

## Poggio Bustone

Poggio (pronounced Puggio) Bustone is the northern most of the four Franciscan sanctuaries in the Rieti Valley. During Roman times, the entire valley was a natural lake, and the villages were nestled in the mountainsides. In humanities infinite wisdom, even in those days, the Romans drained the lake. The Friary is set high up in rugged terrain a kilometer or two west of the town.

### The Village of Poggio Bustone



### The Friary

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Francis came here in 1209 and greeted the people: “Buon giorno, buona gente.” “Good morning, good people.”

It is said that on his first visit, Francis found a small deserted hermitage in existence. Delighted by the loneliness of the spot, took possession of it for himself and his brothers who numbered 7 at the time.

The Convento di San Giacomo is currently occupied by a small number of friars. It is said to have founded by Francis in 1217. Below the convento, down a flight of stairs is a hermitage-like sanctuary where Francis planted a cross to remind him of the redemption.

A Small chapel at the end of the Stations of the Cross.

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We can sum up Francis' experience at Poggio Bustone in four words: solitude, forgiveness, peace, preaching. On this mountain, Francis experienced the revelation of God.

From San Giacomo a steep path leads up to the *santuario* of 1209. This little hermitage consists of a small chapel hewn out of the rock. An inscription reads: "Our holy father Francis lived in this sacred place for many years with Blessed Giles and his other companions."

Here Francis experienced the spectacular greatness of God, begged mercy for his sins, and knew God's revelation of forgiveness and the future of the Order.

Another cave, even smaller than the former, contains a picture showing Francis receiving a book from an angel with the words: "Francis, here your sins are forgiven as you have asked." This incident referred to in First Celano 26-27 is to have taken place here. Thus we call this place a "Sanctuary of Light (enlightenment) and Peace (from forgiveness of sin.)"

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The path is about a 30-45 minute climb up steep switchbacks.

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One of the six chapels along the way.



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### Francis' Cave



The chapel at the top. When you finally reach the top every pilgrim rings a bell to let the world know you have made it.

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A view from the top.



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We celebrated reconciliation at the chapel.

Reflection questions:

It is fair to say of Francis that there were two things in the world he loved more than anything else: Mountains and music. What does this say about him and his spirituality?

Try to understand Francis' oft-repeated prayer: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner."  
Why should he, or you, or I, feel and pray this way?

Consider the meaning of Francis' confession in public. (2 Mirror of Perfection 62)  
What does it mean to confess to one another? Does it make sense to you? Why?