

HISTORICAL NEWS

OF THE FLORENTINE CHURCHES.

LESSON FIRST

OF THE MADONNA DI OR S. MICHELE.

FIRST PAGE

There are many miraculous images of Mary in Florence, among which the most glorious was always that of Or S. Michele. This was probably due to the multiplicity of the centuries, or because of the quantity of miracles, or the quality of the honors. I would like to address all three of these privileges here in this lesson. But first, I would like to speak of his sovereign Tabernacle and the sublimity of its design and the marbles' richness surpassing all human estimation. Moving me to do this is the lack of much valuable information left out by Francesco Bocchi, Giovanni Cinelli, and Filippo Baldinucci, who all wrote about this Oratory. Furthermore, Giorgio Vasari could have written much more about it in the life of Andrea Orcagna.

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However, I will begin by reporting what he briefly wrote, as follows: "Soon after having the men of the **Company** of Or S. Michele put together many *denari* of alms, and goods that were donated to that Madonna after the plague of 1348, they resolved to make around her a chapel, or Tabernacle, not only carved in marble but also from other precious stones of immense value, like mosaic and bronze, as much as could be desired. So much so that by labor and by matter every other work was advanced until the point that the grand work was made. Being the most excellent of that age, all the work was given to Orcagna. He made so many designs until one finally pleased the patrons, and they deemed it better than all the others; whereby they entrusted the work to him, they left everything to his judgment, and to his advice. He then gave several carving masters from several places all the decorative things that needed to be done and waited with his brother (Nardo di Cione) to produce all the figures of the work. When everything was finished, he had them bricked up, and made them together very considerably without mortar with spliced copper bars, so that the polished and clean marbles would not get stained, which he did so well with profit and honor, that to those that came after him and considered his work, it seems that the whole chapel of Orcagna was quarried from a single piece of marble due to its unity and joints. And although the chapel is of a Gothic manner, it holds the first place among the things of that genre and time due to its grace and proportion, and especially the composition of large and

small figures, the angels, and the half-relief prophets placed so well around the Madonna. The casting of the diligently cleaned bronze enclosures is also marvelous, which, going around the whole work, encloses and squeezes it together so that it remains no less vigorous, strong, and beautiful than in all the other parts

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But how much he worked to show the subtlety of his ingenuity in that great time can be seen in a large half-relief narrative in the rear part of said Tabernacle. This half-relief contains figures one and a half *braccia* (about 100 cm) long which depicted the twelve Apostles looking at the Madonna while surrounded in an almond tree by two angels in the sky. In one of those Apostles, he portrayed himself as old, with a shaved beard and a hood wrapped around his flat head and round face. In addition to this he wrote these words underneath in marble: "Andreas Cionis Pictor Florentinus Oratorii Archimagister exstitit bujus 1359." Up to this point Vasari said nothing about the variety of precious marbles and the very rare stones, nothing about the many beautiful figures and statues, and nothing of the mysteries portrayed in the bas-reliefs; on the contrary, by mentioning the blessed ascended Virgin Mary, he makes a mistake by saying that the apostles look at the Madonna ascended to heaven. There are two low reliefs (not one) divided into two pictures, the first of which above shows the Ascended Virgin surrounded by Angels among some trees worked with rare finesse at the bottom of the scene. In the second section from below, which has nothing to do with the one above, we see the dead Madonna surrounded by the Apostles, and it is true that Orcagna portrayed himself, but not yet old, as the aforementioned Writer said since the good craftsman died in 1389 at age of 60. Therefore in 1359, the year in which the Tabernacle was completed, he must have been 30 years old without any more.

II. Here, I would like to start making up for the things of this Chapel that the writers left out.

First, I would like to notice the beautiful design of this work with its measurements made by Orcagna's own hand. Even after 400 years, the very well preserved design may be seen in the famous Library of ancient manuscripts of the former Senator Carlo Strozzi. Thanks to the courtesy of Mr. Carlo Tommaso, his worthy grandson, we have a copper engraving of the design.

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Now coming to the exact description, in the corner of the loggia towards the middle, the reader will see a niche adorned with various marbles, as high as a step and three *braccie* (about 200 cm)

wide. This niche goes around the Tabernacle covered by a domed grandstand and surrounded by a rich balustrade, resting at the end of a staircase also made of marble. In the four corners of the gate worked with bronze arabesques there are four pedestals, which support a spiral column, on whose top there is a statue representing an Angel. These columns are four and three-quarter *braccie* high, and the Angels are one and one fourth. Then after this noble balustrade, inside rises the much-commended Tabernacle supported by four pillars, each of which has nine columns that are three and a sixth *braccie* high, and a quarter large, between each of them you can see hard stones shining with an abundance of lapis lazuli – not only in the pillars, but in the bases and in the arches of the Dome, as well. Twelve are of the Prophets, which are one *braccia* high, and half turned on the architrave, each having a sign that expresses the virtues of the Virgin Mary. Then there are four spiers made in the Gothic style, six and an eighth *braccie* high without the base, which in the middle they place the dome six and a quarter high, and in the highest of it is an Angel two *braccie* tall. The vague arabesques and the very fine marble leaves are extended everywhere in such a manner that they are considered miraculous. Finally, eight mysteries are represented in the base of the grandstand in graceful bas-reliefs. These are of the Nativity of Mary, her Presentation in the Temple, the Marriage with Saint Joseph, the Annunciation, the Epiphany, the Circumcision, and in the eighth, according to the ancient tradition, an Angel who brings to the Virgin a palm leaf as an announcement of Christ's death.

III. In the middle of such a remarkable grandstand above the rich altar surrounded by beautiful relief angels there is a painting, famous and adored all around the world, of the image of the Virgin Mary, called the Madonna

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of Or S. Michele, the most powerful advocate of the Florentines. Giulio Mancini, a modern Tuscan author, argues in one of his essays about paintings that this image was painted by the Sienese painter, Ugolino di Nerio. I will report here a scholarly defense from Balducci written during the life of Orcagna. It states as follows: "We will add lastly that the modern writer, of whom we spoke a little while ago, believed that Vasari made a mistake to have affirmed that the sacred image of the Virgin Mary, which adorned this Tabernacle, was made by the hand of Ugolino who died in 1349, being that the image was painted in 1284. It did not seem likely to him that in 1284 Ugolino could have been well educated in painting and that he could have painted such a work. Furthermore, the style of the painting was more akin to a Byzantine painting than to a contemporary Florentine one. Finally, the image is wooden, and Vasari says that the image that originally hung on the column in the loggia was made by Ugolino. But if we consider well, the Author's argument cannot hold. First, Vasari in his first edition says that Ugolino died not in 1349 but in 1339, and in both the first and second editions he states that Ugolino died in a decrepit age. Therefore, if we count well, in 1284 he could have been at least 30 or 35 years old, and consequently in the prime of his work. Secondly, Vasari says in both editions and in open letters that Ugolino worked in a Byzantine style and that he always stubbornly kept to these ancient ways, even though many painters of his time - including Giotto himself - worked in a much better manner. For this reason, we must say that the painting is the hand of Ugolino. That she may be on wood or on the wall may then be typo by the printer.

