

ATESSA

2) The Convent of Saint Pasquale

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The church and monastery of Saint Mary of the angels, or better known as the Convent of San Pasquale, was founded in 1408 by the Franciscan Brother Thomas in the heart of a rugged valley near Atezza. The convent throughout the centuries has undergone both religious and constructive changes, alternating between periods of decline and glory.

The present building shows the architectural effects of these modifications, one of which is a majestic brick porch added in 1731 which leads to an elegant cloister with a well in the centre. During the drought of 1709, water miraculously gushed out of this well.

The convent was used as a well known woollen mill during the seventeenth century and later became a centre for theological studies. The artistic furnishings kept here include a terracotta statue of San Francesco, the remains of a decorated altar piece from the sixteenth century, the chapel and a statue of San Pasquale which dates back to the eighteenth century.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the convent became state property due to a law regarding the confiscation of church endowments, it was soon abandoned and became completely dilapidated. Thanks to the Oblate fathers, the convent had a new lease of life in 1936. The same fathers then went on to build the large grotto in 1958 in honour of the Virgin Mary of Lourdes.

During recent years the convent has been maintained by a presbyteral community, but in 2008 it was taken over by an order of Spanish priests, the "Identes" and is now used as a centre for spiritual retreat to rediscover the ecology of silence or an intimate meeting with God, surrounded by nature and the pleasant perfume of lilies and lilacs, as mentioned in the phrases engraved on the top of the main church door.

In the neighbouring park, full of botanic species, footpaths and picnic areas, a wide lane leads to an enormous open space, ideal for celebrations and concerts which overlooks the Sangro and Osento valleys, framed by the Maiella Mountain and the Adriatic Sea.

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