Santa Maria di Fontaniale

Category: Catholic Church

business description: The church of Santa Maria di Fontaniale, so named because it was located near an ancient spring, was a dependency of the Abbey of Santa Giustina di Sezzadio, and was built on land that the Aleramic Marquis Otberto donated to the Benedictine monks in 1030. Following the decline of the Benedictines, the Abbey of Santa Giustina passed to the Petracoli families of Cortona and the Corte family of Pavia in 1478.
In 1592, it became the property of the Congregation of the Oblates of Saint Ambrose of Milan, established in 1578 by Saint Charles Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan. Through the efforts of Cardinal Borromeo, Pope Gregory XIII, having already recognized the new Congregation, issued a brief in January 1582, incorporating and uniting the Abbey of Sezzadio to the Oblates of Saint Ambrose. Upon their entry into Santa Giustina, the Oblates also dedicated their care to the church of Santa Maria di Fontaniale.
Expansion works promoted by the Oblates are confirmed by the apostolic visit of the Bishop of Famagusta in 1585, when he ordered that, given the "great devotion of the chapel, it be erected and enlarged as it was begun." Documents mention work continuing through 1632-1633.
In 1611, the bell tower was rebuilt, and in 1631, there is further mention of "de dictae ecclesiae ampliazione," considering that the attendance of the faithful had increased significantly in recent months.
Following this further expansion, in 1632, the vestry was ordered to build a portico on two sides and a paved path from the fountain to the church.
The current building, located near a complex of ancient farmhouses, has a Baroque façade, a single-nave interior, and two side chapels forming a transept.
In the left chapel, a valuable 17th-century canvas of the Annunciation is visible.
In 1598, Oblate Marco Aurelio Grattarola placed a polychrome wooden statue of the Madonna in the niche above the high altar. The statue was declared miraculous by the people just a few years later, and the church was thus named the Blessed Virgin of Miracles.

From:
Cassine: Terra di storia - Storia di Terra
edited by S. Arditi and G. Corrado

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