Instead of writing “he made the image of our Lady FOR a pillar of the loggia” he wrote “IN a pillar”.

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And even when Vasari had said so, we still find that he and many of those who wrote about the lives of painters, used to say that a painting was made in a church, but it is not necessarily made for said church. Thus, Vasari having said this, Ugolino making Our Woman in the pillar does not prevent us from being able to believe that he meant that Ugolino had made the image into a wooden painting to get the measurements right and then for that panel to be placed on the pillar. The doubt then seems to be reduced to a mere cavillation”

IV. Having accomplished this and having the obligation to trace all the most noteworthy things in this chapel, I will go on to discuss the singular privileges of the Most Holy Image. I must observe that ascribing to the painting its performance of sensational miracles to the year 1292 – despite being the one noted by Giovanni Villani – is incorrect. I find that the distinguished Company of the Madonna of Or. S. Michele had begun in 1291, which would presuppose that before some time the miraculous painting was already in great place on the pillar. Therefore, it seems more likely that the holy painting was placed on the pillar soon after 1284, the year the loggia was built. Hence it is now about 460 years old, counting only from 1291, the start of the company.

And here I would like to make a not contemptuous reflection on a marvelous combination of two sanctuaries which were formed at the same time and became famous all over the world. For precisely at this time, when in our image, heaven opened a source in Florence or rather a river of grace, the angels brought the House of Nazareth from Palestine to Italy. And if Pontiffs,

Emperors, Kings, and Princes made the Lauretan temple magnificent, the Florentine Republic alone, as we shall see later,

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not wanting to spend immense treasures, built the Madonna of Or. S. Michele, one of the most splendid and superb churches. As the Book of the Reformations stated “Un fiat Beatissime Virgini Marie S. Michaelis in Orto templum splendidissimum, & supra modum splendidissimum”. Pilgrims came to the Holy House of Loreto from all parts of the world, and even people from different parts of Europe came with very large offerings and vows to venerate our Image, thus writing to Pope Urban V in 1364 “Ad quod sere concurrunt homines de variis Mundi partibus”.

V. And after such a beautiful digression, returning to our Image, I must not forget to mention things about the Company of Or. S. Michele, like the most authoritative document demonstrating the antiquity of the miraculous painting. There is no better way of doing this than by summarily reporting the old chapters of the [statutes] written in the fourteenth century, and communicated to me by the scholar and courteous Mr. Domenico Maria Manni, the prologue of which is as follows:

"In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. And to the honor and reverence of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and of His Most Holy Mother Madonna Santa Maria always Virgin, and of Blessed Santo Michele Arcangelo, & of Blessed Santo Lorenzo, and of the whole Court of Heaven, and to the honor and reverence of the Holy Church of Rome, & of Our Lord the Pope, and of his Cardinal Signori Friars, and of the Bishop of Florence, and to the status,

honor, and maintenance of the City of Florence, and its district, for the good and consolation of the Poor. These are the Chapters, and the orders of those, which are and will be of the said Company, which was begun in the years of the Incarnation of Our Lord Jesus Christ, MCCLXXXI. the day of Blessed Santo Lorenzo in the month of August ".

VI. Three writers penned forty chapters in the confraternity's statutes that confirm the high veneration that different peoples had for this institution.

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In the first one we must recall the manner which was used to console the hordes of peoples who asked to be enrolled in the company. This confraternity employed a notary obligated to solemnly stand at the desk every day to register the names of the brothers and sisters who were enrolling. However, since there were too many to accommodate, the step was taken to have foreigners and those from the countryside registered alongside citizens as soon as they entered through the city's gates. And with a rare example we find in chapter XXXVII that even the dead were ascribed to the company as long as one brought the name of the deceased to the notary. As written in the book, his soul became a participant in the suffrages of which grace was given. The policy was marked with the confraternity's seal of the Annunciation and with these words written around it: **Sigillum Societatis Virg. Marie Sancti Mich. in orto de Florentia.**

I will discuss everything that the company did under the Loggia in the second chapter, but here I will instead talk about the sacred pillar, since in those early times of the statute's creation the Oratory was not mentioned. In every evening, lauds were sung by the Laudesi brothers. During the eve of the feasts of the Lord, of Mary, of the Apostles, and of the Holy Advocates of the City,

these lauds were sung with greater solemnity, making a general illumination of the whole Loggia in the preceding night. On all Sundays of the year and other solemn days, a sermon was delivered in the Loggia by preachers chosen by the Clergy to preach in the late afternoon hours, after **Vespers**. Throughout the day, four assiduous guards were kept at the pillar and then two at night to receive offerings of wax, clothing, money, and alms, which were more abundant since they were made at night. Finally, in the third chapter it is pertinent to talk about the examples of charity and piety that the brothers gave to the city and to the county.

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Most devout in the Company were the processions of the Carmine and the Nonziata, which each year visited two of the following churches: S. Marco, S. Spirito, S. Croce, and S. Maria Novella. The order would restart every three years with the offering of a one-ounce candle for each brother. Each Monday six masses were celebrated in various churches for the deceased brothers. This was done so that each dead brother would have at least one mass said for him during the year, in which an officer of the company had to attend and pay twelve coins to the Priest. However, the most common gifts were general alms, besides the daily ones, and which took place in all **the districts** of Florence and its county. Indeed, it was the happiest day of the whole year for the poor, among which were included all the monasteries, hospitals, prisons, and hermits, being found in the books of the company, as charitable donations sometimes reached the sum of 37,000 lire, which helped the fame of Or. S. Michele and its company grow.

