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FONDO EUROPEO AGRICOLO PER LO SVILUPPO RURALE: L'EUROPA INVESTE NELLE ZONE RURALI

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Montefiore dell'Aso



Sala Carlo Crivelli

Polo Museale
San Francesco





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CATALOGUE-GUIDEBOOKS FOR THE MUSEI PICENI NETWORK

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CATALOGUE GUIDEBOOKS

INTRODUCTION

This guide is part of a set of 22 volumes which will lead the reader on an exciting journey of discovery of Piceno territory. Of these 22 guides, 18 are dedicated to the collections of the four museums that make up the Musei Piceni network (Palazzo de Castellotti museum complex, Offida; Palazzo Bonomi Gera municipal museum, Ripatransone; San Francesco museum complex, Montefiore dell'Aso; San Francesco cultural complex, Monterubbiano). The other four volumes are written as itineraries that focus on the specific history, art and environment traits that forge the Piceno identity (Piceno Museums and Collections; Natural Environment and Environmental Education Centres; Typical Towns and Products in Piceno; Artisan Studios of Piceno). Inspired by the complexity of the museum system and the lavish territory where it is located, these guides offer important proof of the fact that every element of material cultural heritage (whether housed in a museum or otherwise) and of Piceno's traditional and typical way of life is the product of what happened and was generated in history and by the territory's social development.

For this purpose, the 18 guides dedicated to Musei Piceni collections not only contain a presentation of each single collection and the relative museum, but also offer the reader an engaging cross-referenced text for putting together the various aspects of the complex web of relationships woven between a museum's heritage, the actual container, the heritage spread across the territory, and the extensive intangible heritage of customs, traditions, rites, legends, and traditional production processes that still reflect the Piceno identity.

The Italian version of each guidebook comprises two main sections: the first is an introduction dedicated to the museum tour and brief notes point the reader/visitor in the direction of the idiosyncrasies of each collection. The second part focuses on one or more objects in the collection and in addition to the general information and the description of the object, offers a series of focused facts for explaining the artefact in more detail and revealing the link between the object and the museum and territorial context in which it is found.

Foreign language texts, in addition to general information offering concise, immediate tips for locating and identifying the object, contain a **descriptive part**, with three main areas of content: a reading of the image/description, origin and original location (physical context and social setting of provenance), original function and meaning.

The Musei Piceni guidebooks are conceived as four macro categories, one per museum, and are dedicated to the following subjects, which reflect the collections on show in each museum venue.

POLO MUSEALE PALAZZO DE CASTELLOTTI, OFFIDA

1. Museo delle Tradizioni Popolari – museum of folk traditions
2. Quadreria civica – municipal art gallery
3. Museo del merletto a tombolo – bolster lace museum
4. "G. Allevi" municipal archaeological museum.

MUSEO CIVICO PALAZZO BONOMI GERA, RIPATRANSONE

5. Pinacoteca civica – municipal art gallery
6. Galleria d'Arte Contemporanea – contemporary art gallery
7. "U. Gera" plaster cast museum
8. Raccolta storico-etnografica – historical and ethnographic collection
9. "G. Mercantini" – history of the Risorgimento museum

POLO MUSEALE SAN FRANCESCO, MONTEFIORE DELL'ASO

10. Carlo Crivelli room
11. "G. Basili" set design documentation museum
12. Museo della civiltà contadina – museum of rural culture
13. "D. Cantatore" collection
14. "A. De Carolis" – museum

POLO CULTURALE SAN FRANCESCO

15. Model of the Aso valley
16. Museo Civico Archeologico – municipal archaeological museum
17. "S. Mircoli" coin collection
18. Quadreria civica – municipal art gallery

**MONTEFIORE DELL'ASO
SALA CARLO CRIVELLI**

The Sala Carlo Crivelli is situated on the second floor of the Montefiore dell'Aso museum complex, along the corridor that set around the cloister below. It is home to six panels painted by Carlo Crivelli, which have been assembled to form a triptych.

The work, known as the 'Montefiore Triptych', is the result of the arbitrary assembly of several panels from a much larger polyptych, painted by Carlo Crivelli in the early 1470s, probably at the same time as he painted the polyptych for the Duomo in Ascoli Piceno.



