



RIVIERA DI RIMINI

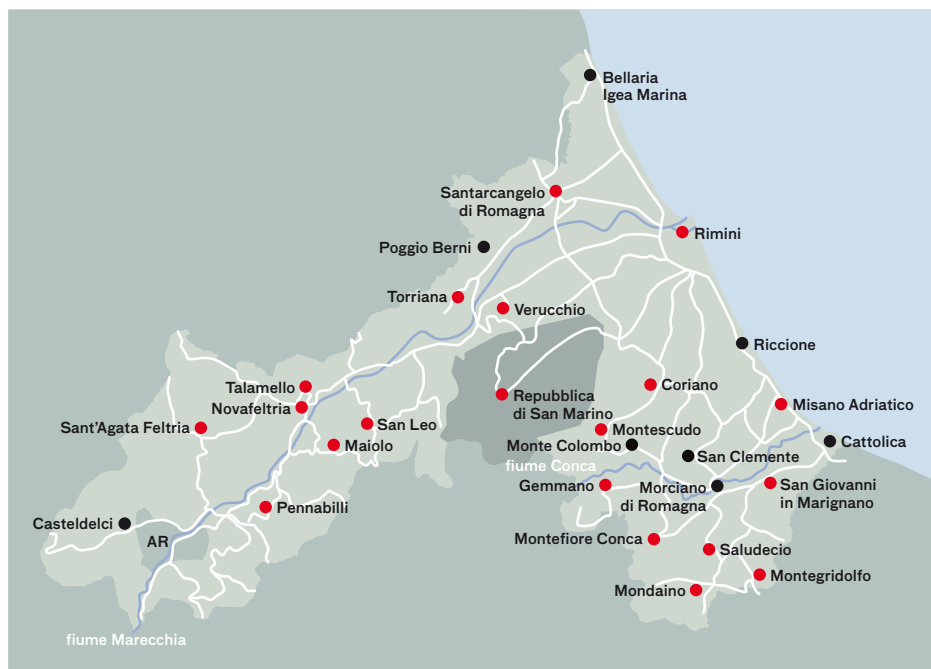


PLACES OF THE SPIRIT IN THE RIMINI AREA

travel notes



Main places of interest and itineraries



- **Coriano**
 - Convent and Institute of the Maestre Pie
- **Gemmano**
 - Sanctuary of the Madonna di Carbonegno
- **Maiolo**
 - Church of Santa Maria d'Antico
- **Misano Adriatico**
 - Church of the Immacolata Concezione
- **Mondaino**
 - Convent of the Clarisse
- **Montefiore Conca**
 - Sanctuary of the Madonna of Bonora
 - Church of San Paolo
 - Church of the Ospedale della Misericordia
- **Montegridolfo**
 - Trebbio, Sanctuary of the Beata Vergine delle Grazie
 - Church of San Rocco
- **Montescudo**
 - Sanctuary of Valliano
 - Trarivi, former Benedictine Abbey
- **Novafeltria**
 - Oratory of Santa Marina
- **Pennabilli**
 - Cathedral of San Pio V
 - Sanctuary of Santa Maria delle Grazie
 - Ponte Messa, Parish church of San Pietro in Messa
 - Maciano, Church of Santa Maria dell'Olive
- **Rimini**
 - Malatesta Temple
 - Church of San Giuliano
 - Church of San Giovanni Battista
 - Church of San Fortunato (Santa Maria di Scolca)
 - Sanctuary of the Madonna delle Grazie
 - Church of San Giovanni Evangelista (Sant'Agostino)
 - Church of Santa Maria dei Servi
 - Church of the Madonna della Colonnella
- Sanctuary of Santa Maria della Misericordia (Santa Chiara)
- Small temple of Sant'Antonio
- **Saludecio**
 - Church of San Girolamo
 - Sanctuary of the Madonna del Monte
 - Sanctuary and Museum of the Blessed Amato
- **San Giovanni in Marignano**
 - Church of Santa Lucia
 - Church of San Pietro
- **San Leo**
 - Cathedral
 - Parish church of Santa Maria Assunta
 - Monastery of Sant'Igna
- **San Marino**
 - Basilica of the saint
 - Borgo Maggiore, Church of the Beata Vergine
 - Valdragone, Sanctuary of Santa Maria
- **Sant'Agata Feltria**
 - Church of San Francesco della Rosa
 - Church of the Madonna di Romagnano
 - Church and Monastery of San Girolamo
- **Santarcangelo di Romagna**
 - Parish church of San Michele Arcangelo
 - Monastery of the Capuchins
 - San Vito, Sanctuary of the Madonna di Casale
 - Collegiate church
 - Convent and Church of Sante Caterina e Barbara
- **Talamello**
 - Church of San Lorenzo
 - The cell
- **Torriana**
 - Saiano, Sanctuary of the Beata Vergine del Carmine
- **Verucchio**
 - Collegiate church
 - Villa Verucchio, Monastery of San Francesco
 - Parish church of San Martino

Places of the spirit
in the Rimini area

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INTRODUCTION

Until fairly recently, for most people Rimini meant seaside tourism and seaside tourism alone - it meant sea, sand, sun and entertainment.

Many of those people now know that inland of the coast, sometimes just a few kilometres from the beach, there is a land rich in ancient settlements, history, culture, nature and places of spirituality.

Indeed, there are also numerous places of spirituality where religion - that has created a diffused civilization and is deeply-rooted here - has left behind a varied web of sites that bear witness to this; places where nature in its most genuine form can herald charm and fascination and a desire for prayer and contemplation.

Our journey accompanies visitors to some of the best-known holy sites and those where devotion is most strongly felt in the territories of Rimini and the Montefeltro; cathedrals and monasteries, sanctuaries and oratories, small country churches and tiny votive cells are all places around which popular devotion has led to the organisation of occasions for people to unite and celebrate, eating and drinking together, dancing and having fun. They show the devotion to Mother Earth and its Creator and to all holy men who have been His mouthpiece and witness.

CHAPTER I

THE DIOCESES

OF THE

TERRITORY

The territory of the Province of Rimini extends into the Marecchia and Conca Valleys and includes the diocese of **Rimini** and part of the diocese of Montefeltro, which in 1977 officially adopted the name of **San Marino-Montefeltro** as it includes not only the Marecchia Valley, but also part of the Conca Valley and the Foglia Valley and the entire Republic of San Marino, which has never had a stable Episcopal see in its territory for fear of interference with its government.

Both dioceses have ancient origins; the first Bishop of Rimini about whom there is documentary evidence was Sternio (in 313) and the first Bishop of the diocese of San Marino-Montefeltro was Agatone (in 826).

Evangelization of the entire region seems to have begun thanks to St Marino and St Leo in the 4th century, but may date to even earlier, at least in the area nearer the sea that was open to influences from the Orient due to the port of Rimini; an important and bustling port in the late Imperial period.

In 359, Rimini hosted a council (known as the Council of Rimini) convened by Emperor Constantius II to define the nature of Jesus, a question that saw the Aryan east opposed to the Catholic west and that inflamed strong conflicts within the Church and the Empire.

The council was never formally acknowledged by the Church, but was held regularly in Rimini and in Seleucia, attracting over 400 Bishops and their entourages to Rimini for several months; proof that even then, as well as having suitable religious buildings and accommodation facilities, the city at least had largely been Christianized.

1. The diocese of Rimini

As part of a complex reorganisation of the region's metropolitan sees and suffragan dioceses, the diocese of Rimini was subjected to the see of Ravenna in 1604 and remains under its authority to this day.

In 1777, Pope Pius VI (from Cesena) seconded nine parishes to his diocese of origin and 200 years later, in 1977, Pope Paul VI added four parishes (Serravalle, Dogana, Faetano and Falciano) to the diocese of San Marino-Montefeltro, at the same time assigning some territory in the municipality of Sogliano al Rubicone to the diocese of Rimini.

In 1809, the Cathedral of Santa Colomba became the Church of San Francesco, now known as the Malatesta Temple.

Pope Ganganelli (Clement XIV, 1769-1774) was born in the diocese in Santarcangelo di Romagna on 31 October 1705 and cardinals



born here include Giuseppe Garampi (1725-1792), responsible for the modern structuring of the Vatican Secret Archives.

The diocese covers two regions - Emilia Romagna and the Marche - and three provinces - Rimini, Forlì-Cesena and Pesaro-Urbino. It comprises 28 municipalities, of which 20 in the Province of Rimini, 5 in the Province of Forlì-Cesena and 3 in the Province of Pesaro-Urbino and 115 parishes, of which 99 in the Province of Rimini, 13 in the Province of Forlì-Cesena and 3 in the Province of Pesaro-Urbino.

The seminary in the diocese of Rimini is named after Father Oreste Benzi; born on 7 September 1925 in San Clemente he was the seventh of nine children and entered the seminary in 1937 at the age of 12, finally being ordained on 29 June 1949.

From 1954 to 1969 Father Oreste was the spiritual leader for young people at the minor seminary of Rimini and deputy-assistant for the local Catholic Youth movement.