And, as I have done in the book's other chapters, allow me to quote the title which can be read at the beginning of another book, called Green Champion, as follows: **Codex bonorum piissima Societatis Gloriosissime Virg. Maria S. Michaelis in Orto, merito in toto Orbe re & fama**

memoratissima, ob suum devotissimum Oratorium sub famoso Templo , ac supramodnm
Eminentissimo, eius nomine fundatum pariter & sonstrutum.

VII. By having invoked the miraculous image of the Madonna of Orsanmichele, located on the pillar in the loggia, we may now refer to the multiple miracles it performed with so much abundance. Giovanni Villani interrupted the flow of his chronicle with the story of the painting's amazing powers, writing: "On the 3rd of July 1292, great and open miracles began to be shown in the city of Florence for a figure of S. Maria painted in one of the loggia's pillars of Or. S. Michele, where wheat is sold, the sick are healed, people are captivated, and miracles were performed in large quantities" S. Antonio affirms the same in the third part of his story, as follows:

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Eodem anno (1292.) mense Iulii patrata sunt quadam miracula Florentia ex quadam Figura Virginis Gloriosa, qua erat in pariete picta atrii, seu horti S. Michaelis, ubi tunc forum erat frument, & aliorum bladorum. Nam concepta devotione ab omnibus ad Figuram illam infirmis devote orantibus, plures sanati sunt exvariis languoribus, claudi erecti, contracti sanati, & obsessi a doemonibus liberati [In the same year (1292), the image of the Glorious Virgin that appears on the wall of the court of Orsanmichele, the market for corn and grain, performed a miracle in the month of July. Answering the devout prayers of the people, the sick were healed, the lame walked, and those possessed by demons were freed.] Sozomeno from Pistoia wrote about this in his general history of the world, which is preserved in the library of the regular canons of the abbey of Fiesole. As Father Antonio Zaccaria writes about the aforementioned story: "Anno 1292. Die 3. Mensis Iulii Figura picta B. Virginis Maria, qua erat in horto S. Michaelis fecit

multa miracula sanando infirmos & elaudos, unde fuit maxima devotio totius populi & finitimorum, & tantum aucta est, quod singulis annis distribuebantur sex mille libbra, & usque ad hodiernum diem extat devotio” “In the year 1292. On the 3rd day of July the figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary, located in the garden of Orsanmichele, performed many miracles by healing the sick and the lame, and it is venerated to this day” All the Tuscan writers speak of it this way, but none that I know of tell of how this miraculous painting was saved by Sig. Neri Abati in 1304 and thus was unharmed by the fire in Florence of that year, which burned not only the adjoining houses, but the loggia itself. Additional miracles that the painting performed can be observed in Orsanmichele’s stained glass windows, which some believe were the first to be made in the city after the secret was brought to Florence from Flanders.

The quantity and quality of the miracles performed by the Madonna of Orsanmichele provoked responses that I must report. The first derived from theologians and professors of divinity, who were not convinced of the powers of the painting or swayed by the stories they were told – but who were probably simply jealous of the devotion it received. They urged people to reconsider its power, which caused the Masters of Theology to be accused of envy over the pure zeal they were showing to the glory of God and Mary.

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St. Antonino (Bishop of Florence, 1446-1459) wrote about it in the third part of his story, scathingly rejecting the accounts of Giovanni Villani and of other writers. Antonino’s words are as follows: “Fratres' autem Predicatores & Minores, quia parum fidei dabant dictis miraculis, Populus, qui leviter movetur, eis detrahebat, & obloquebatur contra eos, adscribens invidia, quod erat vera pietatis” “Because the Friars' Preachers and Minors (Dominicans and Franciscans)

properly gave little credence to the miracles which had been reported, the people (who were unpersuaded by them) drew away from the clerics and insulted them by claiming their protests were driven by envy.” But the stupendous abundance of miracles contradicted the aforesaid critique. At all hours the painting attracted the impoverished and the sick, along with curious strangers who wished to witness supernatural events, and their prayers of thanks filled the air with a thousand blessings. So it was then that the Loggia, intended for the sale of grain, was instead frequently encumbered by the crowd of devotees, so much so that the Signoria was forced to close the loggia – but I am not sure of the year. It was then transformed into a church, but not without serious regret and opposition from several citizens of the Great Council, who lamented the alternations that compromised the beauty of the most majestic place in Florence, which we will describe in due course.

The very large sums that were donated to the guardians of the pillar were the direct result of the many miracles performed there. I will now report on only one of these many rich offerings. It was the one that the Florentines made in 1348 (the year of the great plague) recorded in the ledgers kept by the captains of Or. S. Michele, which ascended to a sum of 35,000 gold florins that, as Matteo Villani reported, was an incredible treasure due to the value of the money then. This was an offering so large that none like it had ever been made to another sanctuary of its time.

VIII. But since we have recalled the merits of this image’s antiquity and miracles, reason has it that we speak of the honors received both publicly and in private. To avoid recounting the long series of ordinations made by the Republic regarding the cult of our Lady, I have chosen some of the most memorable ones, which are high marks of honor to this Oratory,

and will discuss other solicitudes of the Signoria in another lesson in order to place the Loggia alongside the most commendable works of Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting. The act that increased the devotion of the painting, along with the holy tabernacle, occurred when she was declared by the republic as a special advocate of the Florentines: the sound of the great bell, customarily rung to recognize grave resolutions, summoned people to the great Piazza dei Signori on the 13th of August 1365. A law was passed in 1366, soon after this proclamation, ordering every citizen to send a banner to Or. S. Michele and if he was a soldier, one light shield (“targa”). To this same end, governed by piety and following another law of 1386, the Churches’ Rectors and the Superiors of the Holiday of Ascension were expected to make an offering at the Altar, which on the same solemn day the Gonfalonier offered a gift of fruit at mid mass, serving as an example to all. Ever increasing the ardor of everyone to do new honors to Mary, he then gave votive offerings of wax figures portrayed naturally, being as tall as the living, with heads and hands, with hats, dresses, shapes, and every other ornament. As per the custom of those times, the Loggia was so filled that it was, as the proverb states, “Sarebbon’elleno mai tante quanti I Boti di Or. S. Michele” - There are more votives in Orsanmichele than there are Hellenes in Greece – to which S. Antonino add, “& in processi temporis est repletus locus imaginibus cereis” (And as time went by, the room was filled with wax figures).

Returning to the holy laws of the republic regarding the veneration and esteem of this valuable image, we must not ignore the one which required the men of the government to swear on the venerable altar of Or. S. Michele to directly administer public matters and attest the books of Remembrances (Recordanze) of those times.

