



## Following Naples Churches

Dr. Tehilla Ben-Gai

June 2025

Pictures were taken by the author on site.

Aerial images from Google Earth

### **Tomb of Charles I of Anjou, Naples Cathedral**

Charles I (d. 1285), founder of the Angevin dynasty, chose to be buried at the heart of the cathedral — inaugurating an era in which foreign rulers sought to sanctify their power through religion, art, and memory, within the city's sacred spaces.

While Rome's churches reflected papal authority, those in Florence exalted civic ideals, and Venice glorified public service — in Naples, churches became a backdrop for dynastic struggles over legitimacy and belonging.

### **Introduction**

This presentation is intended for those who wish to explore the churches of Naples independently—without a guide, but with depth.

Unlike Rome, Naples was not the seat of a spiritual empire but the capital of a southern kingdom. Its churches reflect dynastic ambition, monastic reform, and civic identity—shaped by the Angevin, Aragonese, Spanish viceroyalty, and Bourbon dynasties, each of which left a distinctive mark through construction, royal burials, or courtly art, from Charles I of Anjou to Spanish and Bourbon rule. Local traditions continued through strong monastic orders and civic patronage.

With original photographs and concise commentary, this guide connects art, politics, and devotion in the city's sacred spaces.

### **Defining Message**

In Naples, churches often served more than a spiritual function—they became spaces where power, memory, and civic identity converged.

Foreign rulers left their mark through architectural patronage, using sacred spaces to express legitimacy and dynastic vision.

Royal tombs, chapels, and artistic programs reflected not only who ruled, but how they wished to be remembered.

At the same time, local continuity remained strong.

Monastic orders, civic guilds, women's communities, and local artists shaped these churches from within—embedding Neapolitan pride and theological thought into their design and decoration.

While Roman churches projected universal papal authority, Neapolitan churches reflected shifting loyalties, civic devotion, and a uniquely urban voice grounded in ancient catacombs, saintly cults, and visual innovation.

# Following Naples Churches

Dr. Tehilla Ben-Gai

March 2025

Pictures were taken by the author on site.

Aerial images from Google Earth

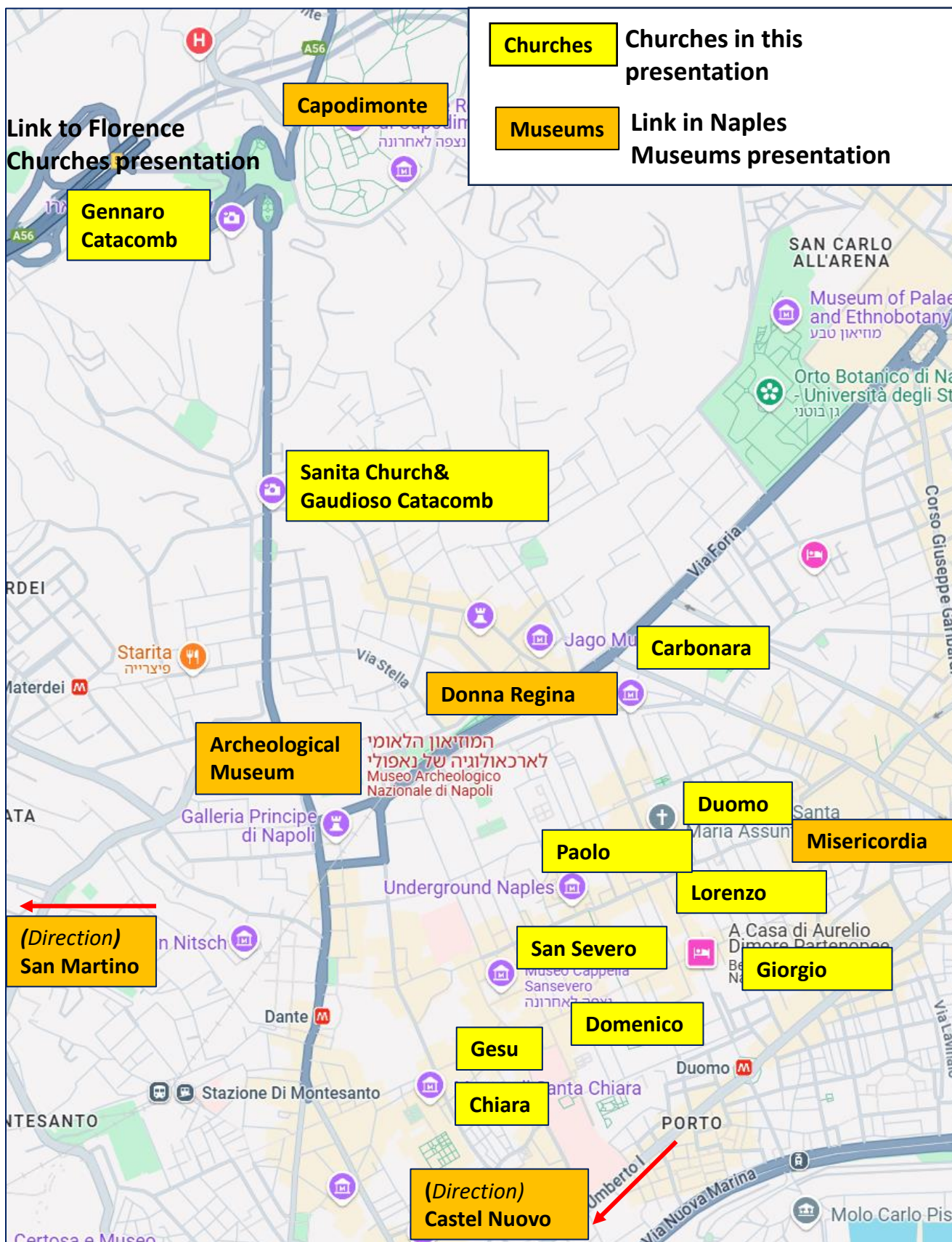
Click to follow link-  
index or Map

## Index

<a href="#">Duomo- S.M Assunta</a>	<a href="#">3-6</a>
<a href="#">San Severo</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">San Giorgio</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Dominico Maggiore church</a>	<a href="#">9-11</a>
<a href="#">Paolo Maggiore Church</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Lorenzo Maggiore Church</a>	<a href="#">13</a>

<a href="#">Gesù Nuovo Church</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Chiara Church</a>	<a href="#">15-16</a>
<a href="#">Carbonara Church</a>	<a href="#">17--19</a>
<a href="#">Gaudioso Catacombs, Sanita Church</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">San Gennaro Catacombs</a>	<a href="#">21</a>

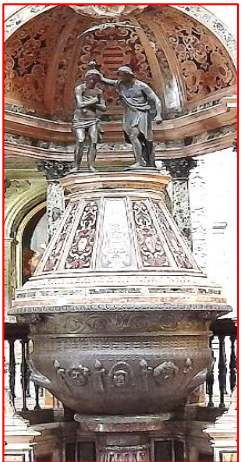
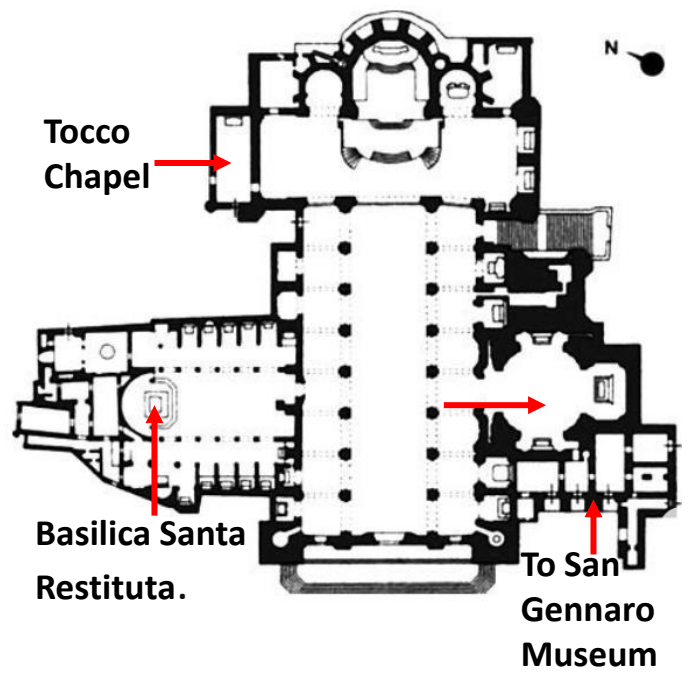
## Orientation Map





**Naples Duomo- S.M Assunta (1)**

**Dynasty, Devotion and Identity:** Naples Cathedral was built in the late 13th century by Charles I of Anjou (1266–1285), after defeating Manfred of Hohenstaufen and ending Swabian rule. This marked the beginning of Angevin power in Naples (1266–1442). The Duomo incorporated the 4th-century Basilica of Santa Restituta—built atop a Roman temple—and layered imperial, early Christian, and medieval claims to legitimacy. Charles’s tomb inside the cathedral marked a foreign dynasty seeking authority through sanctity and visibility. Naples’ royal tombs reflect efforts to legitimize power through religious and artistic patronage. Later enriched by the Aragonese, the Duomo became the center of the cult of San Gennaro. His relics—and the miracle of his coagulated blood turning liquid twice a year—turned the cathedral into a shrine of civic identity, divine favor, and Neapolitan resilience



Cathedral Font Mary’s assumption



Church’s Coffered Ceiling. 1676, Luca Giordano.



Tomb of Charles’s I, died in 1285: Gothic monument blending dynastic ambition with sacred presence.



Cathedral Dome



1299: Angevin Monument: Charles I of Anjou (left: 1285), Charles Martel (right, 1295) and his wife Clementina Center, (1295).