In 1968, along with a group of young people and other clergymen, he founded the Community of Pope John XXIII Association, a religious group that is very active in Italy and in numerous countries worldwide. Father Oreste passed away on 2 November 2007.

2. The diocese of San Marino-Montefeltro

According to historians its origins appear to date back to the 7th century, although it is first mentioned in the 10th century when the name "Montefeltro", referring specifically to the diocese, appears in documents and there is evidence of a bishop called "Agato" who took part in the Council of Rome in 826. Its first historic and monumental see was the fortress of San Leo, known as "Mons Feretrius" and hence "Montefeltro". On 7 July 977, Pope Gregory V subjected the Episcopate of Montefeltro to the Church of Ravenna. For political reasons, in 1050 Pope Leo IX took metropolitan jurisdiction of Montefeltro away from the Archbishop of Ravenna but following a series of political events, the diocese was reintegrated to the metropolitan see of Ravenna, then subjected to the Holy See of Rome. In 1563 Pope Pius IV, with the consent of Massari, Bishop of Montefeltro, allocated the diocese to the metropolitan see of Urbino, founded just a month earlier. Again for political reasons, from the

second half of the 13th century on the bishops serving the Montefeltro were forced to abandon San Leo and find shelter in other towns in the region, such as San Marino, Talamello, Macerata Feltria, Valle Sant'Anastasio, Montetassi and Pennabilli. In 1569, following pressure from Duke Guidobaldo of Urbino, Bishop Giovanni Francesco Sormani was forced to transfer the Episcopal see, the chapter of the Canons and the seminary in the process of being set up from San Leo to Pennabilli; a transfer ratified in a Papal Bull issued by Gregory XIII in 1572. In 1977, a decree issued by Pope Paul VI gave the diocese a new territorial configuration and its new name - the diocese of San Marino-Montefeltro - which is still in use, separating it from the metropolitan jurisdiction of Urbino and subjecting it once again to that of Ravenna.

It is called the diocese of San Marino-Montefeltro as it includes the territories of two countries; Italy and the Republic of San Marino. It comprises 13 municipalities in the Province of Pesaro-Urbino, 7 in the Province of Rimini and 9 so-called "castles" in the Republic of San Marino and 81 parishes - 31 in Emilia Romagna, 38 in the Marche and 12 in the Republic of San Marino.



CHAPTER II
**THE
CATHEDRAL
OF THE
DIOCESE
OF
RIMINI**

Without doubt, the first church to visit in Rimini is the mother of all the other churches in the diocese, the church that is also the Episcopal cathedral.

It is the **Malatesta Temple**.

Everyone is aware of the importance of this building, a milestone of early Renaissance architecture. It was built by Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, lord of the city, who between 1446 and 1460 commissioned Leon Battista Alberti to extend and “update” an old Franciscan church dedicated to St Francis (although it was of Benedictine origin and dedicated to Our Lady) and transform it into “his” church, in which his forefathers, his courtiers, his captains and he and his family could be buried.

In other words, it was supposed to become a kind of dynastic mausoleum and at the same time the “church of the Prince”, built sparing no expense in order to exceed the beauty of ancient buildings. As the court intellectuals (and in particular Leon Battista Alberti) claimed, it was intended to express a high concept of piety, in other words it should have been dedicated to God or to “Divinity” alone.

This is why all the traditional images of virgins and saints so dear to popular religion disappeared, replaced by chapels dedicated to angelic powers and others that exalted the beauty of the firmament and the liberal arts, that evoked the prophecies of the ancient Sibyls and prophets and in which the theological and cardinal virtues and the great doctors of the Church (or “intellectual” saints) were exalted.

1. The Malatesta Temple and its learned and ancient piety

It seems that everything recalls a learned, pure and ancient piety, made more attractive thanks to architectural and sculptural forms borrowed from the past. However, it is without doubt elitist and contaminated by the self-esteem of the commissioner, who did not hesitate to put his name and coats of arms everywhere.

A masterpiece of Humanism, the temple is a treasure chest that houses magnificent works of art by Agostino di Duccio, Piero della Francesca and Matteo de’ Pasti and is doubtless, more the fruit of the ambition and pride of Sigismondo than the fruit of his sincere devotion.

In fact, it provided Pope Pius II with the pretext to make unjustified accusations of Paganism against Sigismondo and this, along with many others, led to the excommunication and defeat of the lord of Rimini, interruption of work on the temple and the disintegration of the group of courtesans, humanists and artists that had been the pride of the Malatesta court.



The building is clearly incomplete and at first sight the inside may appear like a huge empty space; it takes some time and closer inspection of its sculptural cycles to grasp its beauty and wealth of spiritual meanings, often misinterpreted given its notoriety as a heretical, pagan or even “erotic” building (due to a presumed dedication to Isotta degli Atti, first lover and then third wife of Sigismondo), a claim supported by often inferior-quality, Romantic literature subsequently adopted by popular publications.

Two pieces in the Malatesta Temple, dating from prior to the renovation commissioned by Sigismondo and always held in great esteem, are worth seeing in particular; firstly, the apse which houses a Crucifix painted on a wood panel by Giotto at the end of the 13th century that shows an extremely realistic image of great humanity and secondly, the first chapel to the left which houses a small alabaster statue of the Pietà, a German piece dating from the early 15th century and venerated as “Our Lady of the Water”. Locals living in Rimini and the neighbouring countryside pray to this statue at times of scarce or excessive rainfall.

The temple was invested with the title of basilica in 2002 and has been the cathedral of the diocese of Rimini since 1809.

Since then it has been dedicated to St Colomba, as was the early and extremely old cathedral that underwent considerable renovation work and after having been used as barracks by Napoleon, was demolished in the early 19th century.

CHAPTER III
**THE
CATHEDRALS
OF THE
DIOCESE
OF
SAN MARINO-
MONTEFELTRO**

The situation concerning the diocese of San Marino-Montefeltro is fairly complicated, firstly because it has three cathedrals.

The ancient cathedral church is in **San Leo** and it was flanked (but not replaced) in 1577 by a new cathedral in **Pennabilli**.

In addition to these, there is another “co-cathedral”, the basilica of **San Marino**. The current Episcopal see is Pennabilli.

The reason for this situation lies in the history of the territory, which was once divided into small seignories that were always fighting their neighbours and each other - a rivalry that has had parochial repercussions to the present day.

For centuries, the Bishop of Montefeltro was unable to maintain a stable see and moved from San Leo to Valle Sant'Anastasio (now in the Republic of San Marino), Talamello, Macerata Feltria and Pennabilli.

The bishop was finally driven out of his historical see - San Leo - around 1570 by Duke Guidobaldo della Rovere who considered the presence of the bishop, the curia, a cathedral and a seminary in San Leo an obstacle to the defence of the state of Urbino.

1. San Leo: the oldest

The oldest Episcopal see and cathedral are those in San Leo. The town's **cathedral**, which is dedicated to **St Leone**, is imposing and magnificent and is flanked by a robust bell tower and an ancient and equally impressive urban **parish church** dedicated to **Santa Maria Assunta**.

This extremely interesting and beautiful architectural complex dates from the deepest and most picturesque Middle Ages; the parish church dates from the 11th century and the cathedral from the 12th-13th century. Both are imposing, but harmonious stone buildings of an austere Romanesque nature that incorporate earlier Roman and Romanesque elements. Inside they are extremely evocative and shrouded in a semi-darkness that favours prayer and meditation. The mystical atmosphere of the Middle Ages is particularly noticeable in the cathedral that is covered in a stone vault supported by large pillars and columns, some of which with salvaged Roman bases and capitals and has a raised presbytery above a typically Romanesque crypt.

Probably consecrated in 1173, although most certainly completed later, it is a huge sandstone building with a central nave and two side aisles. Although extensively renovated, it retains its original features and a solemn interior. The crypt houses the double-sloping stone lid of the sarcophagus in which the mortal remains of St Leone were laid to rest. According to tradition, the saint, a friend and colleague of St Marino, was ordained by St Gaudentius in Rimini in the late 3rd- early 4th century. Although not backed



by historical documentation, according to legend his body was removed by Emperor Henry II in 1014 and is now said to be in Voghenza in the Province of Ferrara. For over 600 years he lay in his stone sarcophagus in San Leo until the Germanic emperor, known as “the Pius one” due to his devotion, with the approval of Pope Benedict VII and in exchange for a defeat inflicted by the Emperor on the Greeks and Saracens near Rome, removed the remains of the saint to take them back to Speyer in his home country, Germany. During the journey however, near Ferrara his horses reared up and refused to go further forcing the Emperor to leave the glorious body there in a place that took the name of “San Leo di Voghenza”. He departed again saying “I, in my journey, wished to treat you honourably: live in the place you have chosen”. It is more probable that the sarcophagus containing the relics, still housed in the church of St Leo in Voghenza, was left there during one of the journeys that holy relics often undertook in the early Middle Ages as they were moved from towns and villages struck by natural calamities or plagues. However, in 1953 a relic of the saint was brought back to San Leo and can now be found in a silver urn, along with the lid of the sarcophagus that Henry II left in the cathedral. The building is perfectly “oriented”; it has east-facing apses like all ancient Christian buildings and for this reason the entrance is on the south side. Visitors who reach it from the square are rewarded with views of its three beautiful round apses topped by small arches and its solid walls marked with pilasters. On the opposite side to the entrance once stood the buildings of the Episcopal see and next to them a 32-metre high bell tower that is now isolated. It too dates from the 11th century and externally has the form of a tall quadrangular prism, although internally it is round. During restoration work carried out in 1973 parts of a ciborium and a pluteus dating from the late-8th century were recovered that had evidently belonged to a holy building previous to the current one. These extremely interesting sculpted pieces are now housed in the local Museum of Sacred Art.