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Each member made their public or private oaths solemnly, taking it for granted that severe punishments would be meted out to those with insincere intentions. An ancient statute can be found in Rubrica 115 of book II which states that any oaths made beyond this altar would be declared null: *Nulla modo valeat, neque observetur, nisi tale iuramentum praestitum fuerit coram B. Virgine, & Capitaeneis Or. S. Michaelis* (In no way shall it be valid, nor observed, unless such an oath has been made before the Blessed Virgin and the Captains of Or. S. Michael). And from a book of the Company of Or. S. Michele we have the following privilege: “1329, the Florentine Republic orders that whoever has killed any of his relatives, from whom the delinquent could have inherited from, he shall be stripped of this inheritance. A third of this inheritance will then go to the company of the Virgin Mary of Or. S. Michele, and the remainder to the Municipality of Florence”. It was thought by the lords that the value of Or. S. Michele

would increase by hosting exquisite concerts and a concourse for lauds which were said to be at the oratory every evening. The republic thus ordered in the law of 1388 that the musicians of the city, and the **Sonatori di pifferi, and Viole players of the Palace**, should come to Or. S. Michele on Saturdays and on solemn feasts, a custom which is still preserved today.

IX. And here I may be granted, although outside its place, to discuss two additional alms made by the Company of Or. S. Michele which can give light to the Florentine history and which I did not know about when I wrote about the chapters of the company above. I learned about these from Mr. Domenic Maria Manni, who found them in the same books: **“1306, alms of 100 florins donated by Giovanna Romita da Signa and delivered by Chele Lapi, a Laudese singer from San Frediano”**. This is the same one from Signa who was beatified, and on page 49 of the book it says that the gift was for general maintenance or discretionary use. In the book of 1307, there is another alm from a resident of Fosse della Porta dell’Alloro Oste, Giotto di Bondone, the distinguished painter who restored the art to its glory.

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X. And finally in praise of this Oratory, I will report some verses from the famous Fra Domenico from Coiella, a writer of the fifteenth century, no less famous for his theological works than for his poetic art, as noted by the scholarly author of the Delights of the Erudites in his tome of 1742, to whom we are able to give the print of the IV book of Elegies on Florentine churches to the aforementioned Author, where he says as follows:

Attamen apparet longe spatiosior intus,

Fulget ubi Sancta Matris imago Dei.

Hans miro candore nitens complectitur arcus,
Sculptilibus pollens undique marmoreis
Quorum compages tanta contextitur arte,
Ut fibi vix aliud par videatur opus

(However, the interior appears far more spacious;

It shines when the image of the Holy Mother of God shines.

Hans embraces a gleaming rainbow
The powerful marble statues on all sides
Their structure is so tightly consolidated
Hardly another pair of work to be seen)

LESSON 2

Continuing with the church of Or. S. Michele

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The motives of great patrons to construct magnificent buildings made is to demonstrate their might and wealth. At the same time it is the solicitous commitment to increase their city's ornamentation and to contribute to the needs of its citizens. Such were the ends that the Florentine Republic had in mind when building the majestic and most splendid building of Or. S. Michele. It was the Florentines who had risen to great power by means of commerce and thus wanted to reveal to the whole world the splendor of their free state, and to give to its potentates a

structure made even worthier by the many artistic riches installed inside it. One of the main ornaments of Florence, this marvelous building had already been used for the preservation of grains and for the custody of the General Archive's public faith. Nor should I overlook another nobler reason for its construction, derived from Florentine piety: the miraculous Tabernacle of the Madonna di Or. S. Michele. The Lords wanted the temple's marvels of architecture and sculpture to complement each other, as we will see in this lesson. Since the original has been lost, I quote from an imperfect copy of the Captain's Statutes that appears in Chapter X of the Green Book of Or. S. Michele, in which we read of the ordination made by the republic for the above-mentioned purpose:

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Templum in statura & forma Palatii cum volta supra coopriente Oratorium, & alia deinceps , & tesso , atquesor platea, ubi consueverat esse sorum denominatum Orto di S. Michele, cui erant confines a 1 & 2 via, a 3 Illorum de domo de Abbatibus, & 4 de domo Caligariis, & cuius constructio fuit commissa per Consilium Civitatis Arti Porta S. Maria, & suit ordinatum, quod fierent 12. Pilastra laterum, & in unoquoque ponendum fore statuam S. Advocati cuiusque Artis, & in medio lateris dignioris Figura Advocati Partis Guelforum, cioe S. Ludovici, ut sic B. Virgo Maria defenderet & auget Artes & Universitates buius Civitatis, ut apparet mentio de pradictis facts per Reformationem editam manu Ser Folchi Ser Antonii Notarii Populi & Com. Flor an. 1309 De mense Aprilis. (The temple in stature and form of a palace with a vault above the oratory, and another successively, and tesso, and the street, where it had customarily been called Orto di S. Michele, whose first and second borders were on the road, the third side across from the house of their abbots, and the fourth from the house of the Caligaries. Its construction was entrusted by the Council of the Silk Guild, and it was arranged that twelve piers should hold the

saintly advocates of the guilds, along with the patron saint of the Guelph party – S. Louis – so that B. Virgo Maria could defend and enhance the guilds and institutions of the State, as appears in the contract written by Ser Folchi Ser Antonio, Notary Public & Com. Flor, in the year 1309, the month of April)

II. Therefore, we have from such an authoritative Book with the public Decree of the new construction delegated to the Silk guild, called the Por. S. Maria, for the fortunate and grandiose initiation of the foundation, or rather of the designs for, this building, in the year 1309. Taddeo Gaddi, the public's architect of the time, had to do the design, but the pillars were not installed until 1337. The delay was caused by the Emperor Henry VII's siege of Florence. He was the enemy of the Florentines his whole life since the war with the Pisans and Lucchesi and internal discord, but calm returned to the city on July 29 of the aforementioned year. The first stone was placed by Gonfaloniere Strozza, attended by the Signoria, and all the magistrates. Then followed all the people with the blessing of the Florentine Bishop Francesco Silvestri from Cingoli. Giovanni Villani spoke of this solemn function in book XI of his Chronicles, in chapter 66. To not repeat the things I said above, I will rather report some circumstance noted by Leopold del Migliore, on page 540, as follows: "The ceremony which was performed in the name of the Guelphs who dominated the city,

