



DON BOSCO A CHERI

Ten years worth a life

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE DON BOSCO IN CHERI

Schools attended, housing, highlights:

1831/32

- Classroom 6, Casa Marchisio, founding of Society of Joy
- Classroom 5, con Lucia Matta, Death of P. Braja
- Classroom 4,

1832/33

- Grammar classroom,

1833/34

- Humanity Classroom, house Cavallo, friendship with Giona
- Caffè Pianta, race with the juggler
- Admission among the Franciscans

1834/35

- Rethoric Classroom, tailor Cumino, meet L. Comollo
- He solves the vocational problem
- Dressing examen

1835/36

- Seminary, first phylosophy classroom
- Holidays: repetitions of Greek in Montaldo

1836/37

- Seminary, second phylosophy classroom, L. Comollo enters the seminary

1837/38

- Seminary, first theology classroom

1838/39

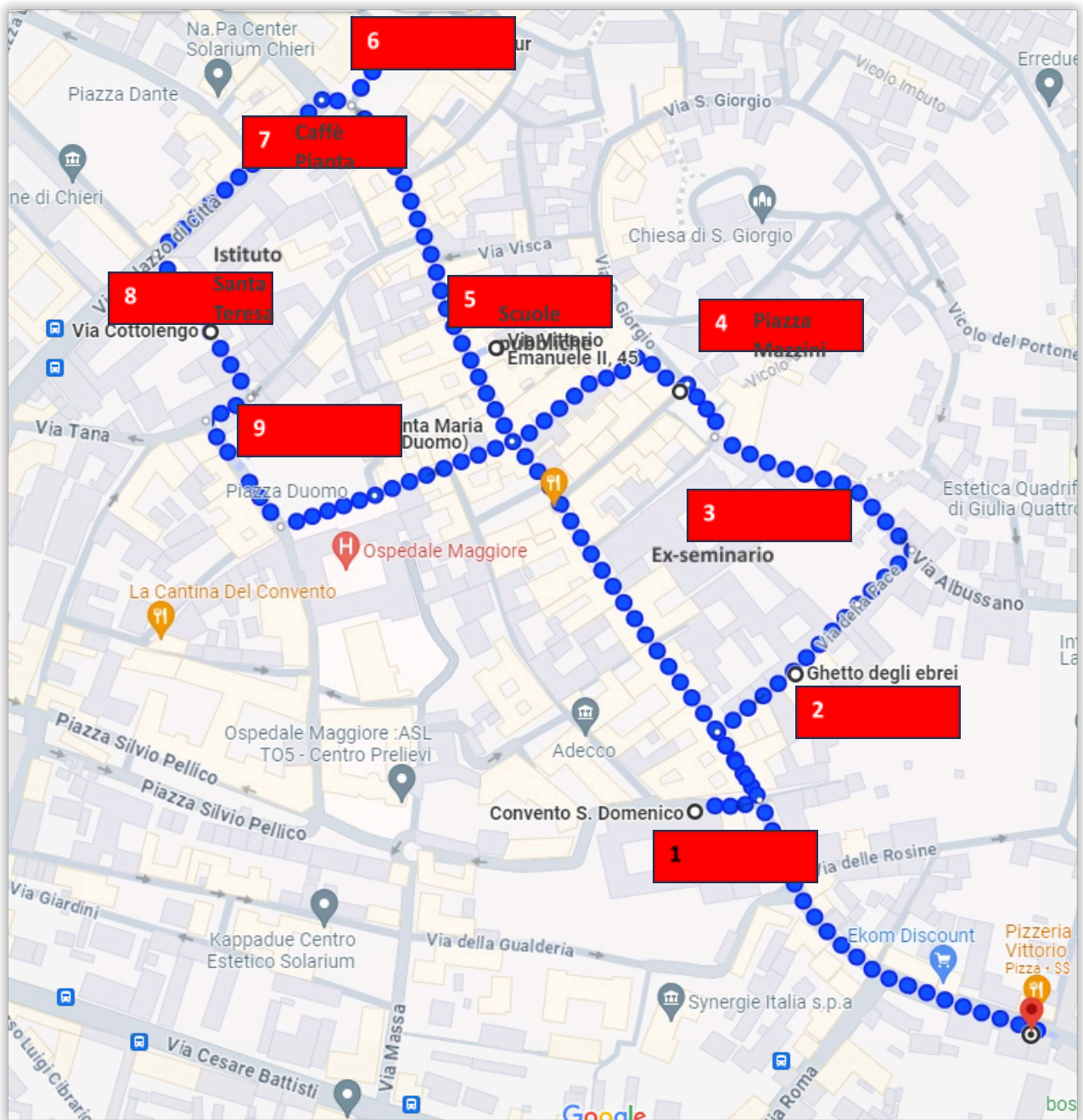
- Seminary, second theology classroom, Sacristan,
- 2.4.1839: death of L. Comollo