2. San Marino and Pennabilli

The other two “**co-cathedrals**” date from different periods in history and are naturally extremely different.

The cathedral in **Pennabilli**, formerly the Church of San Bartolomeo and now the Cathedral of San Pio V, was commissioned by

Bishop Sormani in the 16th century. Seven years after it began, work was completed in 1584 and the church was consecrated in 1588. Its construction marked the transfer of the diocesan see from San Leo to Pennabilli. The façade, which overlooks Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, is more recent. In fact, it was created in 1914 using terracotta from Imola. The building recently underwent extensive consolidation and restoration work that returned it to its former glory. It houses various works of art, the attribution of some of which is uncertain.

Known as the parish church by locals, the cathedral in **San Marino** was renovated in 1838 in elegant and ornate neo-Classical style based on designs by the Bologna-born architect Antonio Serra, somewhat in contrast with the city's mediaeval style. The basilica, which stands on Piazzale Domus Plebis, is the main church of the city of San Marino and is dedicated to the patron saint of both the city and country. Given its importance, it is even on the 10 cent coin of the euro currency of San Marino. As early as the 4th century, a parish church dedicated to St Marino deacon stood on this same site, a fact confirmed by several documents dating from 530, 885 and 1113, the most important one because it was a deed of gift. By the early 19th century however it was in a terrible state and it was decided to build a new church. Work began in 1826 and was completed in 1838. It was inaugurated on 5 February 1838 and was promoted to the rank of minor basilica by Pope Pius XI on 21 July 1926. Inside it has a central nave and two side aisles separated by 16 Corinthian columns forming a grand semicircular ambulatory around the apse. The main altar features a statue of St Marino by Tadolini, a scholar of Canova. Some of the saint's relics, which were found on 3 March 1586, are located under the altar whilst other relics were donated on 28 January 1595 to the Island of Rab in Croatia, his birthplace. St Marino's skull is housed in the *Sacred Shrine*, a silver and gold reliquary bust that has been under the main altar since 1602. It is displayed to the public during important celebrations and processions. Between the basilica and the small adjacent church of St Peter, which according to tradition was the first oratory built by Marino in honour of St Peter, stands a bell tower, a solid building that dates from the Romanesque period, although it was renovated in the 16th century.



CHAPTER IV

THE PATRON

SAINTS

Although the first evangelists of the area are unknown, according to an ancient hagiographic tradition this honour goes to St Gaudentius of Ephesus, thought to be the first Bishop of Rimini and linked to the Council of Rimini held in 359.

In addition, there are the legends regarding two saints, Marino and Leone, considered the first real evangelists of Rimini and the Montefeltro area.

It is said that St Gaudentius arrived in Rimini when Marino and Leone had already converted many pagans after preaching widely.

It seems that Marino and Leone stayed with Bishop Gaudentius in order to improve their work, the former later being ordained deacon and the second clergyman, before becoming hermits and propagators of the New Word in the inland area where they founded the communities that still carry their names, San Marino and San Leo, on Mount Titano and Mount Feltrio respectively.

1. St Marino and St Leone

Leone and Marino were from Dalmatia and came to Rimini in the latter half of the year 200. It is known that deacon Marino was born in Loparo on the Island of Rab in northern Dalmatia, now Croatia, and died in San Marino in 366. According to legend, in the year 301 he founded the oldest republic in the world that takes his name - the Republic of San Marino. It is said that Marino, a stonecutter, came to Italy in 257 with Leone to reconstruct the walls of the town of Rimini and flee from the Christian persecutions that had begun under Emperor Diocletian. Having arrived in Rimini, the stonecutters were sent to Mount Titano for three years to extract and carve rock. Marino and Leone subsequently went their separate ways; the former returned to Rimini and the latter took refuge on Mount Feltrio where he preached with grace and simplicity and founded a small Christian community, which later became a Christian diocese, building a church there around which a settlement was formed that took the name of San Leo. Leone or Leo as he is sometimes known is thought to have been the first Bishop of Montefeltro, although the diocese (comprising the valleys of the Marecchia, Foglia and Savio Rivers) was only recognized in 826. The death of the saint from the plague dates to the year 360 - a few years before Marino - and the lid of his sarcophagus is still housed in the cathedral dedicated to him in San Leo. Marino remained in Rimini for over 12 years where, as well as dedicating himself to material work, he also preached the word of the Lord and helped many of the city's inhabitants to discover the Christian faith. However, a woman arrived from Dalmatia claiming to be his legitimate wife



and having sought in vain to seduce him, turned to the Roman authorities. Marino decided to flee Rimini, climbing the Marecchia river valley and one of its tributaries, Rio San Marino, to reach his first shelter, a cave known as Grotta della Baldasserona. After spending a year there he was discovered by some farmers who spread the news. The woman went to see the saint again, but he stayed in his shelter without food for six days. On the sixth day the woman abandoned her plans and returned to Rimini where she confessed she had acted against a saint and therefore, against the Lord. Marino left the shelter, climbed Mount Titano and built a small cell and a church dedicated to St Peter there. A man named Verissimo, the son of the owner of the land on which the mountain stood, protested against the presence of the saint. Marino prayed to the Lord to control the boy who immediately fell to the ground paralyzed. The woman then begged for the saint's forgiveness in exchange for her conversion and baptism and a plot of land where Marino wanted to be buried. Verissimo regained all his faculties and many of his relatives also converted. The Bishop of Rimini, Gaudentius, summonsed Leo and Marino to express his gratitude and ordained the first a clergyman and the latter a deacon. It is claimed that on returning to Rimini Marino found a bear had savaged the donkey he used for work. He thus ordered the animal to replace the donkey in its heavy and humble work for the rest of its life. As a new wave of persecution began in Rimini, Marino died on Mount Titano on 3 September 301 AD. Before he left his mortal life, again according to tradition, Marino gathered all the inhabitants of the settlement founded on Mount Titano around him and said "I leave you free from both men". The two men referred to by Marino were the Emperor and the Pope; the former the sovereign of the Empire and the other the head of the Papal State. These words have always been considered the foundation of the independence of the Republic of San Marino. The legend of St Marino combines historical facts and imaginary tales. It was handed down by the *Vita Sancti Marini*, a hagiographic text drafted around the end of the year 900, although other versions of the life of the saint exist. For example, the famous phrase translated above - "*Relinquo vos liberos ab utroque homine*" - is thought not to date from the 3rd-4th century when the saint was alive, but to be the fruit of a mediaeval concept of power. In other words, it came from a historical period in which the initial freedom enjoyed by San Marino was being threatened and was probably spoken by

a jurist or local patriot who wished to give legal foundation to the legend of perpetual freedom. Over the years it has become a fundamental part of the history and independence of the tiny republic.

2. St Gaudentius

The first Bishop of Rimini, St Gaudentius, is also the main patron saint of the diocese of Rimini, St Leone is the patron of the diocese of the Montefeltro and St Marino the patron saint of the republic of the same name that he is believed to have founded.

Since the early Middle Ages, as well as St Gaudentius, Rimini has also had other patron saints; St Colomba, St Innocence and St Julian, all three martyrs.

The names of these saints are written in the book of the ancient city statutes that governed the feast days. Important churches were dedicated to them (the cathedral was dedicated to **St Colomba**), all destroyed in the 19th century, except the Church of **San Giuliano**.

The latter is an ancient Benedictine abbey renovated in the 16th century and still houses the body of the saint. In the apse it boasts the last masterpiece by Paolo Veronese (1588) that shows the martyrdom of the saint. In a side chapel there is also a beautiful painting dating from 1405 (by Bittino da Faenza) that narrates "in pictures" the fascinating legend of St Julian.

In Rimini, a church was also dedicated to St Marino although it is now commonly known as the Church of **Santa Rita**. In the apse it has four large paintings by Giorgio Picchi dating from 1595 that portray a mysterious episode in the legend surrounding the former saint; an obsessed woman claiming to be his wife.