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never reduced to such a happy state as it is now. It was marked by the throwing of gold and silver coins, minted on one side with the building and these letters: Ut magnificentia Pouli Flor Artis, & Artificum ostendatur. On the other were the arms of the republic and we can read Reip. & Populi Honor & Decus" Those who were by chance there and told about it added more details, such as the fact that the Ambassador of the city of Arezzo threw a small coin onto the pile. How

many years later the place reached its current state of sublime perfection is not possible to determine; although there are some paintings by Jacopo del Casentino, Lorenzo di Credi, and Andrea del Sarto, and Giovanni Antonio Sogliani. Luca della Robbia produced three of the tondi, and between them appear many statues that were produced in the fifteenth century by Donatello and his workshop that were done with innovation, noble design, and beauty. You may also wonder who the architect was, since in a folder in the church Leopold del Migliore praises Andrea Orcagna and Baldinucci gives credit to Taddeo Gaddi as the architect. However, I believe that they are correct in part, and we will see this once we distinguish the length of time it took to complete the project. First, in 1284, Arnolfo built the Loggia by order of the Signoria. Second, in 1337 Taddeo Gaddi installed the pillars which were first made of bricks, and then covered up with stone and marble. Gaddi then died in 1350. In 1352, according to Baldinucci, Orcagna worked on the altar of the Madonna until 1359, at which time he became the architect. As for the expense, Varchi writes that it reached eighty-six thousand gold florins, an enormous amount considering the currency's value in those times.

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Twenty thousand florins were diverted from the grain Loggia for the use of the church, as mentioned above. I found in the books of Commissions in the years 1339 and 1350, assigned to Silk Art, that this money was obtained without aggravating the municipality with a new tax, but that certain levies were created called the seven Piazzas from the Mallevadoria dell'Armi. Villani call it a small duty, as if by this diminutive term he meant how the little amount assigned to be collected was multiplied for the good of commerce that such an excellent amount could have been raised. However, I would like to recall an incredible entry which can be found in the book called Campione on page 14, and also noted by Villani in book XI, chapter 91. This entry notes

that 750 florins of gold were obtained every year merely by sweeping up coins that were left there like trash. Still, we should note here the stupendous contributions made by devotees to the miraculous image, a portion of which was given to the magnificent ornamentation of this solemn and very rich temple.

III. This praise will truly prove to be appropriate for Or. S. Michele, and much greater still for what we will say to describe its qualities. Its shape is almost quadrangular, being 42 *braccie* long, 32 wide, and 80 tall. It is all encrusted with strong squared stone which is water resistant and season-proof. According to Vasari, all gothic style buildings made in Tuscany at the time were walled up, and this Barbarian Architectural can be seen in this tower. However, in it we see one of the first improvements of the art, which was done to reinvigorate it. We can observe the arches which are turned into a portion of a circle and above the main pillars of the vault there are two series of large adorned windows in the compartments formed by marble columns. In the triangles of the front we can see the coat of arms of the Republic, the Guelph Party, and the royal house of Naples which is a shield divided in half

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with lilies on one side, and flat listre on the other. This was done for the Kingdom of Hungary, which was under the rule of Louis Anjou, son of Charles, when the loggia was built. He was such a friend and protector of the Florentines and Guelphs that as a sign of gratitude they raised there his coat of arms. At the time, this was the greatest benevolence that Florence ever professed towards a monarch. The place was finished with a wreath of openwork roses, which was supported by corbels that swing outward and gracefully turn around you like a parapet. The ground runs around a stone foundation a little higher than four *braccie* up to the niches, in which appear statues of the patron saints of the guilds. Some of these larger than lifesize figures were made of metal and others of marble, but all were beautifully carved. They spared no expense to outdo the work of previous masters. A comment in a book marked "F" reads as follows: "Knowing how important it is to give heart to those who work hard to bring about ideas, try to leave his most honored name and fame to his homeland through rare workmanship. It is desired that those who have already been elected to show off their talent, and to know about the Statues of Or. S. Michele, be amply rewarded."

IV. To give an account of these statues starting from the eastern side to the via dei Calzaioli, in the first niche there was St. Luke, then St. Thomas, followed by St. John the Baptist. Towards the middle, the first niche holds St. John the Evangelist, St. George is in the second, St. James is in the third, and St. Mark the fourth. On the side of the magistrate, St. Lo was on the first pillar, then St. Stephen and third St. Matthew. Turning to Tramontana, the first niche is vacant for a certain reason of which we speak later; the second spot contains the Quattro Coronati, followed by St. Philip and then St. Peter.

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Coming back to St. Luke, this statue was made by Giambologna for the guild of the Judges and Notaries, also known as the Proconsolo, whose coat of arms is a star of gold, which fills the whole field with silver carved in the corners of the base. St. Thomas was made by Andrea del Verrocchio, disciple of Donatello. The saint seems so alive that it appears to be led by love to touch the wound of Christ. It was done at the expense of Mercanzia, which has a red star on a white bale as an insignia. By virtue of a public decree, St. Louis should be placed in this niche but we do not know why he was withdrawn from the niche save for matters of style. I read in the Green Champion, ordered in 1483, that Andrea was satisfied with this workmanship and placed its value at up to 800 large florins.

St. John the Baptist belongs to the Merchants' Guild, formerly the Consuls of the Calimala, whose symbol is a golden eagle on a white bale in a red field. The workmanship is by Ghiberti, whose name is written to the hem of the suit. However, we must confess that this is a languid figure in comparison to his other marvelous works. St. John the Evangelist, made of bronze, is the work of Baccio da Montelupo who made it with great diligence for the Silk guild, for whom the symbol is a red door on a silver field. Next is St. George, whose first location was in Tramontana, very proportionate to his greatness. We will later talk about the reason for his moving. The armorers and swordsmen, who make metal jackets and rapiers for weapons, had it done. This figure is esteemed by all as the most beautiful. In addition to what Vasari says about it, Bocchi has made a treatise titled "The Excellence of the Statue of St. Giorgio made by Donatello," which was printed in 1584 by Marescotti. Nearby is the statue of St. James of the guild of the Furriers, who have on their coat of arms a white sheep on a field of blue. This saint was done by Nanni di Antonio del Bianco and is very much liked. St. Mark is by Donatello, of which Michelangelo said:

“that if such was the semblant of the living Saint, he could be believed in everything he has written, as much shows the statue of an honest man. Nanni made St. Louis for the Farrier’s guild, as evidenced by their coat of arms, which is a pair of black pincers. Admirable is the St. Stephen, a worthy work of Ghiberti, as a reward of which he also had the grace to make St. Matthew which is for the Wool Guild, having a white sheep with a white banderola and a red cross on a blue field as the coat of arms; there is also that of the Bankers guild, whose symbol was a red field sown with gold coins. In the archive of said guild there is a book in which, in addition to reading the allocation of the statue to Ghiberti, you can find how the officers of the guild obtained the niche, which had previously been given to the guild of the bakers to place their protector, St. Lawrence. However, being that the statue was poor valueless art, on the 24th of June in 1419 the Signoria, led by Gonfaloniere Niccolò di Franco Sacchetti – with the consent of the bakers – gave their place to the bankers to make the figure of St. Matthew, for which Lorenzo Ghiberti received 650 gold florins. Two marble statuettes, worked with honor by Niccolò Aretino, can also be observed in this place. After this comes the empty niche, where nothing remains except a base with a prodigious half-relief by Donatello representing St. George who kills the Dragon, praised by Raffaello Borghini with these words “one can look at it, but not imitate it.” The Quattro Coronati are by Nanni, representing four different Masters of the arts with the ax, the shoe, the ladle, and other blacksmith tools. The artist was troubled with their positioning in such a narrow place. However, his master Donatello, with the reward of only a dinner, with a few industrious blows,

arranged them in a way to cover the disciple's error, which got him esteem and wonder from all. Next is St. Philip, made by Nanni for the guild of the shoemakers. St. Peter was for the Guild of the Butchers, intelligently made by Donatello. Vasari holds it to be an admirable and extremely rare work due to the graceful drapery corresponding to the altitude of the body, so that the clothes are not better worn on a living man.

V. Such a litany of statues, united this way and exhibited to the public, is seen in very few cities. Many have come from distant places to see them, confessing that it seems to them a rare thing indeed. To defend these statues and uphold the respect demanded by the Florentines, we have the statute which imposes punishment on anyone who throws stones at them or does some harm to them. We can find another beautiful view in the archways between pillars, adorned with four tall columns, on each of which is a statue one and a half *braccie* tall. In all they are forty, decorated with rustic acanthus leaves, as the arabesques that fill the arches are very vague. The last things to be seen above the niches are paintings in the twelve terracotta tondi, all but three of which are ruined, by Luca della Robbia. They depict a Madonna with a child on her neck above the pillar of St. George, the army of the Republic above St. Thomas, and the symbol of the guild of Por Santa Maria above St. John. Now it remains to discuss the aforementioned translation of the Madonna from the guild of the Doctors and Apothecaries that one can now see at S. Giorgio. However, having to assemble in another lesson on the many shining virtues from the interior of the Temple,

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in which we will talk again about the story of this **decorative program**, we will here return to praise this wonderful construction, some verses from the famous Dominican poet:

Nunc ubi magna domus pracelsa turris ad instar Fertur in aereas altius una plagas •

Qua licet ex omni videatur splendida parte Sanctorum Statuas dum soris ipsa tenet. Attamen
apparet longe speciosior intus Fulget ubi Sancta Matris Imago Dei.

Now where the great house towers, said to be in bronze, one of the higher quarters
From which one may be seen on every side the splendid statues of the saints while she holds the
statues of **sori**. However, it appears far more beautiful inside where the image of the Holy
Mother of God shines.

LEZIONE 3

Continuing the church of Or. S. Michele

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It is impossible to discuss the church interior in an orderly manner without considering the
prodigious altar of the Madonna of Or. S. Michele, already described in the first lesson. I must
add to the aforementioned discussion a comment on the laudable uses made from the great riches
it has generated for the republic, and the daily sacred rites the altar services. To start with the
first one, I will note a document indicating the great treasures spent in pious works by the
superiors of the Oratory. Thanks to the captains, in addition to the splendid and noble
maintenance of the church, they were able to administer large sums of money for the workings of
the Monasteries of Chiarito, Lapo, and San Giorgio. Today they are considered exemplary
monasteries in Florence, and their establishment is noted in the writings of Ser Michele di
Ghirolfo da Lucardo in 1342 and Ser Salvestro Salvestri in 1405 in the general archive. About
the second point, I would like to refer to the institution formed by the republic in 1415,
composed of a collegiate of ten Priests and two *cherici* with a head called "Proposto"
(Superintendent). Its establishment can be found a book with wooden covers in the archives of
the captains. It can be read there that up until that time, the Oratory had been used by a single

priest with the title of Sacristan. With the intervention of the musicians, they assist with the performance of the usual lauds to Mary on the holidays, and on every Saturday at the unveiling of the sacred

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Image with the singing of the litany, at which time 26 candles burn, with 12 at the altar, 6 at the tendrils, and eight at the garland. By legacy of Luca di Filippo Carnesecchi Gentiluomo Fiorentino, two candles must always be lit for the Mass at the Consecration. In his Testament of 1601, drawn up by Ser Antonio di Ser Chello, he says "I leave two doublets of yellow wax of 15 pounds to be perpetually lit to the Madonna of Or S. Michele at the time of the elevation of the host."

II. Passing now to recall how many sacred and beautiful things were in this Oratory, I will say that leaning against the pillar, next to this chapel, there is a larger than life-size wood crucifix, carved in a primitive style that the Florentines venerate. Based on the authority of the writers of Holy Archbishop Antoninus's life, it was believed that it was customary for him to go there to pray when he was a child; so he was painted at the foot of the cross, at that age. However, we can't confirm without an authoritative document whether the Crucifix of dried Elm actually spoke to the Saint (Antoninus). However, I believe Rondinelli's report of the plague, in which he wrote: "The Friars of St. Mark went in procession on many Fridays to the Crucifix of Or. S. Michele to which St. Antonino went to pray as a boy." I must thank those Benefactors, who in the year 1714 made for this divine image a richly carved tabernacle with a gilded canopy, **pavonazzi** pendants, and gold fringes. Opposite in the second pillar, you can see a fresco figure of The Good Thief, which was rarely painted in those days: the painter not only nailed him to the

cross, but tied his legs with ropes so that he would not be confused with Christ Jesus. This is the customary way the Church made it, as Molano noted.