**Duomo Cypt**



Crypt: Gennaro’s tomb



Crypt Ceiling: busts relief of saints, and Evangelists.



Crypt: Patron Alessandro Carafa kneeling in front of bust of Saint Gennaro.

**Santa Restituta Chapel**

**An Early Church from the Constantinian Era**

The oldest Christian site in Naples, founded in the 4th century by Emperor Constantine atop a former Roman temple. Roman columns and 8th–9th century mosaics are still visible. The basilica is dedicated to Restituta, a Carthaginian martyr persecuted under Diocletian, venerated in both Catholic and Orthodox traditions. As the structure around which the later cathedral was built, it expresses a Christian identity rooted in imperial, eastern, and local traditions.



Statue of Saint Restituta: Martyred in Carthage. venerated as Naples' earliest patron saint.



Luca Giordano: 4<sup>th</sup> Century, Ancient Roman columns



Lolla della Orvieto, 1322: Enthroned Madonna with S. Januarius and Restituta.



Stories of Joseph



Restituta's Ceiling

**Restituta Baptistry**

4<sup>th</sup> C: Oldest early Christian baptistry in the West



Earliest Christogram symbol- "Chi Rho" with Greek Alpha and Omega



Restituta Baptistry font.



Paleo Christian: Mosaic ceiling.



**Baptistry Mosaics, late 4th century:** Among the oldest in the Western world—depicting apostles, symbols of the four evangelists, and baptismal scenes that mark the shift from martyrdom to institutionalized Christianity.

## Treasury Chapel of St. Gennaro.

**Chapel of San Gennaro**

Built after the plague of 1526 by the people of Naples to house the relics and blood of San Gennaro—the city’s patron saint, credited with ending the epidemic. Gennaro, bishop of Benevento, was martyred in 305 under Diocletian and became a symbol of divine intercession through miracles such as halting a Vesuvius eruption. The liquefaction of his blood, occurring three times a year, remains a powerful ritual of Neapolitan identity and civic faith.

**Painter Domenichino:** Commissioned in 1631 to decorate the chapel, the Bolognese painter faced fierce local opposition. Threatened by the city’s painters’ guild, his family was held hostage, and he was likely poisoned in 1641. His tragic fate left the dome to Lanfranco, and paintings to Ribera.



1691, Domenico Vinaccia: “Archangel Michael defeating the Devil”.



Mid 17<sup>th</sup> C., Giuliano Finelli: “Saint Gennaro, Protector of Naples”.



**Domenichino, 1640:** “Miracle of the healed by oil of St Gennaro”.



**Domenichino, 1640:** “Beheading of St Gennaro”.



**Domenichino, 1640:** Execution of San Gennaro in Solfatara. San Genaro Museum.



**Ribera, 1645:** “San Gennaro emerges unharmed from the furnace”.



**Ribera, 1640;** “Obsessed woman freed by San Gennaro”.



18<sup>th</sup> C., Vaccaro: Archangel Raphael leads Tobias.



**1853, Mancinelli:** “The Vow of 1527” Naples’ vow to build the chapel if San Gennaro ended the plague.

## Tocco/Aspren Chapel

## Tocco Chapel – Naples' Apostolic Origin

Commissioned in the 14th century by the Greek-Byzantine Tocco family, the chapel depicts Naples' foundational Christian myth: In the early 1st century, on his way to Rome, Saint Peter encounters a Neapolitan woman named Candida, heals her, and she converts to Christianity. Candida introduces him to Aspren, whom Peter also heals and appoints as the first bishop of Naples. The chapel offers a visual claim to Naples' apostolic roots—a Christian mission emerging from local figures directly linked to the apostle Peter.



Relics of Saint Aspren

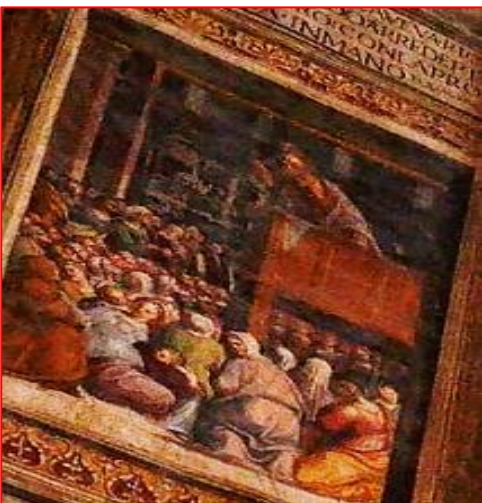


Scenes from the life of Saint 'Aspren, painted in 1520 by **Agostino Tesauro**: His relics are in the altar of this chapel. Gothic arches; vaults showing the early structure of the church.



Miracles Performed by Aspren: healing the ill and cripples. Above: Image of Aspren (framed)

St. Aspren overseeing the building Restituta church



Aspren baptizing the people of Naples.



Saint Aspren concentrated as Bishop



Baptism meets st. Petrus



Saint Peter Healing Aspren on his way to Rome

**Fusion of Devotion and Enlightenment**  
 Commissioned by the noble Sangro family in 1573 above the burial site of Bishop San Severo (d. 409), the chapel became a unique expression of Naples' intellectual elite. Under Prince Raimondo di Sangro in the 18th century, the chapel was transformed into a laboratory of artistic and anatomical experimentation—turning it into Naples' most enigmatic monument.



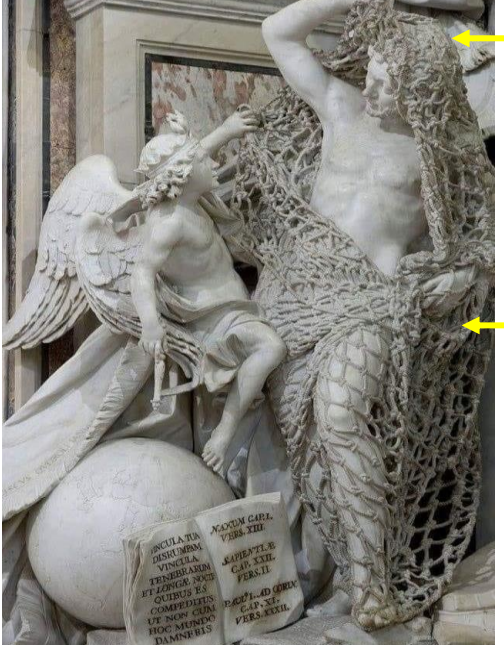
Sanmartino, 1753: "Veiled Christ": Tissue-like marble.



Deposition of Francisco Celebrano, 1850



Corradini, 1752: "Modesty/ Veiled Truth". Weightless cloth over human flesh. Seems like in a middle of an action;



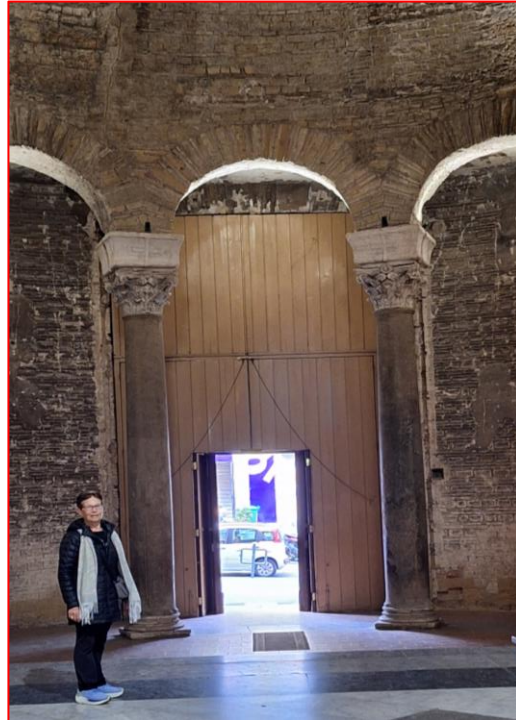
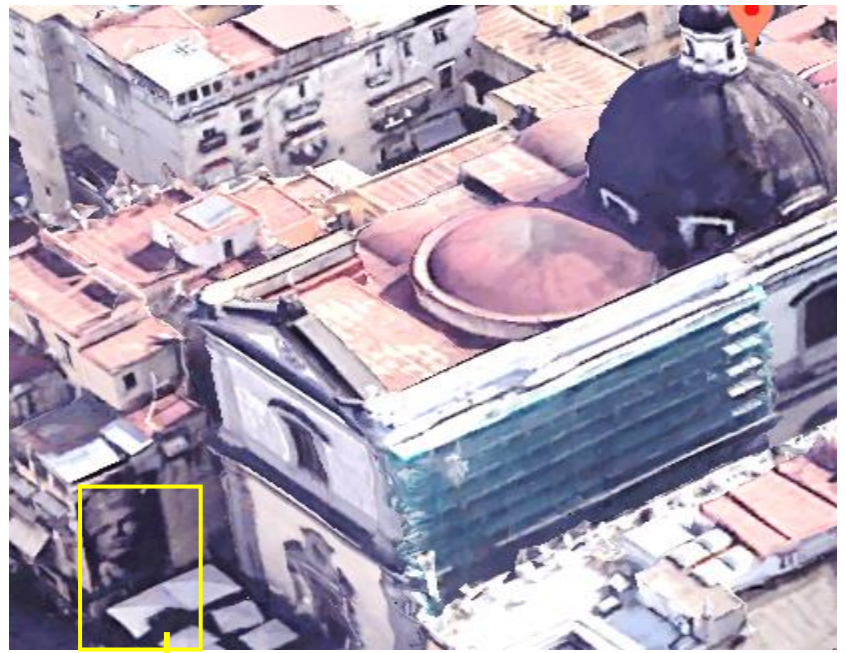
Queirolo, 1754: «Disillusionment»: Man free himself from a net, representing sins, helped by a putto, symbol of human intellect.