There is not a great deal of iconography concerning the patron saints of Rimini, although the effigies of St Gaudentius and St Julian can be found on the first coins minted in Rimini and a collective portrait of them also exists. This is in the lower part of the altarpiece by Cosimo Piazza painted in 1611 for the now demolished Church of the Capuchins and currently to be found in the Church of **San Giovanni Battista**. In it St Gaudentius and St Julian can be seen at the front holding a scale model of the city whilst other saints are behind them, including St Anthony of Padua, with the sea in the background.





St Anthony of Padua

This “modern” saint was added to the “historical” patron saints of the diocese of Rimini in 1599. Subsequently, many others were added (St Nicholas of Bari in 1633, St Nicholas of Tolentino in 1672, St Philip Neri in 1703, St Francis of Paola in 1735 and St Emygdus in 1787), but none of them reached the popularity of St Anthony.

The fact remains that from the early 16th century the legend took root of a long stay by the saint in the Rimini area, accompanied by numerous miracles. The most famous of these are the miracle regarding the fish that scrambled to the shore to hear him preaching and the miracle of the starving mule that knelt down before the saint. The first is also narrated in *The Little Flowers* of St Francis and is usually located in Rimini, whilst the location of the second is claimed by several cities. The presence of St Anthony in Rimini dates to the third decade of the 13th century when the city was threatened by the Patarine heresy. Locally however, the start of devotion to the saint dates from the early 16th century when the city was in turmoil due to having been transferred to the direct control of the Church and the demands of the Malatesta and because, like the entire Papal state, it was experiencing widespread misgovernment and unrest that would soon lead the Dominican Girolamo Savonarola (1498) to being burnt at the stake and the great Protestant reforms of the Augustinian monk Martin Luther (1517).

In 1518 a small temple was built to **St Anthony** in the ancient forum of Rimini (now Piazza Tre Martiri) the site where, according to tradition, the miracle of the mule took place.

Having been renovated several times (the last after the earthquake in 1672), the small temple still exists and stands in front of the church called **dei Paolotti** (the Friars Minor of St Francis of Paola), whose ancient apse once boasted a beautiful altarpiece by Guercino (1659) of St Anthony of Padua (now in the Municipal Museum).

In the apse of the current church, renovated after the last war, the two miracles of the saint that took place in Rimini are illustrated in two large frescoes by students of Achille Funi (1972). Meanwhile, the church built at the port to commemorate the miracle of the sermon to the fish no longer exists as it was destroyed during the war.

CHAPTER V

FRANCISCAN

SITES

The sites best suited to contemplation, meditation and prayer are those occupied by the Franciscan monasteries of the Minor Observant and Capuchin orders, almost always located in isolated areas of outstanding natural beauty that not only favour prayer, but also contact with nature.

1. Santa Maria delle Grazie in Covignano di Rimini

Just outside Rimini, on the hillside of Covignano, stands the Franciscan sanctuary of **Santa Maria delle Grazie**, built in the 14th century in the woods that once covered the area.

It can easily be reached by car, but we suggest taking the path of the Stations of the Cross that begins in Via Covignano and leads to the churchyard where there are numerous cypress trees and from where it is possible to admire panoramic views spanning the entire city and the sea. The path is flanked by the 14 small cells of the Stations of the Cross.

These were amongst the oldest, indeed probably the oldest in the world. They were restored and completed in the 18th century with relief scenes, but were destroyed during the last war that heavily damaged both the city of Rimini and the hillside of Covignano. Renovated in the 1950s, they now have new ceramic bas-reliefs created by the Rimini-born sculptor Elio Morri.

2. Franciscan sites in the Marecchia Valley

The Marecchia Valley road that leads from Rimini into the Montefeltro area in particular boasts a wealth of Franciscan sites. It is the road that St Francis himself walked in 1213 and that retains many signs of his presence here.

According to tradition, during his journey towards Rimini the saint stopped in a forest at the foot of the hillside of **Verucchio** where there was a small hermitage dedicated to St Cross. He performed some miracles here including silencing the birds so he could go into deep contemplation whilst praying and making a new medicinal spring gush forth. An even more striking miracle concerns his stick which, after he had thrust it into the earth, took root and became a cypress tree that continued to grow extremely quickly. The hermitage subsequently became a monastery, flanked by the Church of Santa Croce.

The site on which it stands in Villa Verucchio, which is isolated and surrounded by olives and cypress trees, is still extremely evocative and exudes great spirituality. Nearby, curative waters gush forth recalling the miracle of the spring, whilst in the cloister of the monastery it is possible

to admire the cypress tree planted by the saint. This huge monumental tree is believed by botanists to be at least 800 years old, which would seem to confirm the legend; it is 25 metres tall and the trunk has a circumference of over 7 metres.

Another monastery that recalls St Francis' journey through the valley is at the foot of San Leo in the village of **Sant'Igne**. The small monastery develops around a tiny cloister dominated by the sail bell tower of the adjacent church dedicated to Our Lady.

Consecrated in 1244, the general architecture of the church is simple and rustic. It has a central nave with a short transept, on the right side of which is a segment of the trunk of an elm cut down in 1662, under which it is claimed St Francis preached. It stands in a particularly beautiful, secluded spot surrounded by tree-covered hills and gently-rolling pastures. The area was once covered by a forest called "Santegna", later known as "Sant'Igne" due to a fire that is said to have miraculously indicated the way to *Mons Feretrius* (the ancient name of San Leo) to St Francis. Indeed, Sant'Igne means sacred fire.

There are no longer friars at the monastery or at the beautiful Franciscan monastery in **Montemaggio**, also in the municipality of San Leo, now a rehabilitation community. It was not founded due to the presence of St Francis as it was built in the 16th century. Work on its church, which boasts a harmonious Renaissance portico, began in 1546 and it was consecrated in 1554. Although now closed, its numerous decorative features are dominated by a large 17th-century coffered ceiling and altars with carved and gilded wood ancones and a highly imaginative polychrome scagliola antependium. It also has a beautiful 16th-century polychrome wooden Crucifix donated by a former duchess of Urbino, possibly the wife of Francesco Maria della Rovere, Lucrezia d'Este. The monastery is also worthy of note thanks to its two cloisters; the smaller one has an octagonal-shaped sandstone well leading to an underground snow house, one of the most charming features of the entire complex.

Although now destroyed, we should not forget a key Franciscan site in **Santarcangelo di Romagna** that had a large Gothic church with annexed monastery. It was an extraordinary complex although after its closure only the church remained. It later became a pipe factory, but is now





the town's elementary school and overlooks Piazza Ganganelli. The splendid artworks it once housed are now in the Archaeological History Museum. The 17th-century monastery of the Capuchin Fathers and the annexed Church of Santa Maria Immacolata still stand on the town's hillside.

3. Franciscan sites in the Conca Valley

The Franciscans had an important monastery in Mondaino too, a town famous for its monasteries. The **Franciscan Monastery** dates from the 13th century and is just outside the centre, in the village of Formosino, on a delightful hillside of the same name that still retains the simple atmosphere typical of Franciscan sites. This is where Lorenzo Ganganelli, who was born in Santarcangelo, was a friar before becoming Pope Clement XIV. Now dilapidated, what was once the **Convent of the Clarisse** is in the old town centre and is easily noted, thanks also to the characteristic church that overlooks the main road. The complex has numerous buildings and a spacious garden, which is the burial place of Sister Elisabetta Renzi, who later became blessed, founder of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows. Along with the enclosed Convent of the Clarisse, thanks to a legacy left by Mondaino-born Bernardino Carboni, the church was also built in 1624 on the foundations of the ancient oratory of the 13th-century pilgrims' hospital of Santa Maria delle Grazie. All that remains are an important fresco of Our Lady of the Milk dating from the 14th century and clear architectural remains of the lower part of the building. Renovated in 1750 in elegant Ionic-order Baroque forms, the church has a beautiful Moorish-style bell tower that bears witness to the reputation and wealth of the convent and a painting of Our Lady, St Francis and the patron saints of the convent on the main altar, adorned with a beautiful Baroque gilt wood frame. It also houses a precious wooden chancel from the nearby Franciscan monastery of Monte Formosino.

above
**Mondaino, Oratory
of Santa Maria delle
Grazie, fresco of Our
Lady of the Milk**

below
**Mondaino, Church
of the Clarisse**

St Francis and his journey from San Leo to Rimini

On 8 May 1213, St Francis spent time in San Leo where celebrations had begun for the knighting of Montefeltrano II, son of Buonconte da Montefeltro.

On that occasion, the saint held a sermon on the theme of a love song popular at the time called "Such is the good I expect that every punishment delights me". The illustrious figures present at the ceremony included Count Orlando de' Cattani, Lord of Rocca di Chiusi near Arezzo, who offered him his estate on Mount La Verna, an ideal place for meditation and contemplation. This is where, at a height of over 1,100 metres, the saint founded the **La Verna Hermitage** and where in 1224 he received the holy stigmata. The site was donated for the free use of the saint, because Francis did not usually accept property - "*nec domum nec locum nec aliquam rem*".

It was legalized after the saint's death on 2 July 1274, by the children of Count Orlando.

To this day, it is possible to visit the room where meetings between the saint and his benefactor usually took place in Palazzo Nardini in San Leo.