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I will now talk about the reason this painting was placed here. For 300 years the painting was noted in the Books of the Compagnia della Croce al Tempio, and copied by Vincenzo del Corno Gentiluomo Fiorentino – lover of old things - in his memoirs, and read about in Leopoldo del Migliore's book as follows "1361 N. N. condemned to the gallows, he was from a family more than moderately civil. A few hours before he was taken to the fields, he spoke to a brother of the company of the Neri who was used to assisting those about to suffer publicly. He told him he had a sum of money in a chest at his house at the foot of the Ponte Vecchio. His intention was to have a figure of the Good Thief painted in Or. S. Michele at the pillar near the oratory so that one could pray to God that in that last short breath, so that he would use the mercy to bless him. Whoever fulfilled this legacy wrote this memoir." This image was painted by Iacopo Landini from Prato Vecchio, known as the Casentino (Jacopo del Casentino). We will now mention about the other paintings in that space, almost all of which were his.

III. The vault indeed is by Jacopo, where he represented sixteen Patriarchs and Prophets who pose on a field of ultramarine blue, a color that cost a lot since it has to be extracted from the precious lapis lazuli stones. There were many state citizens who murmured about it saying it was a waste of the Madonna of Orsanmichele's money. However, this bold talk displeased the people so much that, according to Cambi, they wanted the imprisonment of one member of the Foraboschi house to satisfy the outrage of Mary. Returning to Jacopo del Casentino, likewise he painted the many saints that appear above the other in the arches. On a second ovate St. Mary Magdalene is carried to heaven by the angels, the latter painted by the hand of Andrea del Sarto.

St. Stephen, painted between the two doors, was made by Poppi, who again made the two paintings,

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that are in the choir, of Christ and St. John the Baptist. The St. Martin in front of St. Stephen is believed to be of the Sogliani. The St. Augustine in the middle of the choir is also believed to be his although there are those who say it was done by Albertinelli. On the wall under the organ, Agnolo Gaddi represented Christ Disputing among the Doctors. And let's not neglect to report what Doctor Brocchi recalls having happened to the figure of St. Verdiana, who is seen at the pillar of the corner of this church next to the image of St. Lucy. This image particularly flourished in our times, but to the great detriment of history the painter erased the inscription written in gothic characters underneath. Stranger still, the Saint can now be seen in secular clothing, whereas normally she was shown wearing a religious habit.

IV. The important chapel of St. Anne was erected by of the Municipality of Tramontana, which was dedicated to commemorate the most important action that could happen in a free republic, the expulsion of the Tyrant Duke of Athens and violent occupier of the Florentine Domain. This occurred on July 26, 1343 the feast of St. Anne's, who became honored for her assistance as one of the patron saints of the city, receiving the title Propitia & F. utrix libertatis Civitatis Florentina, "the woman of liberty of the state of Florence." In the Book of Riformagioni Lib. B. of 1349, appears a record of how the Signoria decreed to spend three thousand florins of gold for the erection of a new chapel in Or. S. Michele. This chapel was then demolished in 1526 by the captains so that the altar could receive on top of it the larger-than-life white marble figure of the Virgin Mary Carrying the Infant Jesus in her womb, a highly praised work by Francesco da San Gallo. On the 26th of July, the Signoria annually took part in a ritual offering with the Captains

of the guilds. There was on that day a horse race, among other things of great joy, ordered in the Statutes of the 28 of October 1343 with this beautiful introduction of words:

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Pro honore Reip. & ad perpetuam memomoriā libertatis Civitatis Florentia, & ut Civium mentibus sit infixum, qualiter die S. Anna de mense Iulii Populus Flor per Dei gratiam, & virtutem bonorum, a Tyrannide Ducis Atbernarum liberatus &c. -----

“In honor of the Commonwealth and to the perpetual remembrance of the liberty of the state of Florence, and so that it may be fixed in the minds of the citizens, how on the day of St. Anna, in the month of July, the people of Flor, by the grace of God and the virtue of good men, were freed from the tyranny of the duke of Athens.” And in a panel of the church we read that on this feast day is exhibited the relic of the saint, which is kissed by the Friars of the Centuria and the Nuns of SS. Trinità.

V. I will now speak about another chapel and refer back to what I promised in the preceding lesson. A Madonna seated with her son made by Simone da Fiesole, pupil of Brunelleschi, was placed at the niche of the Apothecaries. It was then transferred to the church where it was placed at one of the two large doors to form a chapel. The reason for this was that in 1628, many people swore to have seen this statue blink and move, which then caused a panic. They all ran away in very large numbers, forming crowds during the day and night to the point that the streets had to be blocked to escape the tumult. Everyone was shouting for mercy, which was one of the preludes to the plague which came to Florence in 1630. To divert the devout people, who refused leave there, Grand Duke Ferdinand resolved to transfer it inside. This miraculous event was processed by the order of Archbishop Alessandro Marzimedici and the Canon Cavaliere Giovanni Guidacci, one of the people who claimed to have seen the statue blink several times. During the time of the Republic, another similar case occurred (in 1493) with the image of the

Madonna, which was standing outside of its niche. In this case an uncovered Jew, on a fine day when he thought he couldn't be seen, struck the statue with an iron rod, a crime for which he was killed. This incident can be read today at the foot of the marble, and the sacrilege also appears in the Chronicle by Forese da Ribatta, who goes into more detail saying that his body was thrown into St. Stephen's sewer as a final contempt.

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The words carved into the marble base in the memory of this fact are the following:

Hanc ferro effigiem petiit ludeus, & Index

Ipse fibi vulgo dilaniatus obit MccccLxxXXIII.

VI. Knowing that the title of Or. S. Michele is frequently mentioned in these lessons, I will now report the origin of its name as it contains significant information about antiquity which I do know if historians truly speak about. I begin by examining the doubt that there was already an Oratory there since 750, dedicated to the Holy Arcangel. To be safe with the authoritative documents, I will first say that shortly after the year 1000 there was a Parish Church with a contiguous garden that was called San Michele in Orto(garden). It was situated in the most dignified place in the city and was truly more venerable than any other which was in Florence. The fact that it was a Parish is very clear from the very ancient sources, which declare it as such in a testament in the Badia Archive number 25 among the following witnesses: Filippus Pieri Ranerii, S. Micaelis in orto 1100. In many ancient contracts of the Mozzi family, who lived along the route that passes by S. Gregorio to the Arno River, the parish of San Michele in Orto is mentioned. It later passed to the Cistercian monks of the abbey of S. Silvestro di Nonatola, but I have not been able to find a source for this. The truth is that Pope Innocentius III, in one of his

notes from Viterbo in 1209, confirms to said Monks that this church was still of S.

