

## Paola - The Sanctuary of San Francesco

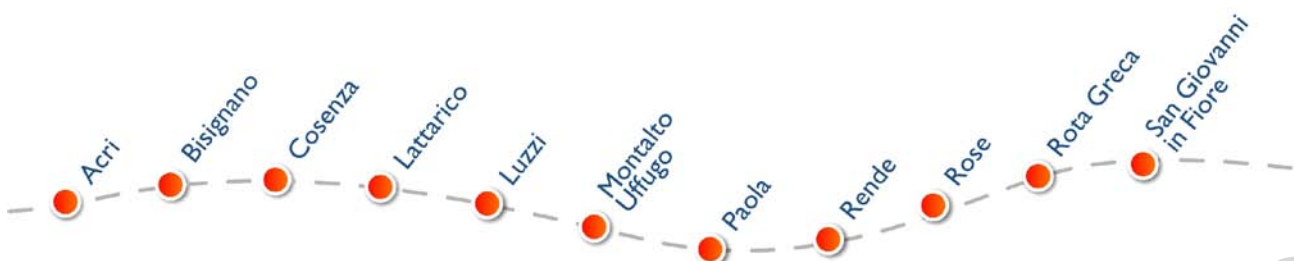
The **Sanctuary of San Francesco** emerges onto the highest and hilliest part of the city of Paola. The origin is that of the same Saint, that felt the need to construct a church and a convent where he could welcome the faithful and companions that were starting to follow him. The development of this fabricated monument started then and has continued up until today. To get to the Sanctuary you pass a large square, facing which you will find the facade of the Basilica. Through an arch you arrive at the lateral wing of the Sanctuary, where the new Hall and the fountain of the 'Cucchiarella' are found. Walking further on in the same direction is the Bridge of the Devil and the path of the Saint.



The route through these places that have witnessed the works of the Saint is known as 'The way of miracles', because of the numerous prove of the miracles the Saint can performed that can be seen.

### The Antique Basilica

Through the main entrance of the Sanctuary, you arrive at two semi-open areas. In the first are conserved several tomb stones, dated between the XVI and the XX century, that remember many occurrences and events connected to the Sanctuary, the second is the real entrance hall of the Antique Basilica: to the right is the entrance to the Basilica, to the left faces the torrent and the adjoining Convent, in front is the entrance to the cloister, the hermitage and the cell of Beato Nicola. The Basilica is Roman style (XVI century D.C) and presents a large hall, quite bare, with only a lateral right nave. Along the nave emerge four small chapels, that join together at the end with the large Baroque chapel, where there are some relics of San Francesco.



## The Cloister

The Cloister of the Sanctuary is closed from the outdoors by a glass screen. Here is the Saints rosary that is now a thick garden and along its walls there are frescos showing the principal episodes of the life of the Saint, many of them joint to legends. Alongside is the hermitage of San Francesco, a mixture of narrow underground spaces that formed the first heart of accommodation for the Brothers and the Saint.

Between the Cloister and the Antique Basilica emerges the bell tower.

## The large Baroque Chapel

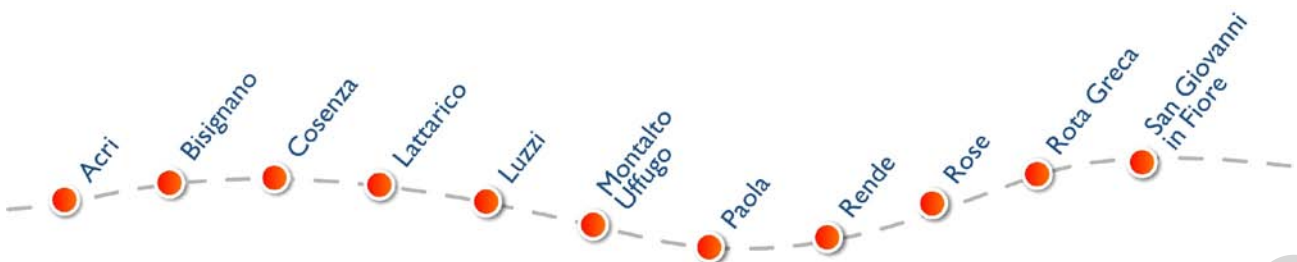
Entering the last chapel of the left lateral nave of the Sanctuary, called the Baroque Chapel, an altar with the figures of San Francesco di Paola and San Francesco di Assisi jumps straight to the eyes. In this altar are the remains of San Francesco di Paola. To be precise, there are only five fragments of bones rescued from the cremation the body suffered by the hands of the Ugonotti heretics. The exposition of the Saintly Relics is celebrated every year on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April.

## The new Hall

The need for a larger church, that allowed for a larger number of followers that crowded the Sanctuary daily, was felt from the beginning of the 1900's. The first concrete plans were made only in the 80's. In July 1997 the first works for the preparation of the chosen site began and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1998 Fatherly Saint John Paul II blessed the first stone. The first celebration for the New Hall was on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2000 in occasion of the arrival of Easter. The building, projected by the architect Sandro Benedetti, 100m long and 40m wide, it's developed on two levels, the lowest part and the gallery.



The altar of the New Hall is in silver and gold, work of masters of Seville, designed by Manuel José Seco-Velasco under the supervision of Susana Lonuye. The stain glass are masterpieces of Giovanni Hajnal. The bronze portal is work of



Paolo Borghi as is the marble sculpture found in the centre below and above the portal.

## The New Hall Mosaic

The great mosaic, made for the New Hall by master Giovanni Hajnal, is a three part work. The middle section represents the scene of the Mirrofore al Seplocro, while the sides the Crucifix and the resurrected Christ lowering to the Infers. The work of art is made with over a million one sq cm pieces, and 743 different colours that fit in well with the whole building. The mosaic is surrounded by an epigraph that commemorates the time, the commitment and the collaborators that projected the New Hall.