The Montefiore museum only conserves six panels from the original polyptych: a *Franciscan Saint* (perhaps the Blessed John Duns Scotus), *Saint Clare* and *Saint Louis of Toulouse*, portrayed as half-length figures in the upper order; *Saint Catherine of Alexandria*, *Saint Peter the Apostle* and *Saint Mary Magdalene*, portrayed as full-length figures in the lower order. The polyptych was completed by a central panel with a Virgin and Child (signed); a side panel with Saint Francis (both at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Brussels); a coping with the Dead Christ supported by angels (now in the National Gallery in London); a lost panel and predella, portraying the Apostles alongside Christ in the act of blessing. The original carved gilt frame has also been lost.

Painted for the church of the Frati Minori Conventuali in Montefiore dell'Aso, near the convent of San Francesco, this monumental work was taken apart in the mid-nineteenth century by the Franciscan friars themselves, who decided to sell a number of panels to the antiquarian Romano Vallati, who then sold them panels to a number of different clients between 1859 and 1882.



SAINT CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA

The young saint is portrayed as a three quarter-length figure with her head turned to the right, looking towards the Virgin and Child originally at the centre of the polyptych, at which she seems to point with her left index finger. She wears a blue dress, embellished with gilded decorations, a ruby and a high belt in red embroidered with gold, and is wrapped in a cloak of dark green velvet damask. In addition to the halo, the emblem of sainthood, she also wears a crown on her head to symbolize her royal origins and a fringed white veil worn by virgins.

Her right hand rests on a wooden wheel, of which a spike can be glimpsed (beneath her right forearm), while she holds a palm in her left hand, both referring to the martyrdom endured by the saint. Catherine was the daughter of a king. At just eighteen years old, she flouted the order of the Emperor Maxentius for all subjects to worship pagan gods and make sacrifices to them. She was taken to the emperor's palace, where she debated with such oratory skill with the wise men whom she confuted, that she convinced them to convert and accept martyrdom. Enraged, the Emperor Maxentius sentenced Catherine to death, ordering that she be tortured on the spiked breaking wheel but the wheel broke, killing the executioners. Catherine was then taken outside the city and beheaded. Milk poured from her neck and her body was immediately transported by angels to Mount Sinai, where a monastery devoted to her is still found today.

Because of her skilful debate with the pagan philosophers and her success in persuading them, Saint Catherine, often depicted with a book in her hand, is the embodiment of Wisdom and Theology. It is with this meaning that the saint was often included in fourteenth and fifteenth-century polyptychs destined mainly for Franciscan convents. This aspect is even more apparent in the Montefiore polyptych, where the panel with Saint Catherine of Alexandria is placed in correspondence to that of John Duns Scotus, a Franciscan monk known for his intellectual abilities and the founder of Scotism. Franciscanism was centred on the values of poverty and renunciation, primarily embodied in the polyptych by the figures of Saint Francis (now in Brussels), Saint Clare of Assisi and Saint Louis of Toulouse. The Blessed John Duns Scotus and Saint Catherine of Alexandria are presented as the embodiment of the intellectual and theological component of this movement, which also played a decisive part in the dissemination and strengthening of the Franciscan Order.