Michele: **Ecclesias S. Felicis, S. Martini in Mamma, & S. Michaelis intus Flor.**

Afterwards, when the Republic had to reassume its patronage and claimed its ancient rights, it had to displace the Cistercians,

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which was met with some disgust from Rome which can be found in the Reformations in a letter from Papa Inocenzio IV dating back to 1249. In it, the republic was urged to return the church to the abbey of Nonantola, together with the castle of S. Martino. The effects of this exhortation can be seen in the resolutions of the republic. Since the Signoria needed a piazza for the sale of grain and large rooms to store it, they had the church leveled, as it was considered a very opportune location. A Loggia was then to be built, of which the Migliore says the following on page 530: "With the design of Arnolfo Panno 1284 which was founded on the ancient church of S. Michele." To not lose the memory of such an ancient church, the Republic wanted Arnolfo to build another one in front of the new Loggia at the same time. This is the present oratory, called S. Michele Vecchio but today called S. Carlo. The reason for this is that S. Carlo da Paolo (Borromeo) had recently been canonized and the fame of his holiness penetrated everywhere. The main cities, especially Florence, were filled with devotion to the saint. After remembering about the ancient passage from Florence to Milan, made by the Borromeans, and of the space made for the saint, he ordered some relics to be brought from Milan to Florence. The first of these relics was a large piece of the shirt he was wearing when he died and a sponge which had been used to collect his blood. The solemnity in receiving them was very great due to the devotion among the people.

However, Cosimo II foresaw that the place where these relics were to be placed was very narrow to celebrate the sacred translation. Wanting to give a sign of his usual devotion and grateful to show himself courteous to the offers from the Cardinal, he signed a memorial to the Company of the Lombards, to whom they were to direct the relics.

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This granted the brothers the oratory of San Michele as a more capable place than the church of S. Miniato, where the company gathered having already moved from S. Pier del Murrone, today called S. Giovannino in Via di S. Gallo. Furthermore, his highness wanted the captains of Or. S. Michele who had the dominion of the oratory to donate it by decree of 1616, on the condition that no coat of arms would ever be placed on it (arme). Then, the very ancient painting depicting a dead Christ was removed from the high altar and was transferred to the door inside. It was replaced afterwards by Matteo Roselli's painting, in which S. Carlo was dressed as a cardinal – a glorious, shiny, and resplendent figure surrounded by angels. Among them, in the first place was S. Michele with his insignia. However, the captains foresaw that the new veneration to S. Carlo would make us forget the Oratory of S. Michele, which was illustrated by Pope Alexander VII in the ninth year of his pontificate of a perpetual indulgence for the Brothers on the Feast of St. Charles. The grandstand of the altar had been erected in ancient times by the Pilli Consular Family, of which Dante speaks in Canto XVI of *Paradiso*: Great was the column of the Vajo. In the scriptures of Or. S. Michele we read “High altar of the Oratory of S. Michele made in the execution of the testament of Messer Bindo dei Pilli in the year 1376”. On the left, as you enter, you can see a panel by

Fabrizio Boschi who portrayed the presentation of Christ in the temple with a beautiful design and a vivacity of colors.

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As a sign of the patronage of the captains, their uniform is carved in gilded bronze characters which are the three letters O.S.M

VIII. Finally I return to the loggia of Or. S. Michele, which was said to have been a tower for grain storage supported by 16 pillars. It was subsequently judged by the Grand Duke Cosimo I to be a suitable place to store and preserve documents and historical writings from fire and water. A medal was made with the effigy of the Grand Duke and his name on one side, and on the reverse was the open door of the archives, with many illustrated books for protocols with crowns on the title page and letters around it which said: Publica Fidei.

There is still an inscription on the door of the archives located in the via Calimala in gold lettering and it says: ARCHIVIVM HOC PERPETVITATI PVBLICORVM MONIMENTORVM CONSERVANDAE DICATVM SERENISS COSMVS MED. EREXIT . QVAMPRIMVM MAGNVS DVX HETRVRIAE SALVTATVS REGIAQVE corona insignitvs est mdlxix.

I thought I had finished my historical memoirs about Or. S. Michele, however, I should speak of an indispensable piece of information without which the reader would misunderstand the officials of Or. San. Michele. Two magistrates had similar appellations. The first was responsible for the care of the Piazza or Loggia, regarding the sale of wheat and fodder,

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The second magistrate was in charge of the good governance of the company and Oratory of the Madonna of Or. S. Michele, along with extensive jurisdiction over the goods donated to the Holy Image. This difference between these two positions appears in the Carnera Fiscale in the book marked 1344, which contains various decrees and writings of the Priori at the Podestà of Florence. Under the date February 27, the following excerpts about grain officials can be found: **Filippus Rochi de Capponibus, Zenobius Lapi Risaliti, Dominicus Rizzini Fagioli, & Mattheus Roselli Pictor Officiales extracti pro Comuni Flor. ad Officium Platea O. Si M. pro termino, & tempore quatuor mensium.** With this document, I regret to have to note the mistake of Leopoldo del Migliore on page 369 of his Illustrated Florence. Leopoldo stated that the aforementioned Matteo da Rosello was one of the captains of the Madonna of Or. S. Michele even though his name was never mentioned by other scholars. However, if he is not among the captains of the Madonna, he deserved to be placed by Giorgio Vasari among the painters as determined in the above-mentioned election. Among his works is the painting of Hell, which he completed in Or. S. Michele. Going back to Leopoldo's Illustrated Florence, on the same page we can find the following words: "Painted naturally in that hell were many sad men of that age, among which were the Duke of Athens with his followers, since they were traitors of the lordship of Florence. They had shown themselves contrary to the public interest as they went against freedom and were thieves with evil tongues. The resemblances in the painting were so excellent that those who had known them were able to point them out in the painting. For as long as the painting stood, the following proverb was said in Florence: *He is portrayed in S. Michele and that is enough.* This work was done by Matteo di Rossello, an ancient and civil painter".

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Returning to the Captains, I must add that these positions were abolished by our Emperor who gave the supervision of the sacred temple to a single gentleman, who is currently Mr. Domenico Baldigiani. I will recall here the twentieth congregation of priests, known as the visitation which recognized its beginning on February 24, 1494. This congregation was composed of exactly 40 priests and they gathered in the church of S. Michele in Palchetto, where the following title can be read on the door:

CONGREGATIO VISITATIONIS PRESBYTERORVM .

Association for the visitation of priests