1839/40

- Seminary, third theology classroom
- 25.4.1840: tonsure and minor orders
- Autumn: fourth theology classroom and examen

1840/41

- Seminary, fifth theology classroom, Prefect of Camerata
- 19.9.40: subdiaconate
- 29.3.41: diaconate
- 5.6.41: presbyterate



Church of San Domenico, friendship with Father Giacinto Giusiana

San Domenico, completed in the early fourteenth century and consecrated in 1388, underwent several changes. The spired bell tower, with single and twin lancet windows, was finished in 1381, while the current facade was built in the fifteenth century, as well as the wooden shutters of the great Gothic portal. The interior is divided into three wide naves with cruciform pillars whose stone capitals bear the date 1317.

- The presbytery and the choir were refurbished at the beginning of the '600 by Archbishop Carlo Broglio.
- The side paintings and the ceiling frescoes, representing scenes from the Gospel and the life of Saint Dominic, are the work of Moncalvo (1606). He is also the author of the central painting above the altar (1606-1608).
- The large crucifix, sculpted by Martino da Casale, dates back to 1522.
- On the left of the person looking at the presbytery, there is the chapel of Saint Tommaso d'Aquino, where, in a Gothic reliquary, the girdle that, according to tradition, the angels would have handed to the Saint after a hard temptation victoriously overcome.
- On the right, towards the center of the building, there is the chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary, where currently the St. Sacrament is preserved.

On the altar of this church Don Bosco, on 8 June 1841, celebrated his third Mass after his ordination, invited by the father Giacinto Giusiana, who had been his professor in the Grammar course (1832-1833). During that Mass, Don Bosco wrote, wept with emotion. *"I spent with him all that day and I can call it a day of paradise"*. He was also sincerely grateful to his father Giusiana for having convinced the committee that he wanted to reject him to make him repeat the exam alone. His task had been cancelled because he had suggested solutions to his fellow students.



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Via della Pace, the ghetto with the shop and the house of the bookseller Foa Elia

The via of Peace is particularly important because here are the buildings that made up the Jewish Ghetto. The Jews formed an important community in Chieri. The young Giovanni, free from prejudices and always animated by feelings of kindness towards all, got in touch profitably with some of them during his stay in Chieri

In the ghetto lived the bookseller Foa Elia. Giovanni Bosco, student of Humanity and Rhetoric, became friend with him. He borrowed, to a penny each, the small books of the Popular Library Pomba, which he read voraciously to the rhythm of one a day. " *The year of the fourth gymnasium - he will write later - the employment in the reading of the Italian authors. The year of rhetoric I set out to study the Latin classics, and I began to read Cornelius Nepote, Cicero, Sallust, Quintus Curtius, Titus Livius, Cornelius Tacitus, Ovidio, Virgil, Horace Flacco and others. I read those books for fun and enjoyed them as if I understood them entirely*".

On the same side, in the building at the end of the road, at the corner with Via di Albussano (with entrance from No. 14 of Via della Pace) lived Giacobbe Levi, so called Giona. Jonah was won over by the cordiality and generosity of Giovanni Bosco, so much so that at a certain moment he expressed his desire to convert to Christianity. This caused some difficulties for John with the Jewish community and especially with Giona's mother. The boy was baptized in 1834. According to custom and statutes, the Confraternity of the Holy Spirit of Chieri ascribed among its members the newly converted and awarded him a subsidy of 400 lire, since he was expelled from the community of origin.