Celebrano in 1766: Cecco di Sangro is climbing out of a chest after hiding there for two days, surprising the enemies and captured the fort of Amiens: Cecco was Neapolitan who as an ally of the Spanish crown, (rulers of Naples), fought against the French in 1597.

**From Early Christianity to Baroque Allegory:**

Founded in the 4th century by Bishop San Severo, this is one of Naples' oldest Christian sites. Rebuilt in 1694 after an earthquake, it still preserves Romna's Corinthian columns and walls. A hidden highlight is Aniello Falcone's early 17th-century fresco of *St. George and the Dragon*. The dramatic image reflects the Baroque Church's Counter-Reformation agenda: a clear, heroic allegory of faith's victory over evil.

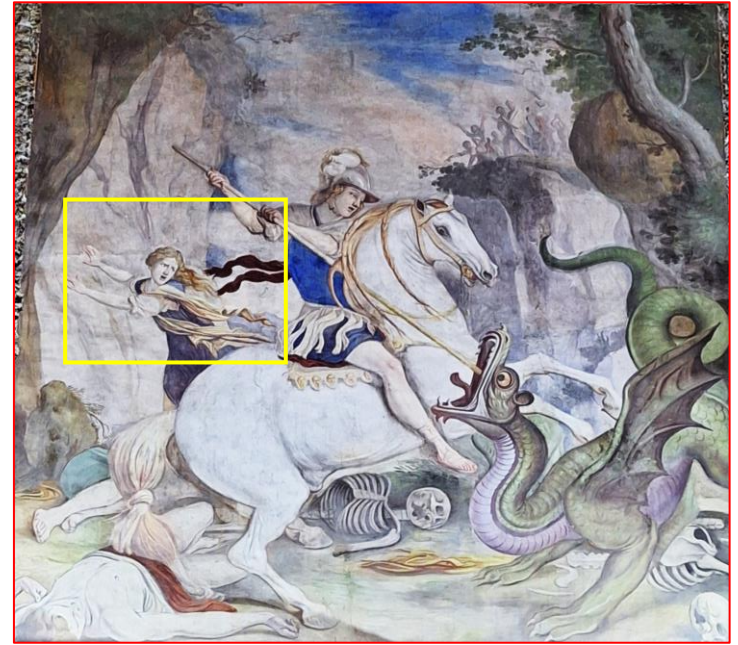


4th C. Paleo Christian Apse, 2 ancient columns. modern entry to church



"Chi Rho" symbol – earliest forms of Christogram- and the Greek Alpha and Omega symbols.

Corinthian capitals.



Early 17th C., Aniello Falcone: "St. George on a white horse slaying the dragon and saving a young woman": emblem of the infinite struggle between good and evil.



Late 17th C.: Alessio d'Elia's Painting: "San Severo" obscures early fresco of St George.



Unveiling the Dragon painting.

# Domenico Maggiore (1)

**Power, Doctrine, and Dynastic Legacy**  
 Founded by Charles II of Anjou and completed under his son Robert I in 1324, the church was originally associated with the Angevin dynasty. Yet the main burial sites of its kings are found in Santa Chiara—where Charles II (d. 1309) and Robert I (d. 1343) are entombed.  
 After Alfonso the Magnanimous conquered Naples in 1442, San Domenico Maggiore became the symbolic pantheon of the Aragonese dynasty. Its sacristy preserves 45 suspended wooden coffins holding the hearts of Aragonese kings, including Ferdinand I (d. 1494). This theatrical staging of dynastic memory contrasts with the monumental stone sarcophagi of Ladislaus and his sister (d. 1414) in San Giovanni a Carbonara.  
 In the adjacent convent lived Thomas Aquinas; his preserved cell and crucifix express the union of theology and royal ambition.



Anonymous painter, 1273: Original painting that spoke to St. Thomas Aquinas during his last stay in Naples in 1273. **Crucifix chapel in the church.**



**Sacristy:** 45 wooden suspended sarcophagi- official burial royal place of the dynasty of Aragon. . Contains the heart of 45 kings- including Ferdinand I.



1345: Tomb of Joan of Aquinas. **Chapel of Aquinas**



Thomas Aquinas and the Virgin



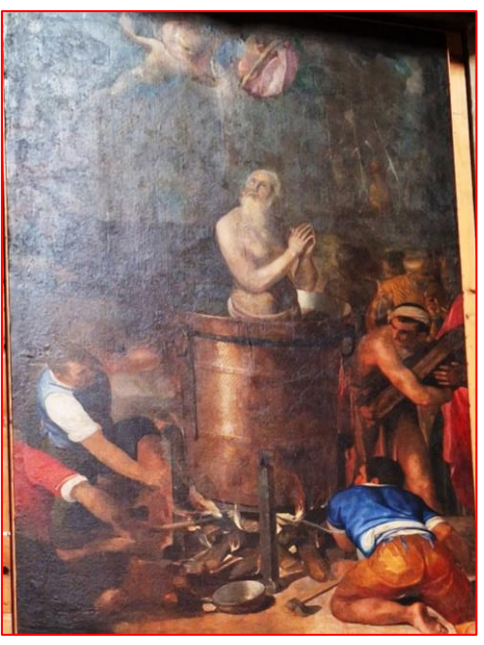
1706, Francesco Solimena: **Sacristy Ceiling fresco:** triumph of Faith over Heresy by the Dominicans



1656: Spire of San Domenico, Founder of Dominican Order.



1342: Tomb of Christopher Aquinas. **Chapel of Aquinas**



Scipione Pulzone: John the Evangelist's Martyrdom, **Chapel of John the Evangelist**



1385: Counter Façade: Giovannotto Protoguidice: captains of Charles III.



Statues by Tino di Camaino.

## Chapel Brancaccio

### The Dawn of the Renaissance in Naples: Between Byzantium and Human Emotion

Painted by Pietro Cavallini in 1308 and hidden for centuries, these frescoes depict scenes from the life of Christ. The works combine Byzantine structure with early naturalism and human expression, marking a crucial step toward the Renaissance. Their rediscovery in 1953 positioned Naples as a central arena in early Italian painting—a meeting point between Roman sacred art and local innovation.



Saint John raising Drusiana



Above: Mary Magdalene's penitent in a cave. Below: "Noli Me Tinger"—Do not touch me—said Christ to Magdalena. .



Above: Assumption of St. John to Heaven. Below: Crucifixion of St Peter: Virgin and St John



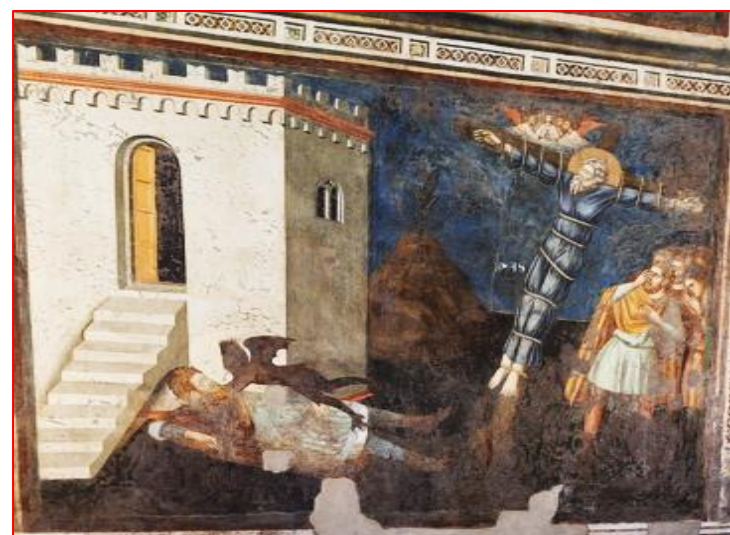
Above: Saints Peter and Andrew. Below: John enters a sealed temple



1308, Cavallini. Roman naturalism meets Gothic form in frescoes that proclaim Naples' Angevins as heirs of Rome—linking local faith, papal style, and political power.



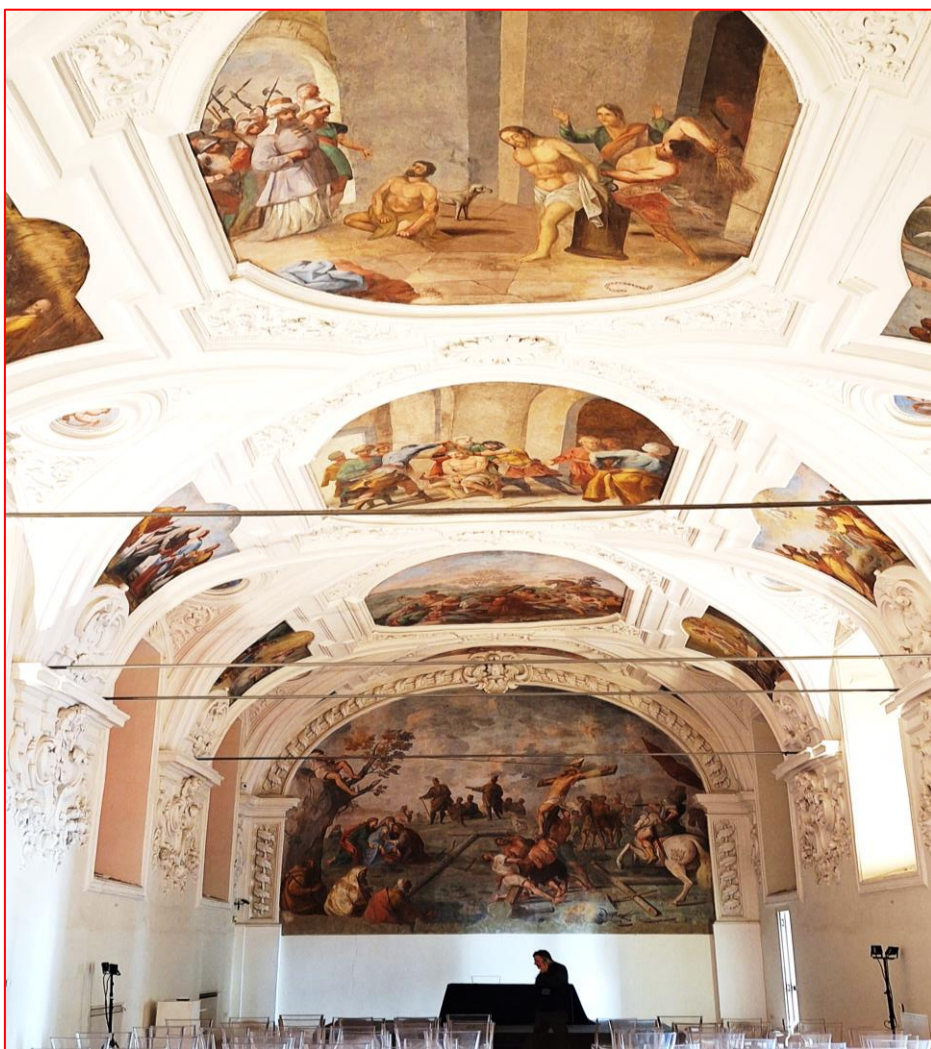
Saint John boiled in hot oil.



