

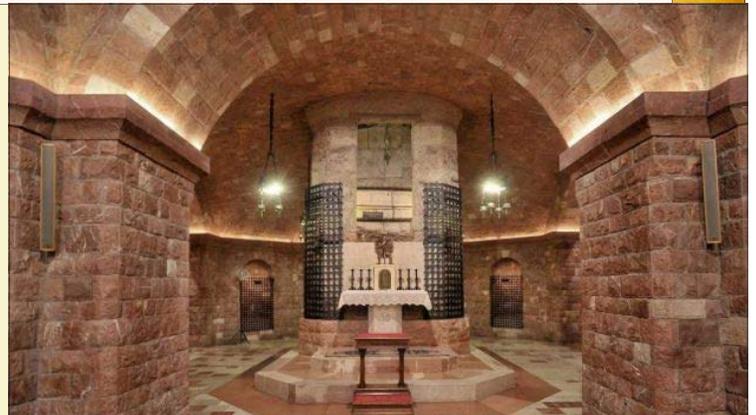


On April 16, 2011, with the Evening Prayer of Palm Sunday, the **8TH CENTENARY OF THE CONSECRATION OF ST. CLARE** along with the Founding of the Order of Poor Clares were both inaugurated in Assisi, Italy. It began with a celebrative act at the Cathedral of St. Rufino, the site where 800 years ago, the Bishop of Assisi handed a palm to the virgin Clare on Palm Sunday. Right on that same square of the Cathedral stood her house. The following day, on Holy Monday, St. Clare, the Little Plant of St. Francis fled to the hermitage of St. Mary of the Angels in order to be consecrated to the Lord through Brother Francis.

At the request of the Minister General OFM, Br. José Rodríguez Carballo, OFM, the *Apostolic Penitentiary*, has granted a plenary indulgence for the entire centenary year (**April 16, 2011–August 11, 2012**), while observing the usual conditions established by the Church, the indulgence may be gained whenever we visit a Poor Clare Monastery either on a pilgrimage or out of devotion.

THE TOMB OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI was reopened to the public on April 9, 2011, thanks to the work of Sergio Fusetti, after a restoration cleaned away decades of candle smoke soot and ash and allowed the original pink stone to shine through again. For two months expert metal polishers and stone restorers labored to renovate the tomb. A new lighting system was also installed. It was the first restoration of the crypt since its most recent restyling took place in 1930. Massive work was done to repair the Cimabue and Giotto frescoes in the basilica upstairs that were destroyed in the 1997 earthquake. The tomb itself, located in the crypt underneath the lower church of Assisi's famed fresco-filled basilica, dates from 1230, four years after St. Francis died.

The president of the Italian Bishops' Conference, Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, presided at the re-opening of the crypt where he showed off the results. Culture undersecretary Francesco Maria Giro said it was a "light" restoration that was nevertheless symbolic, removing the black and restoring the pink, which he said denoted the love and tenderness for which St. Francis is known. "The preparation and expectations for Pope Benedict XVI's upcoming visit was the motivator for restoring "the original splendor of this place, which is the center and heart of Assisi and of Franciscans all over the world."



Pope Benedict XVI is expected to visit Assisi on October 27, 2011 for a day of prayer for peace with other religious leaders. The visit will commemorate the 25th anniversary of a day of prayer for peace in Assisi that was presided over by Pope John Paul II on October 27, 1986.

VIRTUAL PILGRIMAGE OPENED

Officials at the shrine of St. Francis of Assisi have also installed two video cameras in the crypt of the basilica so Catholics worldwide can make a "virtual pilgrimage" to the saint's tomb.

The installation of the cameras, which can be accessed at www.sanfrancesco.org

Devotees can also send their prayer requests to

latuapregghiera@sanfrancesco.org

