

## **Casa della Misericordia (House of Mercy)**

### **(16th century)**

via Rovelli, 32-34

The charitable commitment of the Capuchin Francesco da Calabria and of some nobles, linked mostly to the founder of the Somascans, Gerolamo Miani, allowed the establishment of this pious building. During the famine and the epidemic in 1539-40 they distributed food to the poor of Como and to quarantined people. In 1540 they got recognition from the city authorities and the governor of Milan, who approved its first statute. In 1544 the deputies of the *Casa della Misericordia* bought a building where they built up an oratory dedicated to St. Paul; two years later, Giovanni Antonio Odescalchi donated a house to this association. It was located next to the church and its purpose was the foundation of a school, with free fees for poor children and compulsory ones for the nobles. Besides the assistance of the miserable and its educational activity, the members of the association also provided free medical assistance for the ill and the poor of the city; they even gave dowries to indigent girls. Starting from 1594, in compliance with Ludovico Tridi's last wish, the educational activity also spread to the maladjusted young people from Torno. After the school shutdown in 1787, public administration settled till the end of the 19th century.

## **What documents tell us...**

### **From the report about Bishop Francesco Bonomi's apostolic visitation, 1578**

*Misericordia's society, near St. Paul's oratory, is managed by thirteen people: three of these are canons chosen by the chapter of the cathedral and the other ten are named by the city community. Its specific task is the caretaking of the needy in the city and the distribution of the collected handouts to them.*

### **From the reports about Bishop Filippo Archinti's pastoral visitation, 17th century**

*The school master, who teaches sixty poor little boys how to read, is maintained through a fifteen lire month salary: most of this amount is paid by the deputies of the society themselves and several times the chaplain, who celebrates the daily holy service, even fulfils the master's task for a double salary of thirty lire a month. The society, depending on its possibilities, monthly gives more or less three hundred fifty lire to poor and ill people; to this sum we have to add extra charity amounting to six hundred lire collected at Easter and Christmas as well as the distribution of salt and bread to the needy during pious people's funerals. And when it occurs poverty is increasing, the above mentioned society goes beyond its possibilities.*