

Elia Naurizio, The Council of Trento in Santa Maria Maggiore, 1633 (Museo Diocesano Tridentino)



On the cover: Jakob Alt, Santa Maria Maggiore in Trento, 1842 (Fondazione Nicolò Rosmo Balzano)
Antonio Marchesi, Paul Moroder, Liturgical orientation, 2012 (photo by G. Zotta)



The archeological excavations carried out underneath Santa Maria Maggiore between 2007 and 2009 have brought to light different construction stages that preceded the current church.

- An important Roman thermal bath [1st century]
- A late imperial public area [3rd century]
- A big three-nave paleochristian church [5th century], which was also Trento's first cathedral
- An Early-Middle-Ages, three-apsed and single-nave church [11th century]
- A second Medieval, two-apsed and two-nave church [14th century]

The last one was demolished in 1519 to make room for the current building commissioned by Prince Bishop Bernardo Clesio. He was a prominent ecclesiastical and political figure in Europe and also the most prestigious commissioner of works of art during the Renaissance in Trentino.

Santa Maria Maggiore Church was built between 1520 and 1535 according to architect Antonio Medaglia's project. Originally from Como, he was active in the artistically lively environment of Vicenza, Verona and Brescia. His church represents the first building of the principedom that was completely inspired by Renaissance style and architectural rules. It was built following precise, harmonious and mathematical guiding lines. It has a single nave with lateral chapels, a wide apsed presbitery and it emulates architectural models by Alberti and Bramante.

The internal part of the church is characterised by the use of a single order and the original, sober, rigorous and strongly unitary composition is still perfectly recognisable.

The external part of the church is dominated by the monolithic character of its entire façade made from Trento's limestone. The architectural composition is characterised by a coherent old-fashioned construction that evokes the image of a temple.

In the third phase of the Council of Trento (1562-1563), Santa Maria Maggiore hosted all the preparatory congregations.

In 1900, the church was heavily refurbished according to architect Emilio Paor's project. This work irremediably compromised the integrity of its external Renaissance aspect. In particular, its façade was completely transformed according to the monumental Neo-Renaissance style of the time, which also had the purpose of praising its Italian character.

In 1920 Chiara Lubich, founder of the Catholic Focolare Movement, was baptized at the ancient font of the church.

The building was repeatedly bombed during World War II and on the external marble front the shell holes provoked by the explosions are still clearly visible.

In 1973 Paolo VI granted Santa Maria the title of minor basilica.

During the works of refurbishment undertaken between 2006 and 2012, a liturgical orientation based on the spirit of the Second Vatican Council reform was implemented.

For more information, see A. Maffei, A. Marchesi, *Tutta incrostata di rossa pietra* [All encrusted with red stone], Ed. Temi, Trento, 2013.

