

Museum of Memory



On May 16, 2018, the “Museum of Memory, Assisi 1943-1944,” already opened in 2011 and temporarily situated in the Municipal Art Gallery, was inaugurated in the Episcopal Palace Sanctuary of the Renunciation. The exhibition, entirely in two languages (Italian and English), unfolds in five rooms in the basement of what was the Bishop’s palace of the then Bishop Placido Nicolini. He was the spiritual and material guide of the underground organization that saved about 300 Jews, welcomed them but, most especially, hid them below, with their valuables walled up. The exhibition is divided into different sections that recount, through essays, original and unpublished documents, objects and awards, the role of some protagonists, later recognized by Yad Vashem as “Righteous among the Nations” (Don Aldo Brunacci, Bishop Placido Nicolini, Father Rufino Niccacci, Luigi and Trento Brizi, Sister Ermella Brandi, Sister Giuseppina Biviglia, Gino Bartali and Father Federico Vincenti). In addition to the “Righteous among the Nations” (certainly a unique case in Italy due to the high number in a small town like Assisi), the exhibition recalls the role of so many worthy citizens, and highlights the places of salvation, including many Assisi monasteries and the Basilica of Saint Francis.



Chapel of Gino Bartali

An important section of the Museum is represented by the private chapel of Gino Bartali, dedicated to Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus. Prior to being a great champion, the Tuscan cyclist had such fervent faith that he took vows as a Carmelite Tertiary in 1937 with the name of Fra’ Tarcisio of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus. The small chapel is dedicated to his brother Giulio, who died prematurely in a racing accident in 1936 (marked by a light with an engraving and dedication by the great cyclist to his brother). It was consecrated by the Cardinal and Bishop of Florence, Elia Dalla Costa in 1937, and preserves some objects greatly linked to Assisi.

Prayer of the Sanctuary

O God our Father,
You so loved the world
that you gave your Son, Jesus.
He stripped Himself of His glory,
to make Himself one with us.
Assist us, so that like Francis,
stripped of all egoism,
we may say in all truth
“Our Father who art in Heaven,”
and so we may put on Christ again,
our naked and crucified Lord.
In Him, may our life be
a gift of love, fulness of joy,
and may the Church,
who covered us in our baptism
in her mantle of grace,
shine in us, as in Mary,
with the holiness of Christ
in the strength of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

SANCTUARY OF THE RENUNCIATION:
PIAZZA DEL VESCOVADO - 06081 ASSISI -
FONE: +390756971311 - +393792570609
segreteria@assisisantuariospogliazione.it
web: www.assisisantuariospogliazione.it

MUSEUM OF MEMORY:
PIAZZA DEL VESCOVADO - 06081 ASSISI -
+393396378067 - +39075 812483 - 075812467
assismuseodellamemoria@gmail.com
web: www.diocesiassisi.it

**INTERNATIONAL AWARD
FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND CARLO ACUTIS**
Piazza Vescovado, 3 - 06081 Assisi
+39 075 815114/+39 339 363 1830
www.francescoassiscarloacutisaward.com



SANCTUARY of the RENUNCIATION



ASSISI

Five eras in a single Sanctuary

The Sanctuary of the Renunciation, which includes the bishop’s palace and the adjacent Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, was erected by diocesan decree on December 25, 2016 and inaugurated on May 20, 2017. This Sanctuary belongs, perhaps more than any other, to the “history” of Assisi: it was located “inside” the city walls prior to the charisma of Francis unleashing its missionary impact on the world and receiving the approval of the universal Church. This is also true for the historical stratification (layers) that these stones and these walls recount.

- A first stratification is undoubtedly that of pre-Christian Assisi on which the bishop’s residence and the former cathedral rest. This is the complex which, according to the opinions of some scholars, is called the House of Propertius (“Casa di Propertio”), a poet from Assisi born around 40 BC or the “Casa della Musa” (Domus Musae).
- It was on these remains that the Christian community laid its first stones. We are on that axis of the road that led to some religious place, such as the ancient temple of Minerva (today Santa Maria sopra Minerva) in the center of Assisi, now the Piazza del Comune.
- The entire first millennium developed upon these two stratifications, with the addition of about two centuries of the second millennium, when the internal family dispute grew between a superficially Christian father, Pietro di Bernardone, and his son Francis, eager for freedom and truth: a discussion that came to a head in the bishop’s residence in 1206 in the famous trial that saw the young “king of the feasts” strip himself to the point of nudity, casting away clothes and money in order to be deeply free, totally God’s and in solidarity with the poor. The bishop’s residence was enriched, in some way, with a new cultural and spiritual “stratification.” That gesture remains imprinted in the stones of the bishop’s residence, engraved in the threshold that Francis crossed. This has only recently been brought to light in the piazza that was invisible until now, but which the excavations currently underway will bring to the surface in an itinerary of the Sanctuary that will present the Stripping of Saint Francis.
- During the years of Nazi-fascist persecutions, this place was the headquarters of the underground organization that saved about 300 Jews. Today, the “Museum of Memory, Assisi 1943-1944,” located exactly in the “basement” where this operation of solidarity was undertaken and



concealed in a highly risky operation, revives and repropose the message of an event that can awaken consciences towards ideals of justice and peace.