The ghetto also includes the Synagogue that rises above the courtyard on the first floor. The municipality of Chieri plans to acquire and renovate this elegant building currently no longer used.

Archiepiscopal Seminary, theological studies 1835 - 1841

The Seminary of Chieri, third of the archdiocese of Turin after that of the capital and that of Bra, was opened in 1829 in a palace that the Broglia family had donated to the Filippini Fathers. Here the fathers had the convent, from which they also cared the church of San Filippo Neri annexed to the complex. In 1801 the community was suppressed and until 1828 the building was used for public offices. The beautiful sundial of the building attracted the attention of Giovanni Bosco and his friend Garigliano at their first entrance. The motto "The hours pass slowly for those who are sad, quickly for those who are in joy" was immediately chosen by the two as a program of life.

Don Bosco attended from 1835 to 1841, studying philosophy (two years) and theology (four years). It's interesting to note that the theology course lasted 5 years but the young cleric asked and was able to take the exams of the fourth year studying as self-taught during the summer holidays.

The long period of studies at the Seminary formed the character of Don Bosco and shaped him as a priest, culturally competent and generously oriented to the good of the many people he would encounter in his apostolate in Turin. When he finished his studies, there was great emotion, because he had become the darling of teachers and seminarians.

Important episodes for his future life include:

- During the holidays of the first year of seminary (1835-1836) the young cleric spent three months in the castle of Montaldo Torinese, where the Jesuit fathers had transferred from Turin the internal students of the Real Collegio del Carmine, for the impending danger of cholera. On the recommendation of Don Cafasso, Giovanni was invited to give repetitions of Greek. He thus got to know several young people belonging to distinguished and noble Piedmontese families, with whom he maintained relationships that would be precious in his future ministry.



- The second year of theology (1838-1839) was marked dramatically by the death of his friend Luigi Comollo (2 April 1839, Easter Tuesday), who was only 22 years old. The night after the funeral, the well-known episode of the "manifestation" of the deceased takes place, revealing that he is saved. The modalities of the event frightened the whole comradeship and left Giovanni Bosco himself upset: *"It was the first time that in my memory I was afraid: fear and fright such that, fallen into serious illness, I was brought near the grave"*.
- In that second year Giovanni Bosco was made a sacristan of the seminary, "a small office", established to take care of the cleaning of the church and ensure the order of the furnishings, but also, as he wrote himself *"a precious sign of benevolence of superiors"*, including 60 francs in compensation. *" So, I already enjoyed half the pension, while the charitable D. Cafasso provided the rest."*



Piazza Mazzini, center of references for Don Bosco in Chieri

Going up Via San Filippo, on the left side of the church, you flank the beautiful seventeenth-century brick facade (modified in 1780) of the former Filippini's convent, and you reach Piazza Mazzini, formerly Piazza San Guglielmo. This place in the early nineteenth century was the heart of the town. There was the town hall and was animated by a lively weekly market and the two annual fairs of Santa Barbara and San Leonardo.

On the square there are some buildings linked to the memory of Giovanni Bosco's stay in Chieri: the church of San Guglielmo, the house of the theologian Maloria, the Lucia Matta's house where he lived for a period, the city palace, the workshop of the carpenter Barzochino.

The church of Saint William was formerly the seat of the Brotherhood of the Disciplined of the Holy Spirit, which also had the purpose of assisting Jews converted to Christianity.

Opposite the church, lived the theologian Giuseppe Maria Maloria (1802-1857), erudite clergyman, Canon of the cathedral. He was only twenty-nine years old when, in 1831, he was chosen by Giovanni Bosco as confessor. The young student will continue to confess regularly from the theologian Maloria for all the time of his residence in Chieri, even during his seminary years.

On the square there was also the Marchisio house. Here, during the school year, lived a friend of mother Margherita, Lucia Pianta widow Matta. In 1831-1832 and 1832-1833 he received John for 21 liras a month. The sum, also payable in kind, was however remarkable for the economic situation of the Bosco family. John then tried to contribute to the expenses by engaging in all manner of small household jobs. For his exemplary and judicious conduct, he immediately earned the esteem of Lucia, who asked him to give repetitions to his son, already 21 years old (note that there were frequent cases of those who undertook studies in advanced youth). The results were satisfactory, so much so that John obtained the pension rebate.