SAINT PETER

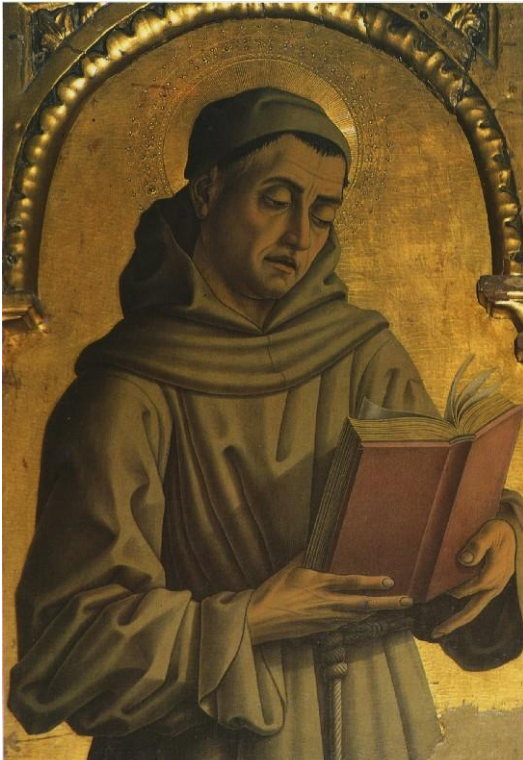


Saint Peter is portrayed from the front, with his lips parted and his eyes looking upwards. He wears the typical long white tunic of the apostles, trimmed with gold, unbuttoned at the chest and cinched at the waist by a belt in the same material as the tunic, tied at the front. From his left shoulder hangs a large yellowish mantle, a colour typically associated with the saint, trimmed with gold and lined in red velvet. He wears simple sandals with a thin wooden sole on his bare feet, fastened with black laces around his ankles. His left hand holds a large book, the Holy Scriptures, with a thick grey cover secured by a red clasp, and two large silver keys on a red string, which symbolize the keys to Heaven and represent his role as a guide for the Christian community, a role given to Peter by Jesus. Peter (whose original name was Simon) was a fisherman from Capernaum, an ancient town on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, in Israel. Through his brother Andrew he came to know Jesus and immediately became his disciple. He witnessed the Transfiguration, the episode when Jesus showed his divinity to Peter, James and John, his first disciples, he saw the agony of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, the olive grove where he withdrew after the last supper before he was arrested, and he violently opposed the capture of Christ, only succeeding in wounding one of the aggressors. After the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah himself placed him at the head of his twelve apostles. He was the first to perform miracles, to baptize and to organize the Christian Church. He devoted himself to preaching, travelling as far as Rome where he was crucified upside down during the reign of Nero (between 64 and 67 AD). The inclusion of Saint Peter in a Franciscan polyptych, specifically in the Montefiore polyptych, has a double meaning. The simplicity of his apparel and his wooden sandals alludes to the life of poverty embraced by Francis and transmitted through the Rule to his brothers, based on the apostolic ideal embodied by Saint Peter. Symbolizing Peter's role as the first custodian and head of the Church of Rome, the large silver keys allude to the trust that the Franciscan Order has always placed in the pope, the heir to Peter's earthly mission.

SAINT MARY MAGDALENE

The young woman is depicted in profile, with her gaze turned towards the viewer. She wears an embroidered damask dress and is enveloped in a sumptuous red mantle. In her left hand she holds a small golden vase, a masterly piece of metalwork, containing the ointment with which she anointed the feet of Jesus in the home of the Pharisee and his body after his deposition from the cross. According to tradition, Mary took the name Magdalene from the village where she was born (Magdala, a fishing village on the shores of the Sea of Galilee), and was the sister of Lazarus and Martha of Bethany (Saint Martha). Known for her indulgence in the pleasures of the flesh, to the point of being termed 'the sinner', in the house of Simon the Pharisee she asked Jesus for forgiveness, washing his feet with her tears, drying them with her hair and scenting them with an ointment. Jesus forgave all her sins and helped her in many ways (freeing her from the seven demons who possessed her and bringing her brother Lazarus back from the dead four days after he had died). Mary Magdalene stayed under the Cross during the Passion, anointed the body of Jesus after the deposition, remained at the grave after the disciples had all departed, and was the first to see Christ after his resurrection. The figure of Mary Magdalene features in Franciscan art as early as the thirteenth century and, in keeping with a very widespread custom, she often appears as a female counterpart to Saint Francis. The Montefiore Magdalene is the embodiment of redemption through the death of Christ and of a contemplative life. Despite wearing the rich robes of a noble courtesan, the Montefiore Magdalene features a number of different elements that allude to the theme of renewed virginity: the transparent veil that covers her head is typical of Christian art, the small crown of pearls with the ruby, symbol of love and faithfulness, alludes to the crown of heaven, the long hair knotted at her neck with a yellow ribbon and loose on her shoulders, symbolizes her nubile state, while the slippers she wears on her bare feet, in stark contrast to her sumptuous clothes, are a symbol of penitence and are the female version of the typical Franciscan sandal.





BLESSED JOHN DUNS SCOTUS

This panel occupies the far left side of the upper register of the polyptych and has maintained its original position. The three-quarter length figure is turned towards the right, in the act of reading a book. He wears the Franciscan habit and a hood in the same fabric. The position of the panel above that of Saint Catherine of Alexandria, patron saint of theological study, and the headwear similar to that worn by university doctors, has made it possible to identify the Montefiore Franciscan as Blessed John Duns Scotus, a mediaeval philosopher who founded the doctrine of Scotism and was one of the greatest masters of Christian theology.