- And so, we come to our own time, the beginnings of this third millennium, when providentially, the ancient bi-millennial pole between the bishop's residence and the former cathedral has been enriched with a presence that is now registering an impressive attraction all over the world: the young Carlo Acutis, declared blessed, and buried in Santa Maria Maggiore – the Sanctuary of the Renunciation.

Episcopal palace

The history of the Episcopal Palace in the time of Francis is well documented. A first mention is made in a document of 1237 due to a dispute between the community of Assisi and the Cathedral of San Rufino, regarding the possessions of the cathedral on Mount Subasio. It is said that it is located on the "Ovescovale" hill, because in the local language of Assisi, "bishop" (vescovo) is rendered as "ovescovo," from the Latin "episcopus." Already before the 1997 earthquake, some testimonies had resurfaced, but it was with the post-earthquake work and the discovery of some archival documents that a new understanding of the building emerged. Above all, the original entrance door of the ancient episcopal palace has re-emerged, consisting of an opening, then closed on the western side, which, until a few decades ago, was used as a basement and is now being reopened and recovered; the pictorial decorations of some rooms, dating back to the Middle Ages, and freed from the covering plaster laid during the episcopate of Marcello Crescenzi (1591-1630)

and Paolo Emilio Rondinini (1653-1668). Under them, the building was profoundly modified with the opening of loggias, the gallery, windows and doors, recognizable by the sculpted or painted coats of arms.

Today, the palace consists of two buildings that lean against the southern wall of the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, separated by a courtyard and a building towards the west, divided from the others by a second courtyard with all three buildings ending toward the south against a transverse wing, which is the best preserved, despite the six modern spurs.

From the square, the building appears hidden behind a wall that starts from the edge of the facade of the church of Santa Maria Maggiore and continues towards the San Quirico monastery, with an eighteenth-century brick portal. Beyond is the courtyard, today the Garden of the Righteous, where the statue of Saint Francis by Giovanni Duprè is located in the center, having been removed from the square of San Rufino, where it substituted the marble statue of the same author that is found today inside San Rufino.

To the west of the complex is the entrance to the Gallery of the Bishops ("Galleria dei Vescovi"), decorated by Giacomo Giorgetti during the time of Bishop Rondinini. In the inner courtyard, one can see two arches closed by windows which likely formed the cloister, probably destroyed in the earthquake of 1832. This may also well be the place where Francis was brought to be judged at the hands of the religious authorities. In fact, in a document of 1253, that is, during the episcopate of Niccolò di Calvi, it is said that public sentences had to be issued "in trasanna ante camera vicarii episcopi," that is, under the roof that is in front of the vicar's room, or, as stated in two documents of 1303, in trasanna episcopi, that is in the trasanna (loggia) of the Bishop. We read in the Franciscan Sources (Fonti Francescane): "(Francis) entering into the Bishop's room ... left all of his clothes, and placing the money on them in front of the Bishop and his father and all the others around, he went outside naked and said: "Listen, all of you, and mark my words. Hitherto I have called Pietro Bernardone my father; but because I am resolved to serve God, I return to him the money on account of which he was so perturbed, and also the clothes I wore which are his; and from now on I will say, 'Our Father who art in heaven,' and not 'Father Pietro Bernardone'" ("Legend of the Three Companions" VI, 20).

In the east part of the building, we find the entrance to the room of the Renunciation, arranged at the time of Bishop Crescenzi with three paintings, one attributed to Cesare Sermei that depicts the Stripping of Francis, another by an unknown artist representing the donation of the Porziuncola to Francis by the Benedictines, and the largest, placed in the central wall of the room that conveys the indulgence of the Porziuncola. It is precisely here, on 4 October 2013, in his visit to Assisi, that Pope Francis, meeting the poor of the diocese, invited the Church to "strip itself of the worldliness that kills," making Francis' gesture of stripping all the more relevant.



Church of Santa Maria Maggiore



According to a legend, the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, the first cathedral of the city, was built in the fourth century at the wish of Saint Savino, second bishop of Assisi, above the domus of Properzio, and probably enlarged in the ninth century, the period to which the crypt dates back. In 1035, the title of cathedral was transferred to the Basilica of San

Rufino, built by Bishop Ugone around 1029, and the place where the relics of the patron saint were kept. Perhaps destroyed in a fire, the church was renovated in the twelfth century by Giovanni da Gubbio, as attested by the inscription engraved on the rose window "DOMINI 1163 IHOANNES FECIT" (perhaps Giovanni da Gubbio, the same architect who built the Cathedral of San Rufino). Later, in 1216, the apse area was rebuilt and the event was recorded on a plaque bearing, among other things, the name of Bishop Guido and Francis, and again in an inscription painted in the gallery, which unfortunately was lost in the earthquake of 1832, when the roof and the right nave collapsed. In 1938, the church was consolidated and the facade took on its present form.



Tomb of Blessed Carlo Acutis



At the front of the church's right nave lies the tomb that enshrines the body of Carlo Acutis, who died in 2006 at the age of 15 from galloping leukemia and beatified on 10 October 2020. The body of this young man, exhumed from the cemetery in Assisi where he was buried in these years by his own wish, was translated and entombed on 6 April 2019 in the artistic funeral monument designed by Eraldo Marini and built by Alfio Barabani.