To the left of the church of San Guglielmo, in the building that flanks the square, with a classical façade by the architect Mario Ludovico Quarini, there was the town hall. Here he remained until 1842, when he was transferred to the former convent of San Francesco, the current seat.

From Piazza Mazzini, continuing beyond the former civic palace, take Via San Giorgio. The first building on the right, with traces of Gothic architecture, is the Palazzo Valfré, formerly Palazzo Mercandillo. On the ground floor, enclosed by large wooden doors, was the workshop of the carpenter Bernardo Barzochino. He belonged to a family of artisans and wood artists highly esteemed in Chieri. It is probably here that Giovanni Bosco came in his free moments to offer his services and to learn the art of building furniture. In fact Don Lemoyne, who learned it directly from the Saint, writes: « *In a workshop of carpenters he know, near his home, he learned very easily to plane, square, saw the wood, to use the hammer, the chisel, the warts, so that he was able to build furniture...».*



Public Schools, friendship with teachers and students

In via Vittorio Emanuele 45, there is a passage that leads to the buildings in which the public schools of Chieri were located. The town of Chieri had purchased these buildings in 1829, following the destination of the former convent of San Filippo for use as a seminary. In November 1831, the new premises that housed the public schools were inaugurated until the school year 1838-1839. In November 1839 the schools were transferred to Palazzo Tana.

In the school year 1831-1832 Giovanni is admitted in the sixth classroom (with the theologian professor Valeriano Pugnetti), because the preparation received at Castelnuovo was considered rather incomplete. After two months, however, he was promoted to the Fifth classroom (with Professor Don Placido Valimberti) and again in the same year he moved to the Fourth class (with Professor Vincenzo Cima). It was in fact customary that, when a student showed that he knew the contents of the program of a certain class, he could be admitted to the higher one also during the school year. Precisely in the class of Professor Cima happens the episode in which Giovanni repeats perfectly a piece of Latin author just heard, as if he read it from the book that, in reality, does not have with him.

In the following three years he successfully attended classes in Grammar, Humanity and Rhetoric. With the teachers he established excellent relationships:

- Father Giusiana, a Dominican, had a beneficial influence on him also at the formative level. Don Bosco, grateful, will celebrate one of his first Masses in the convent of his father who had saved him from failing for pass the task to some companions.
- Giovanni will also remember in his memoirs Don Pietro Banaudi as a true model for teachers. "*Without ever inflicting any punishment*" - Don Bosco testifies - "*he had managed to be respected and loved by all his students. He loved them all as children, and they loved him as a tender father*".
- Relationship of mutual esteem also bind Giovanni and his teacher of Rhetoric. The theologian Giovanni Francesco Bosco later told the Salesians that he was admired for having seen the young Giovanni Bosco digging the vineyard of his landlord while, holding an open book supported by a branch, he studied the lesson.

The most beautiful friendship of this period is that with Luigi Comollo, who attended the public schools of Chieri from the school year 1834-1835. Physically frail, but of great spiritual richness, he played an important role in the maturation of the young Bosco, who said: "*I always had him as a close friend, and I can say that from him I began to learn to live as a Christian*". John, for his part, defends it against the abuses of comrades, resorting once even to the strong ways. Thanks also to this friendship he discovers his vocational direction and adopts a system of life more suited to it. The taste for personal contacts and friendship pushes Giovanni to make himself available to everyone. In particular, it is required of school repetitions also by classmates. His patience, his innate didactic "instinct" and his cordial character achieve good results, and not only in the school field.



Piazza Cavour, the Society of Joy

Continuing on Via Vittorio Emanuele in the direction of Turin you arrive in Piazza Cavour, known in 800 as Piazza d'Armi. Probably already in the year 1831-1832 in this square Giovanni Bosco gave birth to the "Society of Joy", with an evocative name of similar institutions that in those years swarmed in all areas: for example the secret societies based on patriotic inspiration, but also the societies with a literary and religious character.

