

“San Marco al Molo” Church

The church of SAN MARCO AL MOLO – the name “al molo” means on the wharf – is situated in the ancient part of the harbour, close to the bay called *Mandraccio*, where the *Molo Vecchio* was constructed: a 100 mt. line of stone blocks following the coast, made to protect vessels and port structures from the stormy weather, above all from the winds coming from the south, as the *Libeccio*.

The *Molo Vecchio* has been the first wharf and the first work in masonry in the harbour, as we know from archaeological documents, around the 12th century.

This area, still now called the Molo Quarter, has been for a long time the place for trade corporations (dockers, sales and rope manufacturers,...), for the custom palace, for military garrison, for the executioner house (*casa del boia*).

The tradition says that condemned men were used to pass by the church dedicated to San Marco Evangelist to pray and ask the Saint to have mercy on them.

With the development of the port, this area has been included in the city walls (*Baluardo*) with the *Porta Ciboria* (Galeazzo Alessi 1560 c.) city door for goods, (now called *Porta Siberia* for a dialect translation error) connecting the wharf with the warehouses in the city.

The church has been built under Archbishop Ugone Della Volta (1163-1188). There is a document from the Genoa Consuls, January 1173, about the permission “*sito et licentia*”, to Striggiaporco, Giovanni Nepitelli's son, about the construction of a church for San Marco Evangelist.

The construction ended in 1177. Archbishop Ugone Della Volta himself, and his successor Bonifacio, consecrated it as a parish church around 1189.

During the 14th century Giovanni da Carignano has been the rector of the church: having signed his map, he is the first nautical cartographer whose name is known.

In 1440 we have some restorations on the church, the addition of some chapels and altars, paid by the trade corporations and port workers.

In 1594 the church has been enlarged and at the same time we have the construction of the new façade; from here begins the transformation of the church in Baroque style (other works in 1646, 1736,...).

The original structure of the interior is now visible again thanks to the restorations done in 1947-48. Today the orientation of the building is the opposite of the original one of the Romanic church, the basilica is three-aisled in plan, covered by a barrel-vault, done in 17th century. On the left side wall it's possible to see a tombstone, a decorated bas-relief, representing San Marco lion, taken from the city of Pola in 1380, by the military.

In the inside: close to the entrance, a wooden statue, “*Assunta*” by Maragliano, 1736; second altar of the right aisle, a marble group, “*Madonna e i Santi Nazario e Celso*”, by Francesco Maria Schiaffino, 1735.

There are also pictures preserved in the church: “*Martirio di Santa Barbara*” by Domenico Fiasella, 1622, in the presbytery; “*Santi Agostino e Chiara*”, by Antonio Giolfi; “*Le nozze mistiche di Santa Caterina*”, by Orazio De Ferrari, 1630 c. and “*Anime Purganti*”, by Giulio Benso, 17th century.

Note: Entrance and apse are now opposite from the original plant.

Very interesting is the view from the outside, where it's clear how the volume of the church became later part of different private constructions built all around.