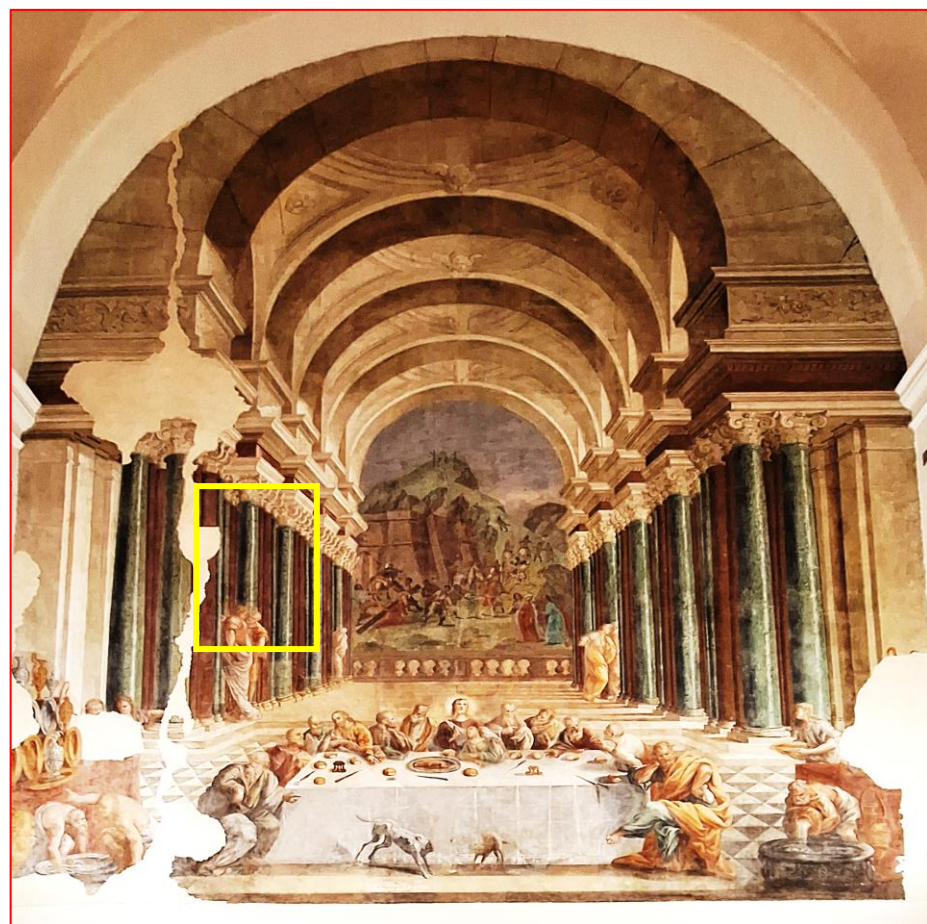
A possessed man is saved at the vision of Saint Dominic; Saint Andrew is seen crucified in the background.

## Convent

Founded in the 13th century, the Convent of San Domenico became a Dominican center of preaching and learning at the heart of Angevin Naples. Thomas Aquinas, one of the Church's greatest theologians, lived and taught here from 1272 until his death in 1274—turning the convent into a hub of Scholastic thought where reason and faith were reconciled. His legacy made this convent a symbol of Dominican intellectual authority in the early university city. The convent included a rich library and a study center, serving also as a training ground for Dominican preachers active throughout the Kingdom of Naples.



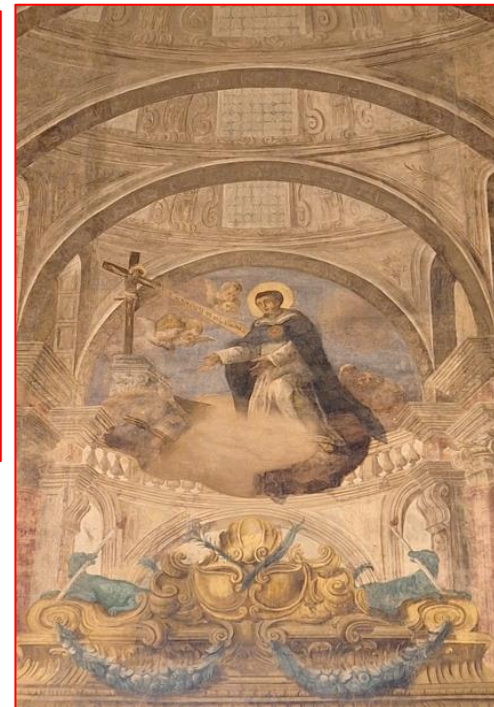
Main image: Raising of the Cross; muscular tension and theatrical staging, anchors Christ; watched by Roman officials, mourners, and spectators climbing trees. Upper image: Flagellation of Christ silent endurance contrasted with the turmoil around him.



1588, Giovanni Antonio Pantasa: The Last Supper is set within an illusionistic architectural fresco, where Roman arches guide the eye toward the framed background scene of Christ Carrying the Cross. This visual "temple" merges the sacred and the human—through the central Eucharistic bread; animals beneath the table; theatrical gestures.



Death of Aquinas in 1274, laid at the foot of the altar, surrounded by his Dominican brothers. Aquinas chose to die not as a scholar but as a servant of faith. Image taken from the Monks' corridor at the convent.



Saint Thomas Aquinas receives divine light, gazing toward the crucified Christ

San Paolo Maggiore was founded atop the ruins of a Roman temple and became the first Theatine church in Naples in 1538. The Theatines, modelled after the apostles, sought a return to early Christian rigor—focusing not on education but on personal spiritual renewal. The church’s layered identity—from ancient columns to Solimena’s dynamic frescoes—reflects the Order’s mission: fusing apostolic purity with Counter-Reformation splendour.



1730, Santolo Cirillo: Purification of the Temple. Christ drives out the merchants in a theatrical vision of sacred reform—echoing the Theatines’ mission to restore the Church to apostolic purity. Counter-façade



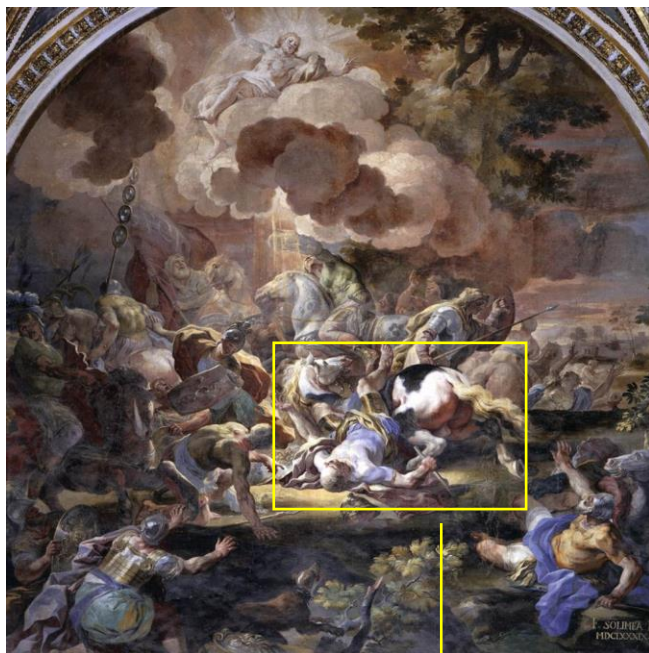
Vincenzo Forli: Burial of Saint Andrew Avellino



Corinthian columns



1498, Francesco Cicino da Caiazzo: Madonna and Child.



Solimena, 1689, Conversion of St Paul



Solimena, 1689: Fall of Simon Magus



Side stairway



Solimena’s Dynamism in the falling horses became standard model for Da Vinci’s Battle of Anghiari.



Solimena: St Cajetan 1480-1547- Italian Catholic priest, religious reformer, who helped found the Theatines.

Franciscan Gothic church begun in 1270 under Charles of Anjou, while St. Francis was still alive. Its wide-open nave was designed for preaching, with no visual hierarchy between clergy and laity. Height, light, and bare stone create a vertical drama—amplifying the spoken word and fostering communal focus.



Niccolò de Simone: **Cacace chapel**



**1323, Tomb of Catharine of Austria:** Twisted columns carried by lions; Relief of St Francis receiving the stigmata.



Apse with arches in Gothic in Baroque manner architecture. Framed: Francis of Assisi.