Don Bosco writes: *"To give a name to those meetings of young people we used to call them the Society of Joy: a name that was very convenient, because it was a strict obligation for everyone to look for those books, to introduce those discourses and playthings that could have contributed to being cheerful; on the contrary, everything that caused melancholy was forbidden, especially things contrary to the law of the Lord. Those who therefore blasphemed or named the name of God in vain, or made bad speeches, were immediately removed from society. So, found myself at the head of this multitude of companions, by mutual agreement it was placed on the basis: 1. Every member of the Society of Joy must avoid any discourse, any action that disdains a good Christian; 2 Accuracy in the performance of school duties and religious duties".*

On the square on the right, in the upper part, there is the beautiful church of San Bernardino, built in



the early seventeenth century. Opposite, the church of Sant'Antonio Abate, with its façade on Via Vittorio Emanuele, delimits the space. It is a Baroque adaptation by the Biellese Giuseppe Giacinto Bays (1767) on a previous Gothic building of which remains the bell tower (1445). A plaque on the side of the church, recalls the presence of John with friends of the Society of Joy to the catechisms of the church.

On the left, on the south side of Piazza Cavour and at the corner of Via Vittorio Emanuele and Via Palazzo di Città, a hotel called "del Muletto" (today Caffè Nazionale) was opened. It reminds us of the happy conclusion of an epic challenge between the young Bosco and a saltimbanque. The race, desired by the insistence of the young Bosco's friends, takes place along the avenue of Porta Torinese in four moments: running, jumping, magic wand and tree climbing. Giovanni passes the acrobat in all the tests and earns the remarkable figure of 240 lire. In order not to ruin the poor man, who sees all his savings vanish, he returns the money, provided that he offers him and his friends of the Society of Joy a lunch. The acrobat willingly accepts and invites Giovanni and his companions

(twenty-two people in all) to the Hotel del Muletto.

Caffè Pianta, the underground of many nights of study and work

A few steps from Piazza Cavour, in the Vergnano house, the Caffè Pianta is located. Giovanni Pianta, brother of Lucia Matta, belonging from Morialdo, came to Chieri in the autumn of 1833 and opened a Coffee Shop with a billiard room. He, having to begin his exercise, insisted with Mother Margaret that John come to live with him and help him in the many needs of the Shop.

The Café Pianta consists of two rooms, one open to the public street and the other, used as a room for billiards and piano, located towards the inner courtyard. The two rooms are connected by a passage (about 3.50 meters long), leaning against a staircase, in which there is also a small brick oven for the preparation of coffee and desserts. In this kind of corridor opens a small basement, in which is placed the folding bed of John.

In the Café Pianta Giovanni receives no salary, only hospitality, a plate of soup and the time needed to study. The mother, as is customary at that time, provided him with bread and food from home, but the economic restrictions did not allow her to send money. To get dressed, to get some of the nourishment and the necessary for the school, Giovanni has to settle with the little money he has collected by doing some repetition.

To the constraints of that period must be added the fact that in 1933-34 John is exhausted by the protracted choice of his vocation, that reaches the most critical and tormented moments: in March John is determined to enter the Franciscan Order and he is admitted, but then suspends the decision pending a clearer discernment.

In addition to his study and work commitments in the Café, his generosity impels him to make himself useful to all: he brings every day the water drawn from the well to the old Don Arnaud who lives on the upper floors of the house; helps in the tasks a group of six or seven guys who are host of the veterinarian Torta in a next-door house. At the same time, he also receives help and support from people who love him, as Giuseppe Blanchard who makes him have fruit to supplement poor nutrition.

Domenico Pogliano, bell ringer of the cathedral, who admires Giovanni for his fervent devotion and his apostolate among his peers, realizes the unhealthy conditions of Giovanni Bosco's bed and invites him to take advantage of his home to study more easily.



Santa Teresa Institute, a Home for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians

The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians work in this building, with an Oratory and a school for girls, since 1878, sent by Don Bosco and Santa Maria Domenica Mazzarello. The spouses Carlo and Ottavia Bertinetti (godmother of Baptism of Jonah) in 1868 had bequeathed to Don Bosco their house, with the surrounding land, to open a project for the young peoples of Chieri. But the opposition of the parish priest of the cathedral, prevented the foundation.