St Francis' overwhelming spirituality conquered almost all the area's country squires and although they rarely changed their aggressive and violent ways, they supported the Franciscan foundations and most of them chose to be buried wearing the habit of those "girt with cord" (in other words, the Franciscan tertiary).

According to tradition, on his journey along the Marecchia Valley to Rimini, St Francis performed numerous miracles, stopping in both Sant'Igne and Villa Verucchio where small and secluded monasteries, some of the oldest in the province, were founded.





San Francesco della Rosa in Sant'Agata Feltria

The Church of San Francesco della Rosa stands beside Rocca Fregoso in Sant'Agata Feltria and is connected to the fortress by a private, hidden passageway. It is claimed that it was built on a chapel that had welcomed St Francis of Assisi during his journey from Umbria to San Leo where he received Mount La Verna as a gift from the Lord of Chiusi who had been struck by his profound spirituality. From there he continued to Verucchio, where the cypress tree that grew from his stick planted into the ground is still alive and well, and then reached the city of Rimini, before heading to Bologna. The story concerning this journey may be merely a legend handed down over the centuries, but it is certainly plausible as the town of Sant'Agata was on one of the most popular communication routes of the time. In any case, devotion to the saint became so strong that the inhabitants extended the chapel to its present size and form. Without doubt, it is linked to the fairly ancient presence of Franciscan monks in the territory near Sant'Agata, more precisely in the village of Cella Fausti.

As the monastery had fallen into ruin, in 1781 the local community allocated Rocca Fregoso to the Franciscans and they remained there until 1820. It was thanks to them the church was built. It is a single nave church with a sombre stone façade that reused materials from the ancient abandoned monastery, including a holy water stoop carved in stone bearing the date 1532 on its base and initially housed in the Church of San Francesco ai Piani. The church has three altars and is adorned with Baroque stuccoes. Also interesting are the pews bearing the coats of arms of ancient local families and an organ dating from the late 11th century.

There are various interpretations regarding the name of the church, but its exact origin remains a mystery.

above
**Saludecio, Monastery
of the Gerolomini**

below
**Sant'Agata Feltria,
Church of San
Girolamo**

The Capuchins and the “modern” orders

The founder of the Capuchins was Brother Matteo da Bascio, born in Pennabilli around 1495. He was a Franciscan of the branch of the Observers in the Monastery of Montefiorentino, near Frontino and was ordained in 1525.

Eager to return to primitive Franciscan rigour, he left his monastery and obtained from Pope Clement VII the right to wear a long, coarse cloth habit, like the one worn by Francis of Assisi, but with a longer, pointed hood, to rigidly observe the rule of absolute poverty, live like a hermit and preach freely.

He was heavily criticized and branded an eccentric travelling preacher, but immediately gained many imitators amongst those who wished to return to the original spirit of Franciscan life. Thanks to his example, the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin was approved by the Pope in 1528 in the *Religionis zelus* Papal bull. The “strict” choices of Brother Matteo da Bascio were bitterly challenged by many parts, but played an important role in the movement to reform religious life in the 16th century.

There were once many Capuchin monasteries in this territory, but only those in Rimini, San Marino, Santarcangelo, Montefiore Conca and Sant'Agata Feltria remain.

Other orders, like the Jesuits and Theatines, became popular in the 16th century and built huge monasteries in the area, though they were abolished in the late 18th century.

In Rimini, visitors can still admire the **Church of the Jesuits** next to their former college, used for almost a century as the city's hospital and now the Municipal Museum, as well as the beautiful **churches of the Carmelites (San Giovanni Battista) and the Servites (Santa Maria dei Servi)**, renovated in the 18th century.

Another order has disappeared completely. Known as the Oratorians (Gerolamini in Italian), the order had a monastery in all the most important cities, but only two remain, both dedicated to St Gerolamo or Girolamo. Standing next to the gate to the town, one is in **Saludecio** and has beautiful 17th-century altarpieces, whilst the other is in **Sant'Agata Feltria** and its church has important works of art including a spectacular altarpiece by the school of Pietro da Cortona of *The Virgin with Child and Saints Girolamo, Cristina, Francis and Anthony of Padua* dating from around 1640. The only really “Baroque” painting in the entire area was generously commissioned by the Marquises Fregoso, Lords of Sant'Agata since 1506.



CHAPTER VI
**THE
BENEDICTINES
AND
MENDICANTS**

The Middle Ages saw an incredible flourishing of regular “mendicant” orders; in other words, orders with very precise life rules that included, amongst others, living in poverty.

They were favoured by the Church as a way to contrast the propaganda for poverty of the Cathari and Waldesians and to compensate for the ignorance of the poor lay clergy and the lethargy of the rich Benedictine monasteries.

1. The Benedictines and Mendicant orders

The Benedictines, for centuries leading figures in the religious, cultural and economic life of the entire territory, that in many cases they had helped to reclaim by clearing forests and drying out marshes such as in the lower Conca Valley, built the area's oldest monasteries.

In crisis towards the end of the first millennium, the Benedictines were replaced by more modern orders active in the apostolate, such as the Franciscans, the Augustinians, the Dominicans and the Servites, that flourished until the end of the 18th century.

The work of evangelization and development of all the regular orders suffered a setback due to the Napoleonic laws that decreed their abolition, with the confiscation of the monasteries and their property by the State.

Only the Franciscans, more deeply rooted in the local society and closer to popular mentality and devotion, succeeded in subsequently regaining or rather, repurchasing some monasteries they had owned before Napoleonic abolition and likewise following the Unity of Italy.

Of the many Benedictine monasteries that have disappeared we will recall just one here due to the unusual nature of the site it was built on and its charm and curiosity.

It is the monastery dedicated to **St Angel**, built and founded in the 12th century at a great altitude on Mount **Sasso Simone** in the upper Marecchia Valley.

The site on which it stood overlooked extraordinarily breathtaking panoramic views, a spot without doubt ideally suited to contemplation and prayer. However, it was so impracticable and isolated it was more a hermitage than a monastery. In just a little over a century, a series of particularly rigid winters and the opening of new and easier pilgrims' ways led to its downfall and it finally closed due to the plague in 1348. In 1462 it was closed by Pope Pius II who joined it to the nearby, but more accessible Monastery of Piandimeleto.

For several centuries it continued as a church dedicated to St



Michael Archangel, where the faithful gathered for summer celebrations and a huge cross now marks where it stood.

Today there are no longer Benedictine, Augustinian, Dominican or Servite monasteries here, but some of their churches have survived as parish churches entrusted to the clergy of the diocese.

For example, the Church of **San Giuliano in Rimini**, now the quarter's parish church, was once a Benedictine abbey church (of the "black Benedictine" order) and has many works of art.

Another Benedictine church (of the "white" or Olivetan order) was the Church of **Santa Maria di Scolca** in **Covignano** near Rimini, now the Parish church of **San Fortunato**. It still features a harmonious Renaissance architectural structure and the apse, considered a true masterpiece of Mannerism, has an altarpiece of the Adoration of the Magi painted by Giorgio Vasari in 1547 when a guest of the Abbot of Scolca who corrected and commissioned a monk to transcribe the manuscript of *Vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori et scultori italiani* (*The Lives of the Most Excellent Italian Architects, Artists and Sculptors*), the first real history of art initially printed in Florence in 1550.

2. The Augustinians and their church in Rimini

Continuing with some simple examples, one of the largest and most important Augustinian churches, the Church of **San Giovanni Evangelista in Rimini**, known as the Church of **Sant'Agostino**, became a parish church and is now the only one in the old town.

This church is worth visiting for various reasons; the architecture of the large auditorium was transformed with precious stuccoes, ancones and frescoes in the 17th and 18th centuries, although the general structure and its tall bell tower date from the 13th century. Furthermore, the apsidal part houses two wonderful cycles of frescoes by the "14th-century School of Rimini". The bell tower chapel narrates the life of the Virgin Mary and the apse the life of John the Evangelist, whilst on the far end wall there is a mighty Enthroned Christ and a majestic and gentle Virgin with Child.

The decorations in this church, probably by 14th-century Rimini-based artists, perhaps the brothers Giovanni, Giuliano and Zangolo,

above
**Rimini, Church of San
Giovanni Evangelista
(Sant'Agostino)**

below
**Pietracuta di San
Leo, the Dominican
monastery**

active in the early decades of the century, also include a Crucifix painted on a wood panel, now on the right wall of the nave and a large, fragmented fresco of the Last Judgement, now housed in the Municipal Museum.

By ideally reuniting and positioning these works we have an idea of the “educational” and catechetical function those responsible for creating them and those who commissioned them sought to achieve and the spirituality of the message transmitted through the painted figures.

3. The Dominicans and an example of a late-Renaissance building

With regard to the Dominicans, we should point out what remains of the imposing and elegant building that was their monastery in **Pietracuta**, in the municipality of San Leo, that overlooked the Marecchia River from a narrow, elongated plateau known as “the Mount”.

