks of stone are crudely laid in courses, frequently broken and deviating widely from the horizontal. The mortar-beds are extremely wide, and there are numerous scaffolding holes. The herring-bone masonry of the nave is the result of late alterations.

IV. The apse is decorated externally with arched corbel-tables supported on pilaster strips. The interior possesses fine frescos of the XVI century, one of which bears the date 1516.

V. The documentary evidence seems conclusive that this church was consecrated in 1102. It is true that the masonry is singularly crude to have been executed at this epoch, and I confess that I have long debated whether it be not necessary to assume that the apse is the remains of an earlier chapel preserved in the church reconstructed in 1102. However, having observed that in the narthex of S. Donato, an edifice evidently constructed c. 1130, there is some masonry almost as crude as that of S. Vincenzo, I am forced to the conclusion that the masons of Sesto Calende were singularly careless and slipshod in their work. They were, perhaps, forced to this by the lack of good stone or brick for building. It therefore seems necessary to accept S. Vincenzo as an authentically dated monument of 1102.

bilis archiepiscopus ecclesie mediolanensis honeste tractarent de diuinis et humanis aduenerunt legati ermeline abbatisse sestensi monasterii suplicantes exconsecrationem prefati monasterii. (*Codice della Croce*, MS. Amb., D.S. IV, Vol. V, f. 20).



San Vincenzo di Sesto Calende. Immagine scattata da A.K. Porter (1913)