**1300, Montano d' Arezzo:** Right: Nativity. Left: sleep of the Virgin. Annunciation Chapel.



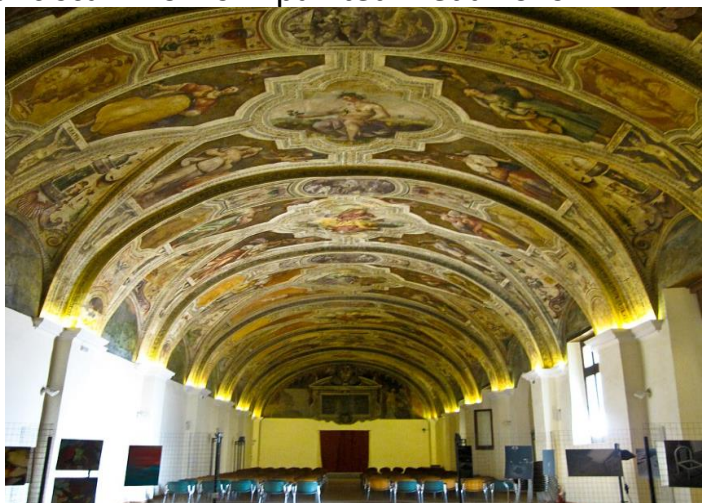
**Chapter house:** Gothic ribs and grotesques frame a ceiling of allegories; the walls are lined with portraits of Franciscan monks in painted medallions.



**St. Francis Receives the Stigmata**  
A seraphim appears to Francis, transmitting Christ's wounds as signs of divine union.  
**Behind the choir.**



School of Cavallini, 14th century: "Scenes from the Life of the Virgin." From bottom: Birth of Mary; Marriage of Mary; Nativity of Christ. Columns with colorful spiral decoration—Sicilian-Norman influence; Pointed ribbed vaults—Gothic. **Behind the choir.**



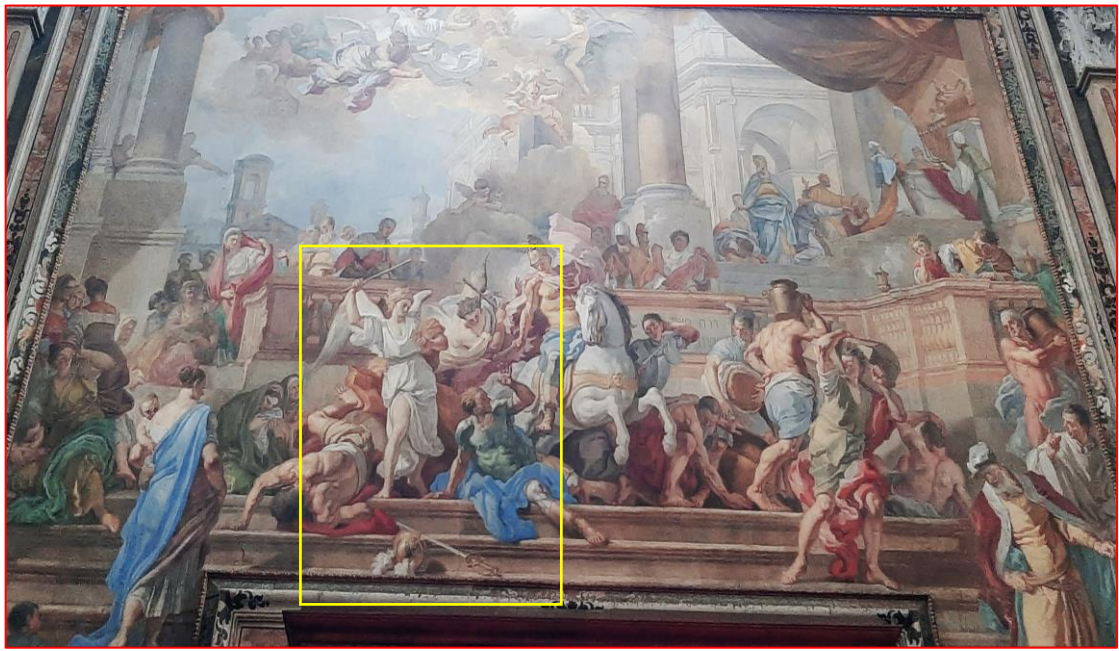
**Hall of Sixtus V:** vaulted ceiling with allegorical and theological scenes.



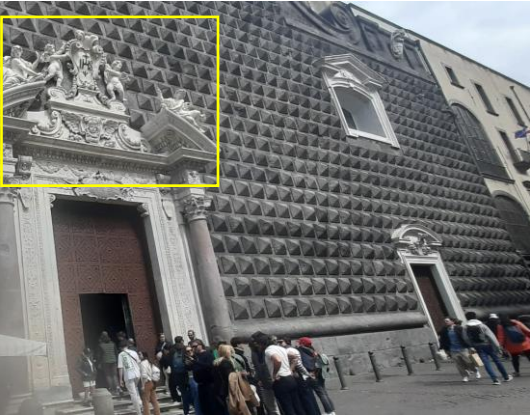
Annunciation: **Behind the choir.**

**From Noble Palace to Jesuit Stronghold**

Originally built in early 14<sup>th</sup> century, by Robert of Anjou, transformed in 1470 into a Renaissance palace; acquired in 1584 by the Jesuits who preserved the palace's distinctive rusticated façade while transforming the interior into a monumental Baroque church. In doing so, they redefined civic power as spiritual authority—appropriating aristocratic architecture to serve the Counter-Reformation message that true greatness now lay not in noble lineage, but in faith. Instead of ballrooms and secular emblems, lavish side chapels were erected—creating a model later adopted by Jesuit churches across Europe



**Solimena, 1725:** "Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple of Jerusalem: Sent by Seleucus IV to seize the Temple Treasures. He was Expelled by a horseman. **Counter façade.**



**1470, fort like Façade.**



St. Francis Xavier before the Virgin Mary. **Chapel of Xavier**



Girolamo, 1602: "Nativity"  
**Chapel of the Nativity**



**Azzolino, 1619:** "Ecstasy of St. Borromeo": Bishop of Milan: 1564-84. counter reformation leader. **Altarpiece.**



**17<sup>th</sup>. C.:** "Spire of the Immaculate Virgin".



**Corenzio, 1637:** "Miracles of St. Xavier". Xavier: Missionary in India, embodies this global vision of evangelization, together with St. Therese.

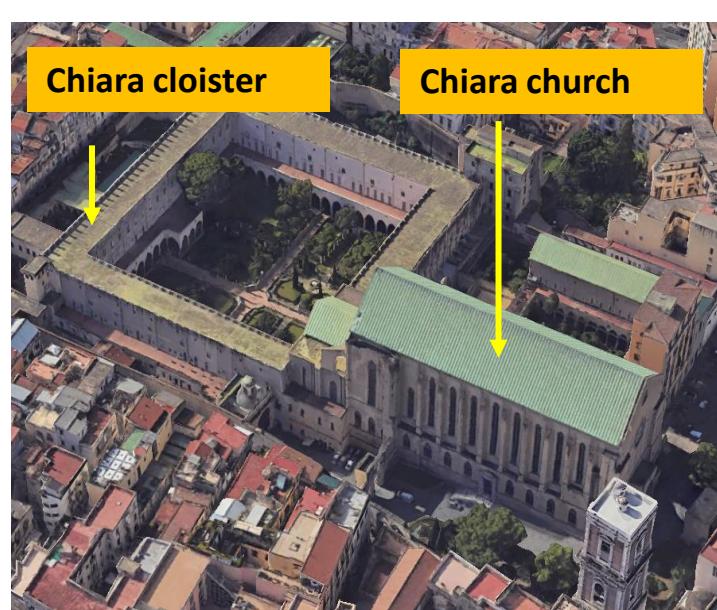
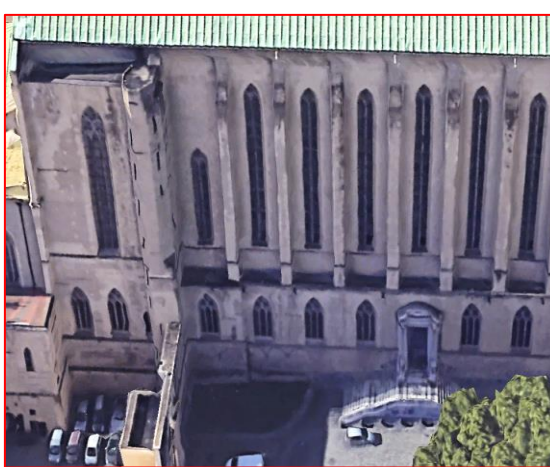


**Giordano, 1690:** "St. Francis Xavier loaded with crosses".  
**Chapel of St. Xavier**



**Political and Architectural Message**

Santa Chiara was built between 1313 and 1340 by Robert of Anjou to serve as the burial church of the Angevin dynasty and to publicly express their identification with Franciscan values—humility, reason, and religious reform. Unlike the soaring Gothic of San Lorenzo or the theatrical Baroque of Gesù Nuovo, Santa Chiara features a balanced, horizontal layout with restrained and unornamented architecture. This formal simplicity reflects the ideals of Clare of Assisi (1194–1253), founder of the Poor Ladies and author of their rule, which emphasized poverty, prayer, and detachment from courtly luxury—paradoxically adopted here by a royal dynasty to assert its pious legitimacy.