Beside it is the modest church “of the Mount” dedicated to the Virgin of the Rosary, celebrated here each year on 1 May. The complex, thanks also to the clean and harmonious lines of the church and monastery, is an ideal place for meditation and spirituality.

The monastery, of which an elegant and impressive façade remains, was built in the 17th century thanks to donations by Rimini-born Giovanni Sinibaldi.

It was completed in 1664, but was closed in 1812.





above and below,
on the right
**Rimini, fresco by the
"14th-century**

**School of Rimini" in
the Church of San
Giovanni Evangelista
(Sant'Agostino)**

below, on the left
**Montefiore, 14th-
century Crucifix in the
Church of San Paolo**

"14th-century art in Rimini"

From as early as the 14th century, extraordinary frescoes were painted on the walls of many churches of the Mendicant orders by numerous Rimini-born artists who, during the first half of that century, were extremely active in Romagna and the Marche and also worked in many towns in Emilia and the Veneto region.

Their work was original and modern; in fact, they succeeded in assimilating the new features of the language of Giotto, due to work carried out probably in Assisi and certainly in Rimini where he painted the extraordinary Crucifix dating from the late 13th century still housed in the Church of San Francesco (perhaps a cycle of frescoes that were destroyed when the church was renovated to turn it into the Malatesta Temple).

One of the school's largest and most famous pictorial feats is the decoration of the "Cappellone" in the Church of San Nicola in Tolentino and in Emilia the refectory in Pomposa Abbey and the apse in the Church of Santa Chiara in Ravenna, now in the National Museum of Ravenna.

Significant decorations by these artists can be found in our territory in the Church of San Giovanni Evangelista (known as the Church of Sant'Agostino) in Rimini. It has two cycles of frescoes that were only discovered in the 1920s after being hidden behind plaster since the 18th century.

Visitors can also head to the Municipal Museum that, as well as a large fresco of the Last Judgement from the Church of San Giovanni Evangelista, also houses polyptychs, paintings and Crucifixes painted on wood panels.

Leading figures of the "14th-century School of Rimini" included the artists Neri, Giuliano, Giovanni, Pietro and Baronzio.

Most of their works of art have now found their way to the world's most important museums, but some still exist not only in Rimini, but also in Montefiore, Verucchio and Villa Verucchio, Santarcangelo, Misano Adriatico, Talamello, San Leo and Pennabilli.

Christ of the Agina and the church of the same name

Known as “Christ of the Agina”, this is one of the oldest pieces by the 14th-century School of Rimini. For centuries it was housed in the beautiful church of Agina in the countryside near Misano Adriatico, on a hill near the Rio Agina stream and close to the Adriatica state road. The building has a noble history; it was destroyed by an earthquake in the mid-17th century and rebuilt thanks to the Knights of Malta. In fact, on the west wall there is a plaque with the Maltese Cross. The oratory is simple, with open brickwork and boasts an elegant sail bell tower. Until 1962 it housed a wonderful wooden Crucifix by the 14th-century School of Rimini called “**Christ of the Agina**”. Recently renovated, it can now be admired on the altar of the parish church of Misano Adriatico dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. It is a great work of art and faith that is well worth seeing.



CHAPTER VII

CONVENTS

In the territory of the two dioceses there are still a number of Franciscan convents, founded in ancient or more recent times, each flanked by a church; they are interesting due either to their architecture or the furnishings they house.

1. The Clarisse

Naturally there are also many convents and the main one we should recall is the Convent of **Santa Maria Maddalena** in **Sant'Agata Feltria** of the Order of the Clarisse, the Poor Sisters of St Clare or the Poor Clares.

The Clarisse established themselves in the current convent in 1561 after a landslide hit the village of Sant'Agata and their old convent. Having survived, they were accommodated in the building they currently occupy, at the time owned by the Fregoso family. Over the centuries the convent flourished until 1810 when, due to Napoleonic suppression, the nuns were deprived of their convent and had to return to their families. The convent was used for residential purposes but one sister, Anna Giordani, rented the oldest wing of the building and thus kept the chancel and church. In 1814, with the return of Pius VII to Rome, the Poor Clares also returned to their convent, but experienced another difficult period in 1866 due to a law that confiscated all ecclesiastical property. The nuns were given just forty days to leave, but managed to stay, although they were prevented from admitting novices to take the veil and join the profession; a move it was hoped would lead to the extinction of the closed order. In the early 20th century, novices started to enter again and community life began to flourish. In 1930 the community passed to the First Rule of Saint Clare. In July 1951 a fire broke out in the convent's chancel causing inestimable damage; in fact, a splendid Crucifix by the Giotto school was destroyed. Fortunately an important archive survived the fire and still boasts numerous mediaeval parchments regarding the community and the territory of Montefeltro. In recent years, some restoration work has been carried out on the oldest wing of the convent that has been converted to guest rooms.

The phenomenon the convent has been experiencing in the past decades is certainly worth mentioning. There is renewed interest in the vocation with young girls coming here from all over Italy; an unusual case that is being studied and has meant the convent has gone from being at risk of closing to now boasting a community of around twenty nuns.

The Clarisse are also present in **Rimini** in the convent of **San Bernardino** in the centre of the city. Beside it is the church of

above
**Valdragone
di San Marino,
Convent of
Santa Chiara**

below
**Pennabilli,
Monastery
of Sant'Antonio
da Padova**

the same name, designed in the 18th century by the Rimini-born architect Giovan Francesco Buonamici. On the outside it has a stucco statue by Carlo Sarti, whilst inside it boasts wonderful paintings by Donato Creti.

In the Republic of **San Marino**, the current convent of **Santa Chiara** di Valdragone stands in a quiet and isolated spot in the “castle” of Borgo Maggiore. Built in the 1960s, it replaced the old 17th-century convent that stood in the upper part of the old city and is of great architectural interest. Its exterior and gardens, which climb the hill following the lay of the land, make the site particularly fascinating. The new convent's church is also dedicated to Saint Clare of Favarone di Offreduccio, who was born in Assisi in 1193 and founded the Clarisse.

The nuns live a life of contemplation, but also create icons, make hosts, do embroidery and sewing work and welcome prayer groups.

2. The Augustinians

The Convent of **Sant'Antonio da Padova** in **Pennabilli** is of the Augustinian order. It now has few sisters who dedicate their life to contemplation, as well as preparing hosts, repairing rosaries and small frames, restoring icons and paintings on wood, painting Easter candles and welcoming groups and individuals looking for a place of contemplation. The convent is near the ancient fortress of Rocca di Billi, which in the past was a separate community to that of the castle of Penna that stands opposite it. All documentary evidence confirms the convent of the Sisters of the City was founded by Giovanni Lucis, as can be seen thanks to the coat of arms inside the door. The donation by Lucis was solemnly drawn up in a document dated 1518 and foundation of the convent probably dates to the previous year. Over the years, the nuns residing in the Convent of Sant'Antonio have belonged to various orders: the Humiliated (1517-1571, for 54 years), the Without Rules (1571-1624, for 53 years), the Dominicans (1624-1816, for 192 years) and the Augustinians (from 1816 to the present).

3. The Religious Teachers, Teachers of St Dorothy and Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

Sant'Agata Feltria is home to the **Institute of the Teachers of St Dorothy** and **Coriano, Rimini** and many other towns





also have an **Institute of the Religious Teachers of Our Lady of Sorrows**, an order also present overseas that has always focused on education as its founder, Elisabetta Renzi, wished. Their mother house is in Coriano where she is buried.

Founded by Father Domenico Masi, the **Institute of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception** is in **Misano Mare**. The order looks after children and the elderly and runs a spiritual home in the former monastery of **San Girolamo** in **Saludecio**, next to the church of the same name.

