

Italy - Assisi  
Day 14  
Thursday, March 16 2023

Frescoes –

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### **Frescoes**

Fresco is a technique of mural painting executed upon freshly laid lime plaster. Water is used as the vehicle for the dry-powder pigment to merge with the plaster, and with the setting of the plaster, the painting becomes an integral part of the wall.

#### **- Basilica of San Francesco d'Assisi – Basilica**

The Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi is the mother church of the Roman Catholic Order of Friars Minor Conventual in Assisi, a town in the Umbria region in central Italy, where Saint Francis was born and died. It is a Papal minor basilica and one of the most important places of Christian pilgrimage in Italy. With its accompanying friary, Sacro Convento, the basilica is a distinctive landmark to those approaching Assisi. It has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2000.

The basilica, which was begun in 1228, is built into the side of a hill and comprises two churches (known as the Upper Church and the Lower Church) and a crypt, where the remains of the saint are interred. The interior of the Upper Church is an important early example of the Gothic style in Italy. The Upper and Lower Churches are decorated with frescoes by numerous late medieval painters from the Roman and Tuscan schools, and include works by Cimabue, Giotto, Simone Martini, Pietro Lorenzetti and possibly Pietro Cavallini. The range and quality of the works give the basilica a unique importance in demonstrating the outstanding development of Italian art of this period, especially if compared with the rest of Christian Europe.

#### **Assisi Diocesan Museum**

The Assisi Diocesan Museum, in the city of Assisi, Italy, was founded in 1941 by bishop Giuseppe Placido Niccolini to preserve the most important works of art of the Assisi Cathedral and of several oratories of Assisi's confraternities. The museum is located underneath the piazza of the cathedral and has a collection consisting of about 300 works of which 100 are on display, exhibited in the museum's nine sections.

#### Exhibition spaces:

*Corridor* - In the corridor are archeological displays of items found in the immediate area, including capitals sculpted in limestone, rediscovered in the crypt but originally from the cathedral, and datable to between the 8th and the 12th centuries.[1] Among the items from the Roman era is the front of the sarcophagus with Nikai Clipeofore and the libation rite dated to the 2nd century.

*Master of St. Clare room* - In the St. Clare room are detached frescoes attributed to the Master of Santa Chiara, an anonymous artist of the 13th century that takes his name from an icon found in the Basilica of St. Clare in Assisi. Originally these frescoes decorated an area above today's chapel of the Madonna del Pianto which corresponds to the old left apse of the cathedral that was separated from the rest of the church with the modifications of Galeazzo Alessi in the 16th century.

*Nicolò Alunno room* - This room has the polyptych of San Rufino (1462) by Foligno artist Nicolò di Liberatore (also known as l'Alunno). In the predella are scenes of the martyrdom of San Rufino, the patron of the city of Assisi, including the miraculous finding of his body and its transfer into the walls of the city. Also in this area are two predellas by Dono Doni (1563) as well as sacred vessels and liturgical vestments from the 17th through the 19th centuries.[1]

*Crypt of San Rufino* - The Romanesque crypt of San Rufino (11th century) is divided into three naves with an apse and has vaulted arches supported by columns resting on arches. The symbols of the four evangelists are carved into the vaults and are dated to the middle of the 11th century. Inside the crypt is a Roman sacrophagus from the beginning of the third century depicting the myth of Selene and Endimone in which the body of San Rufino was originally placed. Also visible in the crypt is part of a Roman wall in opus quadratum, that was rediscovered underneath the cathedral. The crypt is one of the places that Francis of Assisi went to pray when preaching in the cathedral.

*Cloister* - The cloister (11th century) is surrounded by old portico with arches and capitals, and has at its center a well from the Roman era, known as the pozzo della Mensa.

*Diocesan room* - This room houses objects from the churches and monuments of the diocesan territory. Of special interest is the work of Matteo da Gualdo.[3]

*Confraternity room* - This room contains objects from the oratories of the confraternities of Assisi and a few processional banners, the oldest of which dates to 1378 and belonged to the Confraternity of St. Francis of the Stigmata. The frescoes in this room recount the story of Christ's passion, and were removed from the oratory of the Confraternity of San Rufinuccio and were painted by Puccio Capanna and Pace di Bartolo. Of particular historical interest is the banner painted by Orazio Riminaldi (1593-1630) for the Confraternity of Santa Caterina that depicts on one side the martyrdom of St. Catherine and on the other side the figures of St. James and St. Anthony the Abbot.

*Engraved stone tablets* - This section contains engraved tablets, including gravestones, discovered during the excavations surrounding the cathedral.

*Sermei room* - This room contains liturgical objects, silver smithery, and paintings attributed to the Umbrian painter Cesare Sermei. Among the works conserved here is the silver bust reliquary of San Rufino made by Paolo Spagna, and the large, recently restored painting by Sermei of St Francis blessing the city of Assisi at his death.

*Perkins room* - This room displays works donated to the Diocese of Assisi by the American art collector Frederick Mason Perkins, who lived for many years in Assisi and died there in 1955. Exhibited are 32 works of Italian artists including: a Madonna attributed to the circle of Francesco di Giorgio Martini, a wooden sculpture attributed by some critics to Jacopo della Quercia, and 14th century Dormitio Virginis attributed to Jacopo Avanzi which was stolen by Nazi soldiers from Perkin's villa in Sassoforte a Lastra a Signa and was recovered by the carabinieri and returned to the museum in 2015.

### **Tour of Assisi**

Assisi is a hill town in central Italy's Umbria region. It was the birthplace of St. Francis (1181–1226), one of Italy's patron saints. The Basilica of St. Francis is a massive, 2-level church, consecrated in 1253. Its 13th-century frescoes portraying the life of St. Francis have been attributed to Giotto and Cimabue, among others. The crypt houses the saint's stone sarcophagus.