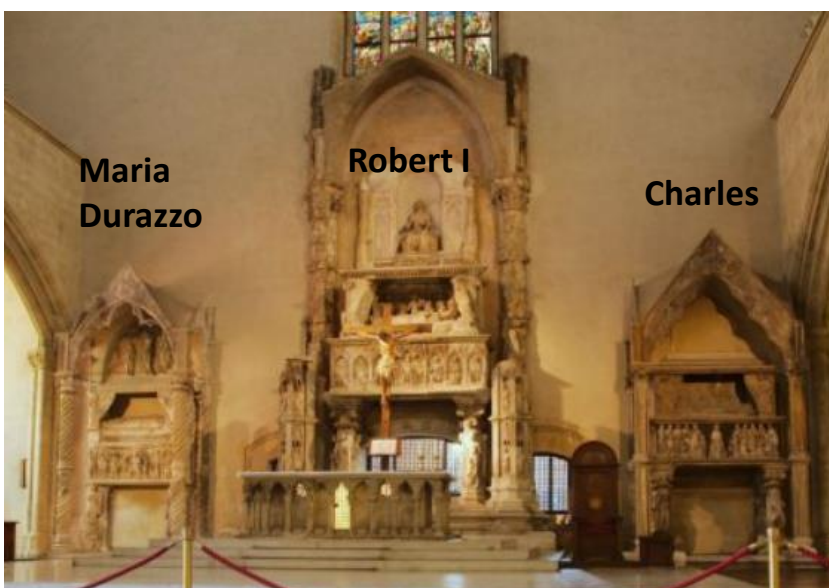
Tomb of Drugo Merloto, Last Templar in Naples to die in 1339.



Sarcophagus of a noble woman



Tomb of Merloto: his dog under his feet.



Maria Durazzo

Robert I

Charles



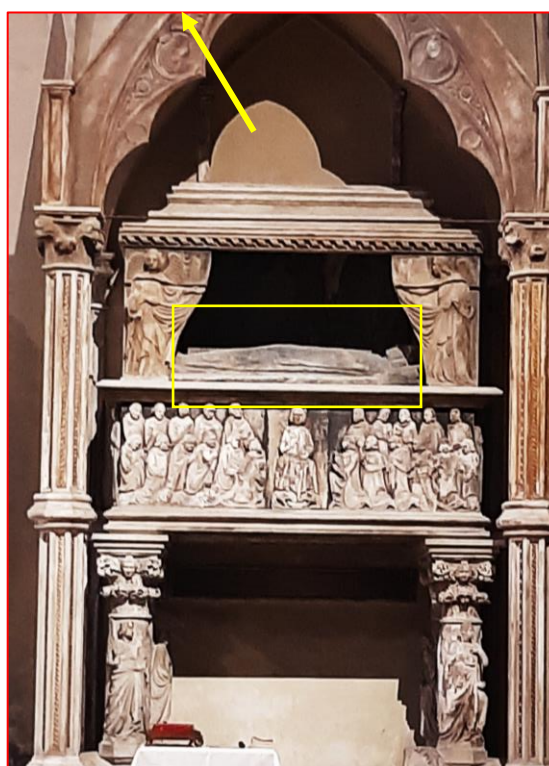
Tomb of Cabano "the Ethiopian", a liberated black slave who became a knight in 1320.



Tomb of **Maria di Durazzo**, daughter of Charles II, died in 1323.



Tomb of **Robert I** – "the wise" – of Anjou, king of Naples 1309-1343.



Tomb of Charles II, father of Robert. Died in 1309. Brought here after the church was completed.



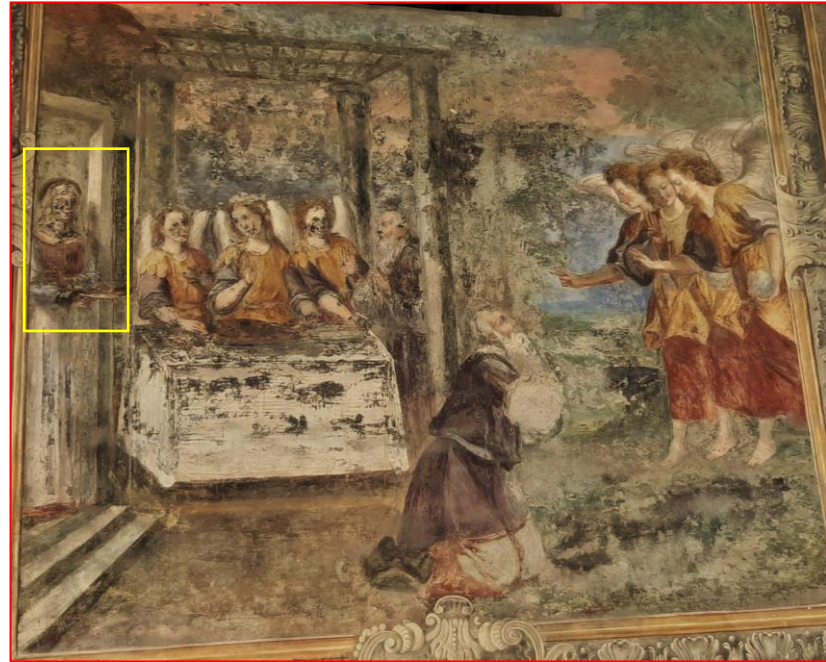
Robert I of Anjou,.



Charles of Anjou,.

**Decorative and Feminine Space**

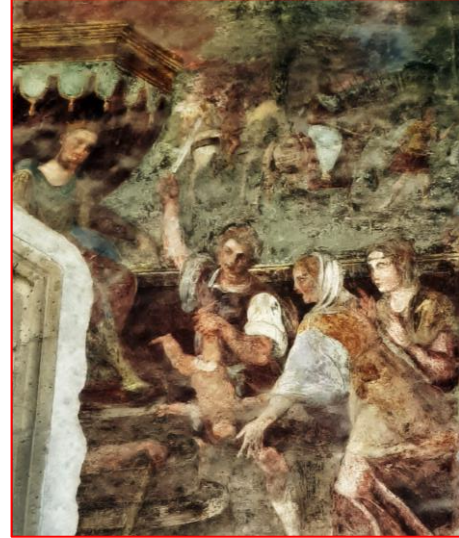
Commissioned in 1310 by King Robert of Anjou and Queen Sancha, Santa Chiara was built in Gothic style as both a Franciscan convent and a royal mausoleum. It houses the tombs of Charles II of Anjou (d. 1309) and his son Robert I (d. 1343), reaffirming its role as the dynastic sanctuary of the Angevin rulers. Under Spanish rule, the cloister was reshaped in Renaissance form. In 1742, the nuns of Saint Clare added Rococo majolica tiles—scenes of gardens and daily life—expressing feminine Franciscan ideals through color and geometry. Along the portico walls, 14th-century frescoes narrate the lives of Saint Francis and Saint Clare, reinforcing the cloister as a space of royal legacy.



3 angels announcing Abraham he is to become a father: Sara Giggling...



Christ and kid Santa Chiara.



Judgment of Solomon.



Majolica glazed octagonal columns.



Soldiers giving food to an old man, poorly dressed.



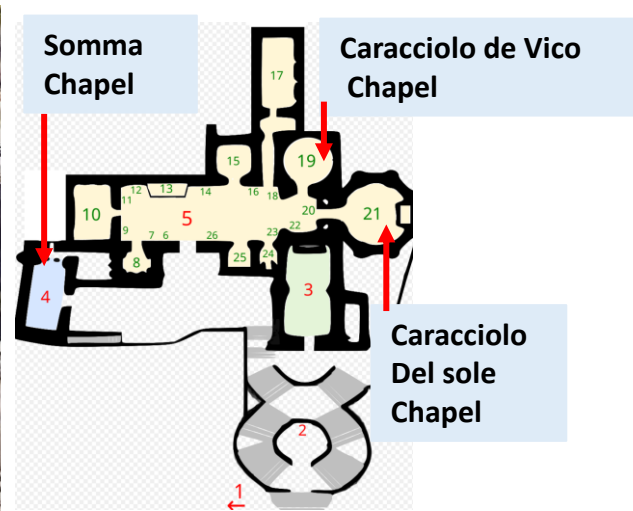
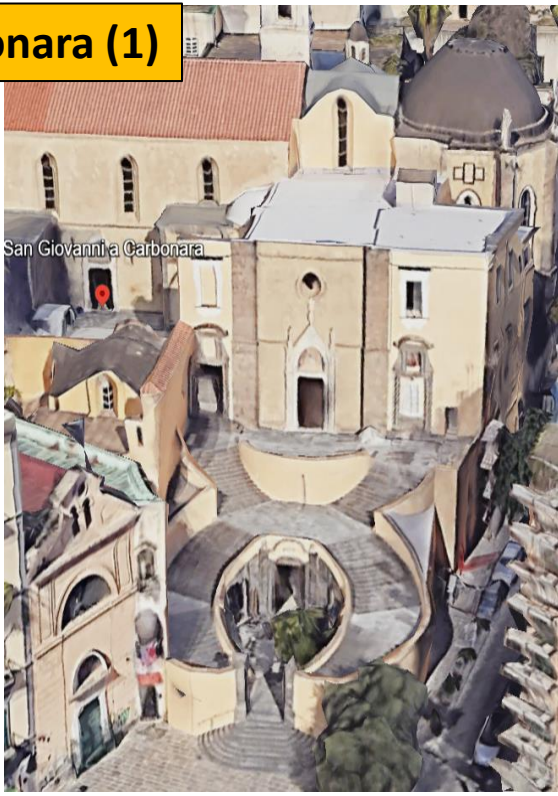
St Francis in the Cloister of Santa Chiara.