4. The Order of the Religious Teachers of Our Lady of Sorrows. From Rimini to the world

The order was founded in 1839 in Coriano near Rimini by Mother Elisabetta Renzi who was born in Saludecio in 1786 and later moved with her family to Mondaino. The daughter of Giambattista Renzi from Saludecio and Vittoria Boni from Urbino, she entered the Augustinian convent of Pietrarubbia, but was forced to leave and return to her family due to the Napoleonic suppressions of 1810. She said the Lord called her to Coriano to help a group of women dedicated to the education of young girls. That was in 1824 and she founded the order 15 years later. She died in Coriano in 1859. In founding the institute, Mother Elisabetta sought to create a reality that could promote the human and religious education of young girls, women and their families, as well as needy children, in Romagna. Her project was based on the direct observation of the social, economic and religious reality of the time, so much so that the Church, seeing in this the intent of social and educational promotion, immediately approved the new institute that rapidly grew in terms of both members and number of schools, oratories and orphanages. It quickly expanded and opened new institutes in Sogliano al Rubicone, Roncofreddo, Faenza, Savignano sul Rubicone, Cotignola, Mondaino and Urbino. The aspirations of Mother Elisabetta, who was beatified in 1989, were to expand the actions of the institute beyond the borders of Romagna and offer education and assistance in any country where there were poor and needy people that public institutions continued to ignore. The first great opportunity was offered immediately after the Second

above

**Coriano, Convent and
Institute of the Maestre
Pie dell'Addolorata**

below

**Saludecio, Monastery
of the Gerolomini**

World War thanks to a meeting between the congregation's Mother Superior and the Bishop of Louisiana during which he was informed of the intention to set up a missionary group in the United States. The bishop, who had for some time been thinking about setting up a school for disadvantaged children, accepted the offer. The United States had recently come out of the war and with the introduction of McCarthyism in the 1950s negative repercussions were being experienced domestically. In addition, the country was suffering numerous material, social and ideological problems at the time. The poorer sectors of society were no doubt paying the price for this situation. Thus a group of 13 sisters from the mother house in Rimini arrived in the US in 1947 and began a long and adventurous journey towards Louisiana, a totally unknown world at the time. From then on, the Religious Teachers began to open their missions all over the world wherever children were more easily victims of social injustice, poverty and illiteracy. This took them to Mexico, Brazil, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, the Philippines and Albania. Based on multi-ethnicity, equality and social justice, their guidelines are inspired by the dictates of Pope John XXIII. Pope John Paul II was a great supporter of the order's work and Elisabetta Renzi was proclaimed blessed in 1989. In Coriano it is possible to visit the mother house of the Institute of the Religious Teachers that boasts a museum dedicated to its founder who is buried here. It houses documents and other items linked to the origins of the institute and some extremely well-made gold and silver items created here. The nearby Church of the Madonna dell'Addolorata has a chapel housing the mortal remains of Elisabetta.





The Convent of Sante Caterina e Barbara in Santarcangelo

The imposing convent occupies a large part of the old town centre and overlooks elegant Piazza Monache, continuing also along some adjacent streets. It covers a total area of 9,900 square metres. It was built in various historical eras and the various layers are clear, topped by the harmonious cupola of the church, created by Bibiena.

The convent of the Camaldolese Benedictine Sisters, a closed order, was founded in 1505 when the municipality entrusted an existing building to its founder Sister Obedience of Rimini. Thanks to a growing number of followers, extension work had to be carried out in 1600. Built next to the old church that was demolished, the new church with an octagonal layout was consecrated in 1738, after five years of work. The architect, Ferdinando Galli Bibiena, who worked in collaboration with his son Antonio, was the first ducal architect of the Farnese family in Parma. After the Napoleonic suppressions, in 1856 the building was reopened by Sister Angela Molari, founder of the Daughters of the Immaculate Conception. Palazzo Fattorini was built adjacent to the convent and in recent years the entire complex has been restored. Today, the Daughters of the Immaculate Conception - who have been here for 150 years - and the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart (of Jesus and Mary) continue their spiritual and social mission. Although one belongs to Diocesan Law and the other to Papal Law, the two institutes merged in 2007.

With an eye to the future, the sisters have decided to open up the convent to the town and its inhabitants. This has led to the first agreement with the *Luce sul Mare* clinic that welcomes the families of the sick and not only and that also has a branch at Franchini Hospital in Santarcangelo. The sisters have also given life to a project that aims to restore and then open the guest rooms to welcome visitors, tourists and all those who wish to share for some time the daily rhythms and atmosphere of the convent.

The garden too, which will remain the heart of the monastery, will be restored and will become a botanical garden open to the public, actively involving local schools, citizens and visitors. In line with convent tradition, it will be a garden for meditation and therefore, at certain times of the day will be open to those who wish to read there, leaving their books behind if they so desire.

CHAPTER VIII
**DEVOTION
TO THE
VIRGIN MARY**

In the dioceses of Rimini and San Marino-Montefeltro, devotion to Our Lady has extremely ancient roots and has always been felt very strongly with at least a quarter of parish churches dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

Important buildings dedicated to Our Lady can be found in both town centres and isolated spots, amid fields and on secluded mountains. These include oratories, chapels, hermitages and sanctuaries that are centres of great spirituality and often keep alive the memory of miracles and apparitions. It is impossible to provide a list of all the places where devotion to Our Lady has been and still is very much alive and where miraculous events featuring the Virgin Mary have occurred. We would like to mention the main ones below, for a deep and intense spiritual itinerary.

1. Madonna delle Grazie in Covignano di Rimini

In Rimini we should first of all point out the Franciscan Sanctuary of the **Madonna delle Grazie** that stands on the outskirts of the city, on the hillside of **Covignano**.

In this place, which rises gently above the plain below, overlooking the city and the sea and inviting visitors to dedicate time to prayer and meditation, an early chapel was built in 1290 on the spot where 4 years previously, a young shepherd was said to have carved an image of Our Lady from a piece of wood. It was finished by angels who came to help the inexperienced carver. The simulacrum then took to the sea and reached Venice where it is still housed and venerated as the “Madonna of Rimini” in the Church of San Marziale. The sanctuary took its current form in the 1560s. The main altar boasts a beautiful Annunciation painted around 1430 by the Umbrian artist Ottaviano Nelli and highly venerated, as the many votive offerings testify.

The most important pieces in the **Sanctuary of the Madonna delle Grazie** are in the left part of the church. Worth noting is the beautiful wood ceiling that resembles the hull of a ship. The entrance door has a fresco of the Assumption of Mary and in the first chapel there is a splendid altarpiece that once boasted 33 small alabaster statues of the apostles and various figures from the Calvary of Christ. They were sold in the early 20th century to cover the costs for the necessary restoration of the entire complex. They are now in Germany and these veritable art treasures are the most admired pieces in Frankfurt museum. The second chapel has a 17th-century wood altarpiece with St Anthony, whilst the third chapel houses a 15th-century Crucifix. In the presbytery, on the right, is the sepulchre of Antonio Alvarado, a Franciscan tertiary and secretary of Emperor Charles VI, by Carlo Sarti. In the centre of

above
**Covignano di Rimini,
Ottaviano Nelli,
The Annunciation,
Sanctuary of Santa
Maria delle Grazie**

below
**Montefiore Conca,
Sanctuary of the
Madonna di Bonora**

the church, visitors can admire the *Birth of Jesus* by Giovanni Laurentini known as Arrigoni and on the door that leads to the sacristy there is a 17th century *Deposition of Christ* by Diego Rodriguez. On entering the convent, visitors will find a small cloister that was rebuilt after being destroyed in 1943. The walls of the cloister still have some terracotta fragments created in the 18th century by Bologna-born artist Carlo Sarti for the 14 cell-chapels of the Stations of the Cross. In front of it stands a building commissioned by Alvarado.

2. Madonna di Bonora in Montefiore Conca

Inland from Rimini, in the valley of the Conca River, the most famous and most popular Marian sanctuary is the Sanctuary of the **Madonna di Bonora in Montefiore Conca.**

It was built around an image of Our Lady suckling her Child commissioned by the hermit Bonora Ondidei. It is in a small cell he had built himself in woodland and that he bequeathed to the Franciscans of the Third Order in 1409.

The current layout of the sanctuary is largely due to the devotion of two brothers, Pio and Tommaso Sanchini, who were priests and who did all they could in the early 20th century to diffuse the cult of this Madonna.

It houses numerous votive offerings that document a series of graces received by the devout. It has recently been restored and can now host even fairly large groups of pilgrims.

The Marian image still retains an archaic 14th-century atmosphere and dominates the church from the main altar, recalling centuries of devotion and prayer that bring 500,000 faithful here each year. It all dates from the end of the 14th century when Bonora Ondidei di Levola from Montefiore retired on Mount Auro to dedicate himself to prayer and contemplation. He lived in the village of Villa San Martino in a small house with three rooms, one of which he used as a chapel and was adorned with frescoes of Jesus, Our Lady and the saints. That image of Our Lady has remained intact over the years and has become the object of devotion. Venerated as the Mother of Divine Grace, it portrays the Child sitting on her knees suckling. She is wearing a red robe with a sky-blue cloak and there is a radiant star on her chest. Bonora himself gave the land, house and chapel to the Third Order of Penance of St Francis with a notary deed dated 7 October 1409. The friars continued to live in





Bonora's cell until 1652 when Pope Innocent X suppressed small monasteries. The monastery's assets and the church were allocated to the convent of nuns known first as the Converted Sisters, then the Sisters of St Mary Magdalene and finally, the Sisters of the Heart of Jesus of Rimini. In 1796 Napoleonic laws closed both the convent and the cell of Bonora. Despite this, pilgrimages continued. In 1833 the first miracle occurred on the site, which merely served to increase its fame. Annunziata Rossi who was seriously ill, was given up for dead. She decided therefore, to pray to the image of Our Lady of Bonora. Reaching the site with great difficulty, she prayed intensely and returned home completely healed. The curia of Rimini began a standard canonization process and this was the first confirmed miracle.

3. Santa Maria delle Grazie in Pennabilli

In the diocese of Montefeltro there is a fairly popular temple called **Santa Maria delle Grazie in Pennabilli**, in the upper Marecchia Valley.

