Parish Church of Sant'Antonio Abate

There are two churches in the village dedicated to St. Anthony the Abbot, and they stand a short distance from each other in the *Issiria* district, which, together with the districts of *Ovolaccio* and *Asuai*, form the village of Desulo.

The oldest, dating back to the 16th century, was closed because it was damaged by ground subsidence and therefore deemed unfit for use.

The most recent construction, inaugurated on 6 July 1980, has its entrance on the main street and has a strong visual impact, both because of its size and its finish made of schist, a stone used locally in the construction of houses. The project is innovative in its interpretation of the space dedicated to worship, while making use of traditional materials for the finish of the walls and roof, in schist and wood.

The entrance leads into a large space from which one can appreciate, from a slightly higher perspective, the interior of the hall, which is accessed by descending a few steps. The vast, bright space is enriched by the old wooden pulpit, which is gilded and densely carved with floral motifs and has two sides painted with large bouquets of pink flowers. The artefact is from the old parish church, like almost all the statues in the temple.

In the area behind the altar hangs a magnificent wooden crucifix with moveable arms, dating back to the 18th century like the other statues on display in the church, namely the 'Madonna with the Risen Christ' and a valuable life-size statue of the *Dormitio Virginis*, with rich brocade robes embellished with embroidery and sequins.

The sacristy houses a recently restored processional Madonna from 1754, a valuable 17th-century statue of St. Anthony the Abbot from the Neapolitan school and another of St. Sebastian, also from the 17th century, from a Sardinian workshop.

From the church entrance, a staircase leads to the open balcony above the hall where, in a shrine, silverware and various liturgical instruments are displayed. On the opposite wall, the beautifully restored portal from the old Church of Sant'Antonio, carved by artist Francesco Nonnis in 1932, is exhibited. The artefact, made of chestnut wood, is richly decorated with floral friezes and two small central images of the Madonna and Saint Anthony. Also by the same artist is the Stations of the Cross with bas-reliefs carved in maple wood, made in 1964, hanging on the temple walls.

One can see the old parish church of Sant'Antonio, at least its exterior, a few steps away from the new one, accessing it via a flight of steps that descends from the churchyard to a large tiled square and finally to the old building. The temple, in late Gothic style, has undergone several attempts at restoration over the years, the first of which was in the 19th century, then in the 1970s, although it is still awaiting completion.

The church has a façade with a wide portal surrounded by red trachyte arches, with decorative friezes at the connection points with the side pillars.

Above the entrance is a large round window also enclosed by a trachyte frame. On the left side of the façade stands the square stone bell tower. The interior of the church is arranged in three naves, the central one being marked by three pointed arches with trachyte ribs. Three chapels, on each side of the aisles, once had two narrow arched windows each. Today these are walled up with concrete blocks. The presbytery was raised and topped by a star-shaped dome, surmounted by a windowed drum from which light filtered. On either side of the altar are two chapels.

Festivals dedicated to the Saint are celebrated on 16 June and 16 January.

They are organised by the prioresses, who parade in procession wearing the magnificent local costume in vivid shades of red, yellow and blue.