The male Oratory was then organized in the premises of the parish of Saint George. On 8 December 1876 Don Bosco himself inaugurated a small female oratory in the Bertinetti house, and blessed a statue of Mary Help of Christians, still venerated in the Saint Teresa Institute. The statue is a gift from the saint, who, presenting it, said: *"For now I am sending the Mother, then the Daughters will come"*. Two years later, in fact, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians took possession of the house, taking over the direction of the Oratory and opening a college there. Over the years the Institute became a house of formation for the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians.

Today the original Bertinetti house no longer exists. Of the ancient buildings remains only a large room of the century. XV, the coffered ceiling decorated with coats of arms that date back to the crusaders Clerics.

In ancient times the house was connected to the nearby Palazzo dei Tana, a family to which the mother of Saint Luigi Gonzaga belonged. The noble Saint lived for a while in Chieri, a guest of his grandparents. Saint Louis was always venerated in Chieri with particular devotion: in the nineteenth century he was presented to students as a model of Christian life and youthful virtue. In public schools his feast was emphasized by a preparatory novena, solemn religious services and a literary and musical academy. Don Bosco will maintain this devotion, proposing it to his young peoples.



Cathedral and Chapel of the Graces, light for your vocation

The Cathedral was built between 1405 and 1435, in the site of a previous church built in the eleventh century on the ruins of a pagan temple. On the right side protrude the bell tower with single and double lancet windows (erected between 1329 and 1492) and the baptistery, remodelled in sec. XV, but built on an early Christian baptistery. The interior is rich in artistic evidence of every century. We only point out - for the purposes of the youth story of Don Bosco - the fourth chapel on the left, dedicated to Our Lady of Grace.

The chapel was built by vote, made by the city council on 2th August of 1630, on the occasion of the famous "Manzoni" plague. The current architectural structure is the work of Bernardo Antonio Vittone (1757-1759), embellished in 1780, the third fiftieth anniversary of the vote. The wooden statue (1636) is by Pietro Botto da Savigliano (1603-1662); the side paintings, depicting scenes of the plague, are by the Ticinese Giuseppe Sariga (t 1782). Even today, every year since the time of the vote, the municipal authorities pay homage to the Virgin, on the day of her feast, with the singing of the Salve Regina.

Giovanni Bosco, when was a public-school student, every day, morning and evening, comes to pray in front of this statue, mindful of his mother's recommendation: "*Be devoted to Our Lady!*". Praying in this chapel together with his friend Comollo, he gets light to discern his vocation. In fact, the Saint tells us: "*Since the obstacles were many and lasting, so I decided to expose everything to my friend Comollo. It gave me advice to make a novena during which he would write to his provost uncle. The last day of the novena, withf the incomparable friend I made the confession and the communion, then I heard a mass, and I served another in the cathedral to the altar of the Madonna of the Graces. So, when we went home, we found a letter from D. Comollo conceived in these terms: - Consider carefully the things exposed, I would advise your companion to postpone entering a convent. He must dress the clerical habit, and while he did his studies he would know better what God wanted from him...*".

On June 9, 1841, at the altar of Our Lady of Grace, a new priest, Don Bosco celebrated his fourth Mass.

On the other side, the baptistery of the cathedral is a chest that preserves many artistic treasures and, at the same time, covers the remains that testify to the ancient Christian worship. The current building, of octagonal plan, was built in two phases: first at the time of Bishop Landolfo (11th century, Romanesque style), then raised when the Dome was rebuilt (1405-1436, Gothic style). The older lower part of the masonry has some "chevron" features, with the reuse of bricks from buildings of the Roman era. A magnificent cycle of frescoes adorns the higher part of the walls. It depicts the "Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to Saint John" and is the work of the Chieri's painter Guglielmetto Fantini, who painted it frescoed around 1435. Starting from the Resurrection of Lazarus, and moving to the right, we find: The entrance of Jesus to Jerusalem, The Last Supper, The washing of the feet, Judas receives the thirty moneys, The prayer in Gethsemane, The kiss of Judas, Jesus before Anne, Jesus before Caiaphas, Jesus before Pilate, The flogging, Jesus before Herod, The crowning of thorns, Pilate washing his hands, The crucifixion.



