

Santa Maria Maggiore



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This Church served as the Cathedral of Assisi until the 11th century. St. Francis is

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supposed to have helped restore the building with his own hands in the year 1216. Behind the high altar on the exterior of the apse (see picture above, the inscription is just above the second pig to the left of the drain pipe), there is an inscription that reads "In the year 1216, in the fourth year of indiction and the tenth year in the episcopacy of Bishop Guido, and brother Francis."

Next to Santa Maria Maggiore is the bishop's palace.



There is a hall attached to the Church's backside that still serves as the Chancery.

The Apse of the Church is built on top of an old Roman villa. Note how the Roman columns are the foundation for the apse.

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The Church used to be full of frescoes, which were almost entirely destroyed by an earth quake in 1832.



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However, the latest earthquake of 1997 uncovered two frescoes that had been covered over. They have been restored.

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Francis was brought here before Bishop Guido to settle a dispute with his father. He stripped naked and renounced his father.

It was here that Francis composed the last strophe of *The Canticle of Creatures* on pardon to patch up the conflict between the mayor and the bishop of Assisi.

Nudus nudum Christum sequi-Naked to follow the naked Christ is a teaching of St. Jerome that was picked up in the Middle Ages to designate a higher and more rigorous ascent to God. Nudity was also a form of humiliation canonically expected of the public penitent. Francis stripped himself naked; he stripped himself of the clothing in which he sang, danced, joked, and participated with friends in the world. In so doing he said no to one life and took up a life of penance. In stripping and handing over everything to his father, Francis renounced his inheritance. He began a life totally dependent on God.

Reflection

What is it like to stand naked before another? What feelings emerge? What in the inner spirit is awakened?

What things do we need to strip from ourselves to become closer to God? What stands as a barrier between us and God?