John Duns Scotus (1265–1308) was born in Scotland (hence the name ‘Scotus’), in the town of Duns, his family name. He had contact with the Franciscan Order from childhood and joined it when he was just fifteen years old. He was ordained as a priest in 1291 and studied theology in Paris from 1291 to 1296. Having finished his studies, his outstanding intellectual and spiritual qualities meant that Duns Scotus was selected to attend the doctoral course at the general Franciscan *Studium* in Paris, where he achieved the title of *Magister Regens* and became qualified to teach. He devoted himself to teaching for just three years (firstly in Oxford, then in Paris and Cologne). He died in 1308 and, although he was never sanctified, his relics have become cult objects that are venerated in many parts of Europe, so that he is frequently remembered as a saint or blessed. In fact, the Montefiore polyptych portrays him with the typical halo of a saint.

The reason for the inclusion of Blessed Duns Scotus in the Montefiore polyptych is associated with the figure of Gentile da Montefiore, who supported Duns Scotus when, in 1304, the scholar decided not to sign an appeal made by Philipp the Fair, King of France, against Pope Boniface VIII. Duns Scotus, who kept faith with the Franciscan Rule that recommended respect and reverence for the pope, did not sign the document and so became an exile.

SAINT CLARE

This panel depicts Saint Claire, follower of Saint Francis of Assisi and founder of the Order of the Poor Clares, the female branch of the Franciscan Order. She wears a red dress cinched at the waist by a girdle with three knots, making clear reference to the Franciscan habit. Over her dress she wears a brown cloak, and a black veil with white wimple that covers her neck and surrounds her face – a characteristic element of the nuns' habit worn by the Poor Clares. Beneath her dress the saint wears a brown tunic buttoned at the wrists, where we can glimpse the cuff of a white shift. She holds a red book of prayer that could also allude to the Rule of the Order of the Poor Clares, written by Saint Clare herself, and the lily, symbol of virginity and chastity. Her head turned towards the image of the Pietà, originally positioned in the centre of the polyptych, and her intent gaze allude to contemplative prayer, something that characterized the Order of the Poor Clares.



Born in 1194 to a noble family from Assisi, Clare fled from her home at eighteen years of age to join Francis at the Porziuncola, a small church now housed within the basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli, where she retired in prayer after renouncing her worldly assets. Her hair was cut off, she put on the Franciscan habit and was first taken to the Benedictine monastery of San Paolo, in Bastia Umbra, then to the church of San Damiano in Assisi, where she founded the female order of the 'poor recluses' (which became known as the Poor Clares after her death). She was appointed abbess of the Order and wrote its Rule. Clare always lived in San Damiano, in most absolute poverty and in contemplation, looking after her fellow sisters. She died in 1253 and was canonized by Pope Alexander IV two years later.

Saint Clare is the female embodiment of the Franciscan movement and finds her parallel in Our Lady and in a conception of female sanctity oriented towards values of chastity, obedience and contemplation. Like Saint Louis of Toulouse, her ties with the town and convent of Montefiore are associated with Gentile Partino, the Montefiore cardinal who commissioned Simone Martini to work on the chapel of San Martino in the lower basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi, asking him to depict Saint Louis of Toulouse and Saint Clare in the entrance arch to the chapel, as two Franciscan saints who had renounced a life of luxury to embrace the Franciscan lifestyle.

SAINT LOUIS OF TOULOUSE

This panel, featuring Saint Louis of Toulouse, occupies the upper order of the polyptych and is still in its original position. Louis was the second-born son of Charles of Anjou, King of Naples, and Mary of Hungary. When he was just ten years old, he and his two brothers, Robert and Raymond, were handed over as hostages to the Aragonese to obtain the release of their father. He was imprisoned for seven years together with the tutors Francis le Brun and Peter Scarreri, two Franciscans who had a decisive influence on his life. The young Louis developed a desire to devote himself to the religious life during this period and after his release and the death of his older brother (Charles Martel), he abdicated the throne in favour of his younger brother Robert, then took religious vows. He agreed to be ordained bishop of Toulouse in 1296, only after having ensuring he could become a Franciscan.

In the Montefiore panel the young saint is portrayed in profile, in a gesture of blessing. He wears his bishop's robes over his Franciscan habit, including a cope, a liturgical mantle richly decorated in red and gold with the lilies of France, symbol of the French royal family. In his left hand he carries a gold and ivory staff, symbolizing the bishop's role as a guide. His typical Franciscan tonsure is covered by a fume mitre, the ceremonial headdress of bishops, embellished with pearls, rubies and sapphires. On his right hand, covered by a white glove, he wears the bishop's ring.

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