

The Monte di Pietà of Messina



Via XXIV Maggio



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The **Monte di Pietà of Messina** is a monumental complex located in Via XXIV Maggio (the ancient Via dei Monasteri).

Before the earthquake of 1908, the road was at the level of the portal, therefore, later, to allow the entrance was necessary to add a staircase.

Its origin can be traced back to 1575, when, following a plague epidemic, many families found themselves in a situation of poverty, so the Archconfraternity of the Azzurri, which was already engaged in social activities, to help the most needy, it established in 1581 a Monte di Prestanza.

In 1616 the project was commissioned to the Jesuit architect Natale Masuccio, who, however, after only three years he died, leaving him unfinished. Of this original construction remain the lower part in ashlar and the portal, on top of which is a marble plaque with the inscription "Monte di Pietà" and above, another with the words "Maior Omnium Charitas". Of the first floor, added in the eighteenth century, only the shelves of the central balcony and part of the side walls remain.

Surpassing the entrance, one comes to a corridor with a barrel vault, from which two side rooms open and that it ends with a three-arched loggia, where the transept is. In the right side part, at the back, the remains of a staircase, closed by a wrought-iron gate, that led to the upper floor can be highlighted. In the left side part, at the end, are the remains of a fountain, with a putto riding a dolphin.

Beyond the loggia is the courtyard, which presents at the end a stupendous flight of steps, designed by Antonio Basile and Placido Campolo, dating back to 1741. It leads to the Church of S. Maria della Pietà (Our Lady of Pity), erected in the area occupied by the Church of S. Basilio, of which only parts of the facade remain, surviving the 1908 earthquake.

At the lowest part of the stairway, the Fountain of Abundance, a work by sculptor Ignazio Buceti, stands out in the center, in which a woman is depicted holding a cornucopia filled with gold (a symbol of fertility) in one hand and the other resting on her breast, a hope auspice for a better future for the unfortunate visitors.

From Via XXIV Maggio, walking sideways to the left of the monument, along Via Pelagia, in the area where the church used to be, one can glimpse the remains of the crypt and a gallery (possibly related to the fortress of Matagrifone (Rocca Guelfonia).

Getting there: with your back to the Info Point on Corso Cavour, turn right and walk down Via Oratorio S. Francesco, where you can enter at the Puppet Museum. Turn right again onto Via XXIV Maggio, (where you can also visit the "Lucio Barbera" Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art, with its works and the Archive dedicated to Nobel Prize winner "Salvatore Quasimodo"), then continue. Past the intersection with Via S. Agostino, after the small square where the Monument to St. Eustochia is located with the statue of St. John Paul that is on the left of Via XXIV Maggio, there is the "Monte di Pietà".

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