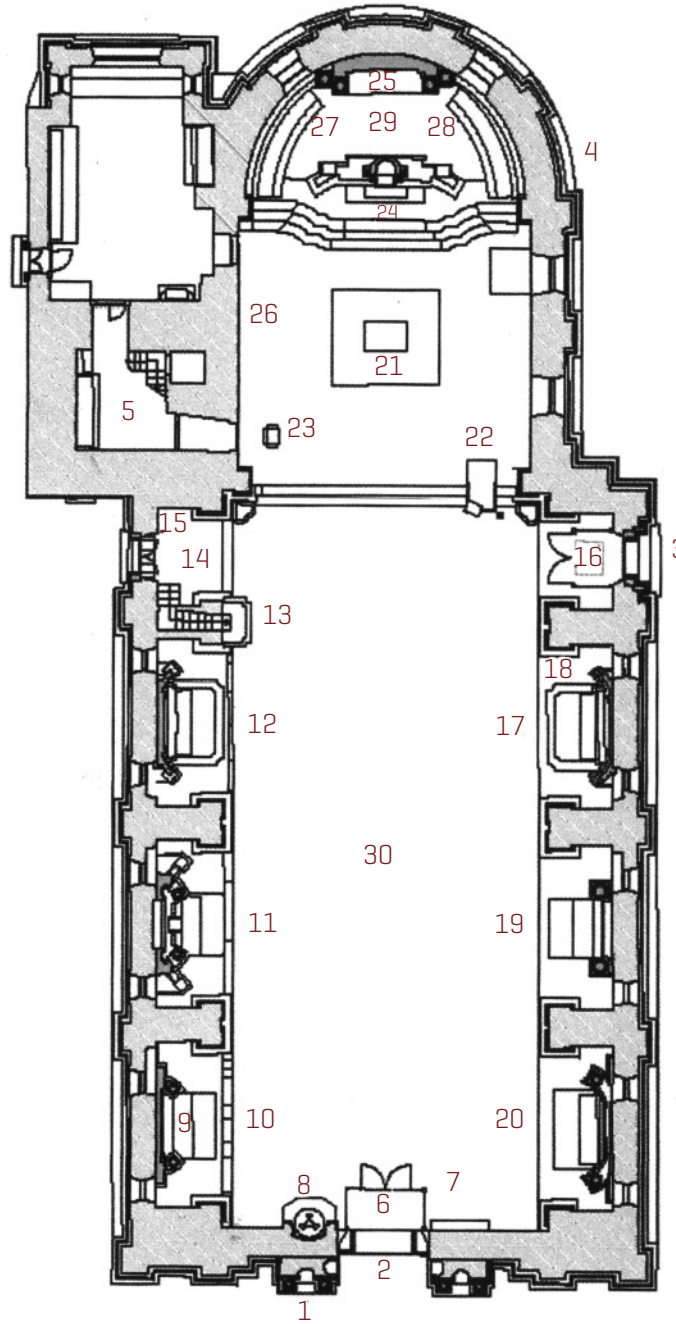
The basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Trento



Vincenzo Grandi, Choir, 1534–1541 [photo by G. Zotto]



1. D. Aimo da Varignana, Main portal, 1534-1545
2. M.T. Polacco [1570-1639], Annunciation
3. A. Medaglia, Southern portal, circa 1524
4. A. Medaglia, Clesian niche, circa 1520
5. Bell tower [belonging to 13th-century Medieval church]
6. G.M. Falconetto, Organ doors, 1508
7. Geronimo Mirana's funerary monument, 16th century
8. F. Oradini's workshop, Baptismal font, 1753
9. Blessed Stefano Bellesini's relic [1774-1840]
10. T. Benedetti, Altar, 1736
Venetian school, The Kings' Adoration, 16th century
11. F. Oradini, Altar, circa 1739
Wooden crucifix, 15th century
12. D. Sartori, Altar, 1740/1750
F. Unterperger, Holy Family, circa 1750
13. C. Benedetti jr, Pulpit, early 18th century
14. Mourning of Christ, 1634
15. A. Medaglia, Tabernacle, circa 1524
16. M.T. Polacco, Christ Resuscitated, 1621



Giovanni Battista Moroni, Mary with Child in Glory, Saint Joseph the Evangelist and Four Doctors of the Church [detail], 1551 [photo by G. Zotto]



17. D. Sartori, Altar, 1740-1750
G. Cignaroli, Saint Theresa, circa 1748
18. Christ's Descent from the Cross, early 16th century
19. G.P. Dal Bosco, Altar, 1833
G.B. Moroni, Mary with Child in Glory,
Saint Joseph the Evangelist and Four Doctors of the
Church, 1551
20. D. Sartori, Altar, circa 1740 G. Cignaroli, Nativity, 1746
- 21.- 23. A. Marchesi, P. Moroder, Altar, Ambon, Seat, 2012
24. C. Benedetti, E. Naurizio, Main Altar, 1634
C. van der Back, Marta and Mary Magdalene, 1678
25. P. Ricchi, Assumption of the Virgin Mary, 1644
26. V. Grandi, Choir, 1534-1541
Mascioni organ, 1930
27. Venetian school, Moses Brings Forth Water out of the
Rock, mid 16th century
28. Apparatus for Saint Clement's urn, 17th century
29. M.T. Polacco, Glorification of Mary, circa 1620 [vault]
30. S. Nardi, The Council of Trento, 1902 [vault]