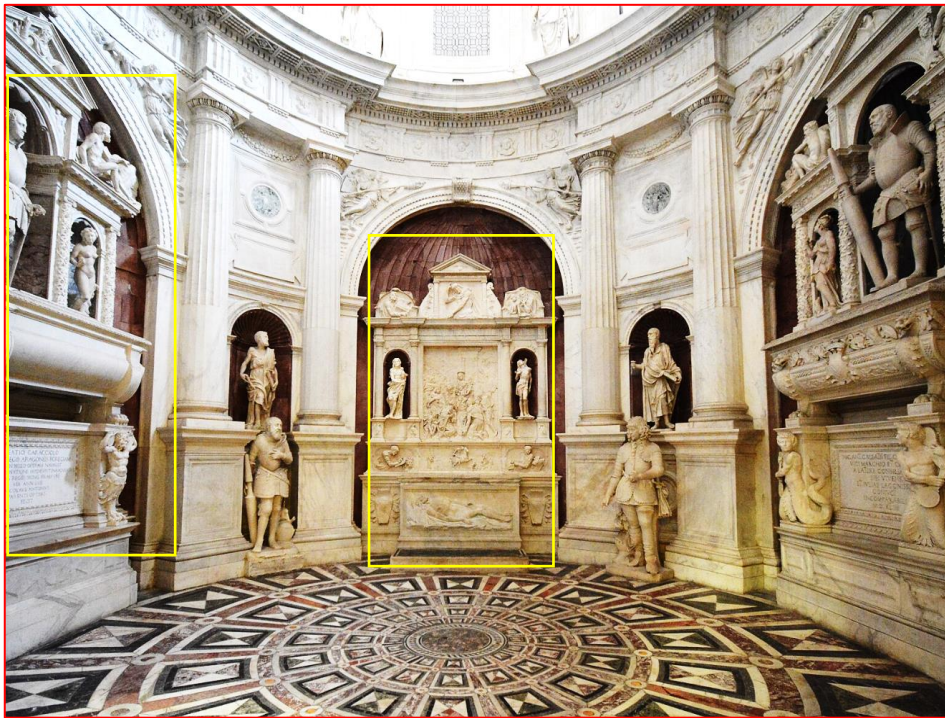
**Power, Memory, and the End of a Dynasty**

San Giovanni a Carbonara was founded in 1340 by the Augustinians but gained dynastic significance under the last Angevin rulers. King Ladislaus transformed it into a royal sanctuary and was buried here in 1414; after his death, his sister, Queen Joanna II, commissioned his monumental tomb—a statement of royal presence at a time of political decline. She too was buried in the church, without heirs. The site thus became a kind of political testament, marking the final assertion of Angevin legacy in Naples.

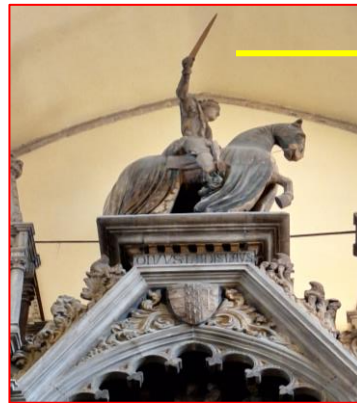
The noble Caracciolo family—though not royal—sought proximity to power by funding two elaborate chapels in the late 15th and 16th centuries.



1707, Ferdinando Sanfelice: stairs to access the entrance of the church



1573, Antony Caracciolo, **Caracciolo de Vico Chapel**



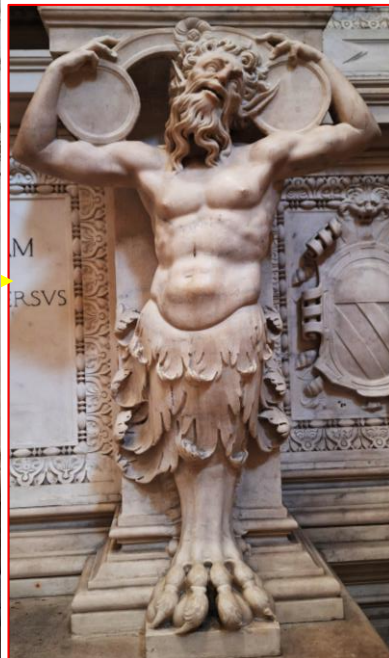
Caracciolo 1414: King Ladislaus di Durazzo Gothic style monument, with 4 virtues to support of King Ladislao and his sister Giovanna enthroned. **Caracciolo del Sole Chapel**



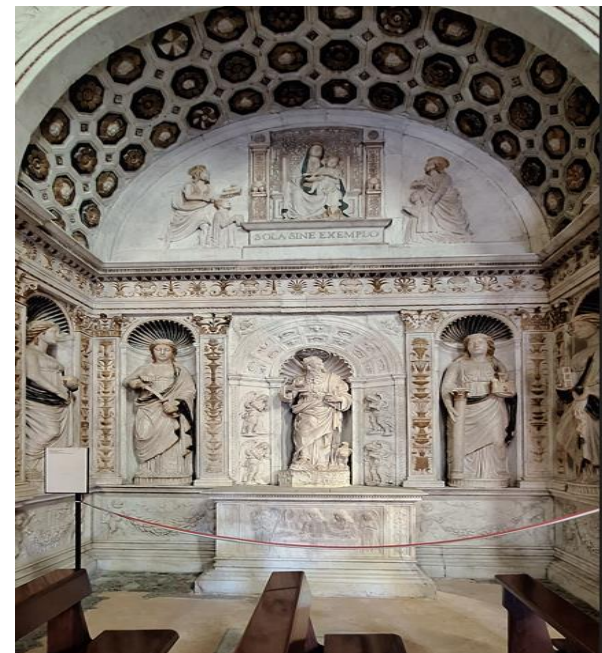
1516, De Siloé Ordoñez: Antony Caracciolo, tomb (At the center). **Caracciolo de Vico Chapel**



1557, Caccavello: tomb of Galeazzo Caracciolo (Left) **Caracciolo de Vico Chapel**



Caccavello, 1557: Satyr **Caracciolo de Vico Chapel**



Malvito and Jacopo della Pila: **Miroballo altar.**



**Somma chapel**

The **Somma Chapel** reflects the ambitions of a Neapolitan noble family during the Bourbon rule. It was refurbished in the 1740s by Francesco Maria Somma — a senior lawyer and legal advisor to the royal court — who commissioned the frescoes by Francesco de Mura. The chapel contains the earlier tomb of Scipione Somma (d. 1605), sculpted by Annibale Caccavello in the 16th century. Around this existing burial, Francesco redesigned the space as a visual narrative, emphasizing divine purpose and dynastic continuity. The choice of themes and of the artist expressed the social status of the patron: not a traditional aristocrat, but a representative of the new, educated elite who gained proximity to power through learning, wealth, and prestige.



1605, Scipione's monument; 1740, Francesco Somma commussuond the Frescoes fro De Mura.



De Mura Wedding of Virgin Mary and St. Joseph



1605, Caccavello : Scipione Funeral Monument.



1570: Mannerist Painter Jesus in purple robe



De Mura: Adoration of the Shepherds .



De Mura: Nativity adoration Mary



De Mura:Crowning with thorns: Pain turns into spectacle.



1570, De Mura : Jesus among the Doctors, debating in the Temple..



1570, De Mura : Mary and Elizabeth meet with expressive gestures.



1570: Annunciation. Golden lion-legged table emphasizes Baroque grandeur.



Arresting Jesus in Gethsemane

**Caracciolo del Sole Chapel (c. 1427):**  
 Commissioned by Sergianni Caracciolo, this chapel fused dynastic ambition with Franciscan ideals. The 1430s frescoes by Leonardo da Besozzo and others show Christ's Passion and anchorite (figures of extreme devotion), withdraws from secular society)—framing Caracciolo's tomb. It's a rare early blend of noble burial, spiritual asceticism, and International Gothic style, shaping Naples' model for painted chapels.



1432, Andrea da Firenze statues knees



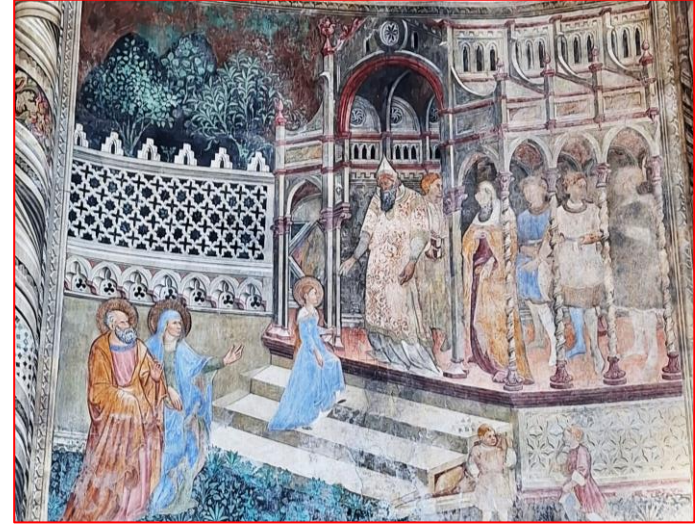
1432, Andrea da Firenze: tomb of Caracciolo.



1438, Besozzo: Virgin Mary's Coronation



1438, Besozzo: Virgin Mary's Birth



1438, Besozzo: "Virgin Mary at the Temple"



Anchorites copying sacred texts



Monk repels the devil with his pilgrim staff



1438, Benevento: Bricklayer anchorites. Hermits building a monastic community—manual labor as spiritual devotion in the Franciscan ideal.



1438, Besozzo: Dormition of the Virgin: Surrounded by apostles and angels, Mary lies in repose while Christ receives her soul.

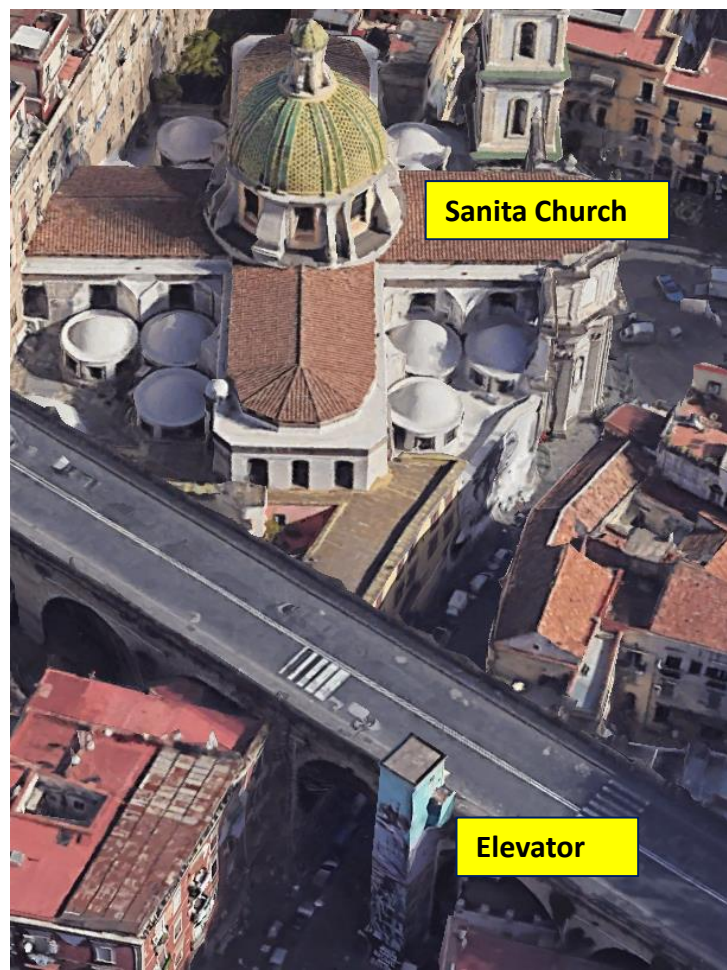


Leonardo da Besozzo, Annunciation, 1438 – A theatrical Gothic vision of the sacred message, set within an imagined palace.

Catacomb of San Gaudioso

**St. Gaudiosus**, a 5th-century bishop exiled from Tunisia after refusing to recognize Arianism, brought the *Rule of St. Augustine* to Naples shortly before his death in 451. This strict monastic code, formulated around 400 CE, demanded communal living, strict discipline, and withdrawal from the world in favour of humility and prayer. He was buried here, and his tomb became a site of early Christian devotion merged with later Neapolitan ritual. Painted saints, frescos, and embedded skulls of nobles reflect a unique fusion of monastic ideals, saintly veneration, and Baroque theatricality.

**\*Taking Pictures is forbidden.**  
Pictures taken from Wikimedia Commons.



Actual bone Burial.



Skeleton standing over earthly symbols of power—crown, scepter, and hourglass on a book—passage of time.



5<sup>th</sup> century AD: A woman kneeling beside an African oil lamp, as an angel leads her soul toward Christ.



17 C., Balducci: Santa Caterina da Siena. Bleeding stigmata and crown of thorns reflect her mystic union with Christ.



**Mixed Noble Burial – Couple Holding Hands**

Real skeletons with painted clothing create a theatrical image of a noble couple united in death, symbolize eternal partnership



Figure in judicial robes, possibly once holding scales or a staff.



Women Burial.

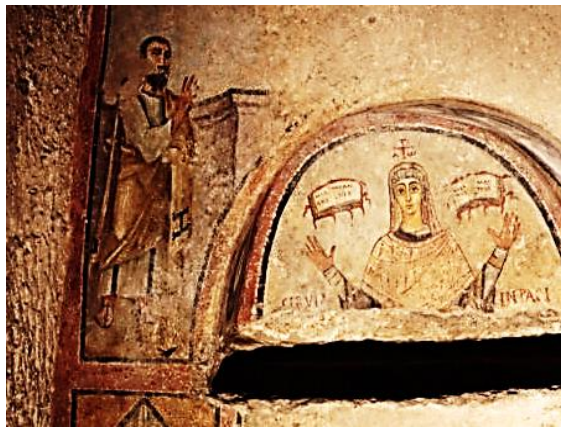


Burial of Balducci – the frescoes' Painter.

\* photography on-site is prohibited. Photos from Wikimedia Commons—

### From Quarry to Cathedral

What began as a Greek quarry became Naples' earliest Christian sanctuary. Hewn from soft tuff, the catacombs served not only as burial grounds but also as a refuge during times of persecution. They reflect the city's transition from pagan Rome to Christianity, with symbols of Christ alongside Greco-Roman imagery—evidence of a blended spiritual identity. By the 5th century, the tomb of San Gennaro transformed the site into Naples' first cathedral. Byzantine frescoes and noble burials point to a lasting continuity of faith, merging Eastern artistic traditions, Christian devotion, and local elite presence from Late Antiquity through the Baroque



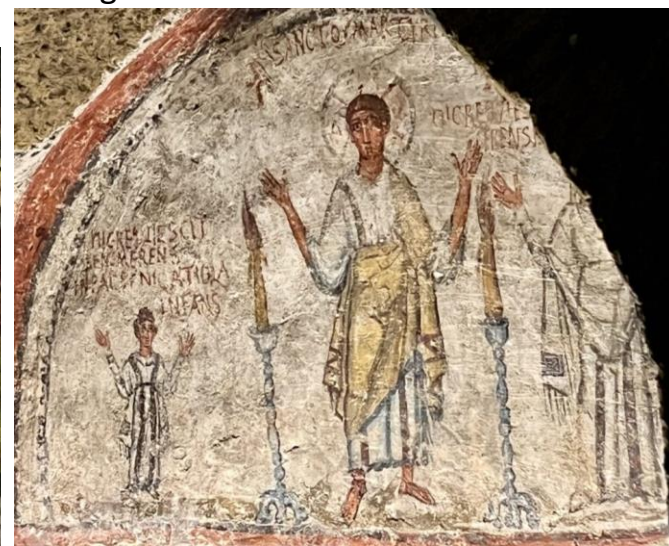
Cerula, 5th c: A rare depiction of a woman in prayer between open Gospels—possibly with liturgical role. Flanked by Peter and Paul



6th C: Family Theotecnus: Repainted after the death of each family member.; Names and ages beside their heads.



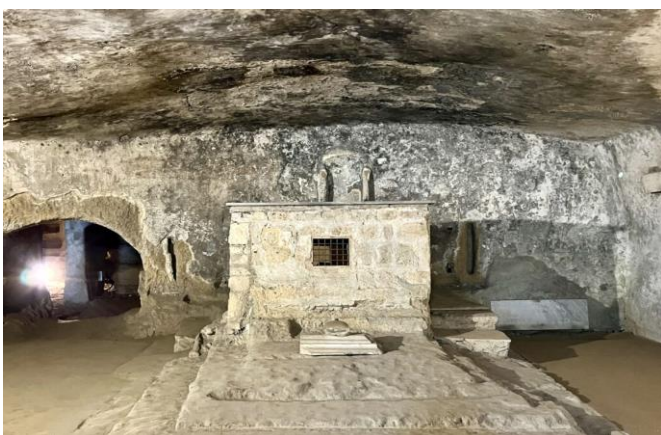
Oldest Portrait of youthful, beardless figure of San Gennaro.



Early 6th c.: A priest celebrates the Eucharist—one of the oldest images of Christian liturgy.



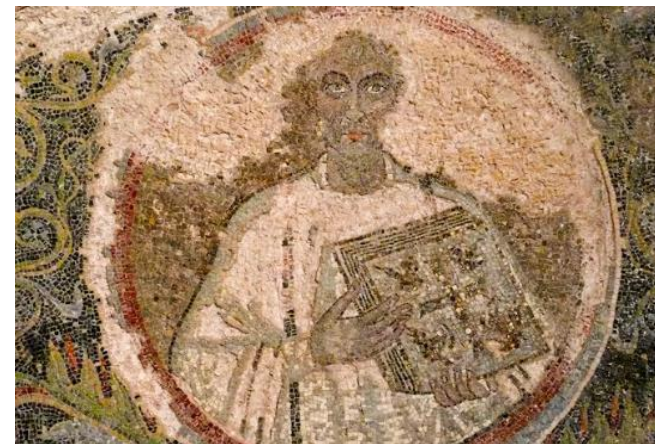
Catacomb Cathedral; People were baptized in the catacombs.



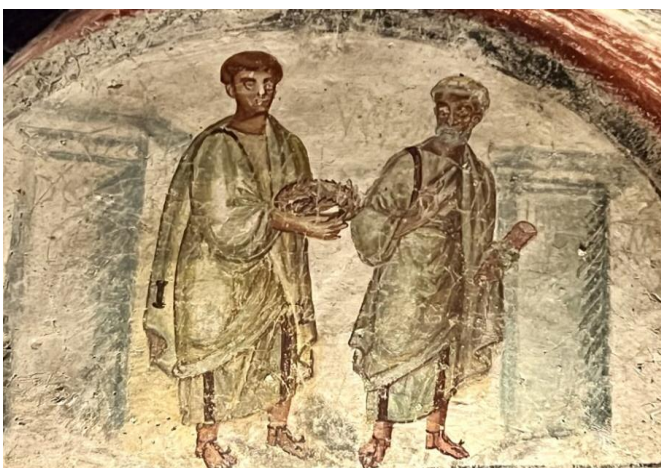
Basilica of Sant' Agrippino: Saint patron before Gennaro: 3rd C; Bishop of Naples.



766: Baptismal font



450 AD: Marytr's Crypt, Quodvultdeus, Bishop of Carthage, exiled from Carthage by the Vandals to Naples.



Saint Peter and Gennaro at the doors of Paradise.



Plant of the Vine fresco: Pagan symbols, was adopted by Christian to represent Christianity.



4th C: Peacock was sacred to Hera; Symbolized spring awakening and the immortality of the soul.