It houses the diocese's most famous Marian image, the image of **Our Lady of Tears** or **Our Lady of Graces of Pennabilli**, thus named because it miraculously shed tears in 1489.

The fresco is extremely evocative and shows the Virgin Mary sitting down and covered in a sky-blue cloak with yellow decorations. She is holding a small goldfinch in her left hand to symbolize the Passion of Christ, whilst with her right hand she is supporting her child who is standing on her right knee, looking serenely at onlookers.

Painted above this are an Annunciation and a garden in bloom, symbol of the virginity of Mary with at the top, a Benedictory Eternal Father and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove.

The image has been the protagonist over the years of numerous miraculous events starting with the one that took place on Friday, 20 March 1489, recalled annually as "beautiful Friday", when on several occasions it shed tears from its right eye before numerous people who witnessed the event. Some surprised and incredulous observers tried to dry the tears with scraps of cloth, but they continued to flow down the Virgin's cheek, leaving a trace on her face.

Below we examine this special event more closely.

Our Lady of Graces in Pennabilli

In the Montefeltro area the most famous image of Our Lady, seen shedding tears on the third Friday of March in 1489, can be found in Pennabilli.

It is an image of Our Lady venerated as Holy Mary of Graces or more simply, Our Lady of Graces. It was painted around 1432 in the **Church of the Augustinians**, dedicated to **St Christopher** and dates from the 11th century.

The miracle of the tears of Mary was quite shocking and caused great ferment in the entire territory. It was judged to be a merciful and maternal warning of future misfortunes that indeed, soon occurred in the form of wars, sieges and pillaging.

In 1517, during the war declared by Lorenzo de' Medici against Francesco Maria della Rovere, Pennabilli was besieged by the Florentines, but on 17 February an image of the Madonna appeared on the city walls and made the besiegers flee.

The Madonna appeared on the walls of Pennabilli once again on 22 February 1522 to protect the town's inhabitants.

Troops led by Giovanni dalle Bande Nere, set up camp under the walls, trying to force the town to surrender. The Duke of Urbino advised the population to abandon the town and he himself sought shelter in the fortress of Sassocorvaro. Everyone fled with the exception of 14 soldiers. Night fell as the enemy walked around the walls trying to penetrate the castle and this time too, amid flashes of light, the Virgin Mary appeared in the sky with her Son in her arms and surrounded by an army of angels; the town was saved once again. After this other miracle, the grateful townsfolk extended the Church of San Cristoforo and in 1528 they enclosed the image in a beautiful Renaissance-style marble aedicule, adorned and almost hidden in the 17th century by a larger and more elaborate Baroque wooden structure with engravings and figures.

Over the centuries and to the present day, the Virgin Mary has offered her help in answering requests for protection. During the Second World War, in June 1944, the population implored Our Lady's help to stop the evacuation of the town ordered by the Germans and the order was revoked. On 21 September of the same year, the German army in retreat had placed mines on all of the area's strategic bridges to blow them up and Our Lady of Graces once again appeared to the town's inhabitants. The Germans did not blow up all the mines placed.





above
**Pennabilli, Church
of Miratoio**

below, on the left
**Cà Romano di
Pennabilli, Our Lady of
the Rectangle of Snow**

below, on the right
**Pennabilli, Monastery
of Sant'Antonio da
Padova**

The townsfolk vowed they would fittingly restore the sanctuary, a vow they subsequently kept. Many inhabitants of Pennabilli have experienced recoveries and miracles by intercession of the Virgin Mary. Worth recalling due to the notoriety of the events is the grace received by the navy captain Filippo Zappi who took part with Nobile in the exploration to the North Pole on the airship "Italia" in 1928. Having reached the North Pole it was impossible to land and on the return journey the airship, now off-course, hit pack ice. The gondola came away in the impact and of the 16 crew members, 10 were thrown out onto the ice, whilst all traces were lost of the 6 who remained on board. After the terrible disaster, the survivors camped in the "red" tent waiting to be rescued. After days, Zappi with two other colleagues left the tent and set off on a desperate march across the ice. Exhausted by the cold and desperate for help he thought about his mother's house. His mother, Elmira Manduchi, was from Pennabilli and lived near the Church of Sant'Agostino. He thought about the miracle of the Virgin Mary, promising that he would thank her if she spared his life. In the meantime, having spotted the red tent and saved the survivors, the rescue teams began to look for the group, found 48 days later and saved. The image is still extremely popular; on the third Friday in March - known as "beautiful Friday" - Pennabilli holds a day of solemn celebration and festivities.

Worship of "Our Lady of Tears", proclaimed the "Queen of the Montefeltro", extends to all the diocesan territory and in 1950 the Church of Sant'Agostino was officially declared the "Marian sanctuary of the diocese".

After the sanctuary, visitors will find the rest of the municipal territory has other important churches, oratories, small cells and religious sites.

CHAPTER IX
**MARIAN
SANCTUARIES**

The 16th century saw a great return to Marian devotion in the entire territory.

It all began with a clamorous public miracle that occurred just outside Rimini in 1506, on the first mile of the Flaminian Way. The intervention of Our Lady prevented a pilgrim unjustly accused of murder from being executed.

The people of Rimini immediately wanted to build a sanctuary on that spot to appropriately honour and house the sacred image of Our Lady with Child that stood next to the gallows set up for the execution and considered responsible for the miracle. They wanted that sanctuary to be of public property eternally; it is now known as the Church della Colonnella.

Miraculous apparitions of the Madonna of Pennabilli followed (in 1517 and 1522) and another in 1523 in Maciano, near Pennabilli.

Here the Virgin Mary appeared to a certain Giovanna from San Leo, a poor and simple woman (the Bishop's notary who collected her deposition described her as a "foolish woman"). She asked for a church to be built on the site of her apparition and it was.

Twenty years later, an apparition of Our Lady on the border between the dioceses of Rimini and Montefeltro, in Trebbio di Montegridolfo is well documented. Here too a church was built, as Our Lady had asked.

The last 16th-century miracle in the Rimini area occurred in the municipality of Santarcangelo di Romagna, in Casale di San Vito in 1593 before a simple image of Mary painted in a small country cell that was soon transformed into a large sanctuary (see below).

Other miracles followed over the years and gave origin to several places of worship in the centre of the city of Rimini too where lavish altars were built to Our Lady of Carmel, Our Lady of Sorrows and Our Lady of the Rosary in the churches of the Carmelites (San Giovanni Battista) and the Servites (Santa Maria dei Servi) and the Church of San Domenico (since destroyed).

1. The Church della Colonnella in Rimini

This is a beautiful building completed in 1514 that still houses a miraculous image and that has always belonged to the municipality. Until the Unification of Italy, the city's magistracy took part in all the most important celebrations. It is known as "della Colonnella" due to the Roman milestone or the sacred image painted above a pilaster or part of a small column. The fine portal that can be seen immediately, is attributed to Giovanni Bernardini from Venice. Inside, visitors will find an elegant 16th-

above
**Rimini, Church and
image of the Madonna
della Colonnella**

below
**Maciano di Pennabilli,
Convent and Church of
Santa Maria dell'Oliva**

century decoration on the walls in painted terracotta by the Ravenna-born artist Bernardino Giuritti.

The 15th-century Madonna with Child is by an unknown artist and several plaques inside the church are dedicated to the same. These refer to the prodigious image, the building of the temple, the coronation and transfer to above the altar.

2. Santa Maria dell'Oliva in Maciano di Pennabilli

Thanks to the help of all neighbouring communities, in just a few years one of the most beautiful Renaissance churches of the Montefeltro, **Santa Maria dell'Oliva di Maciano**, was built in Maciano, now in the municipality of Pennabilli, on the spot where an apparition had occurred.

It is an extraordinarily interesting monument from numerous points of view; in artistic terms it is linked to a beautiful architectural cycle that diffused in the entire Montefeltro area the harmonious forms of the Renaissance of Urbino.

The portal bears the date of 1529, the year it was completed.

The church was immediately entrusted to the Franciscans (the Order of the Friars Minor) and in 1553 they began to build a large monastery beside it with halls, cells and storerooms and a beautiful library (the date 1635 is on the door). The last books were sold less than 100 years ago by a naive monk who received very little money for them and was humiliated following police reports and lawsuits against him.

Alongside it is a bright cloister with large arches. Its columns are said to have been donated to the monks by Countess Oliva from the ruins of one of her villas that stood in Antico, although this seems to be a recent legend invented to justify the name "dell'Oliva" given to the Madonna and the architectural forms of the church that are similar to those of the Church of Antico. In the lunettes of the portico there are frescoes of the life and miracles of St Francis; unfortunately, only a few can still be seen, but it was without doubt an important group. What remains is nevertheless precious as it bears witness to the fact all the area's communities were involved in the piece, finally united in the desire to honour the poor devotee from Assisi. In fact, each fresco bore the name of the offering party which include the communities of Penna,





above
**Trebbio di
Montegridolfo,
Sanctuary of the Beata
Vergine delle Grazie**

below
**San Giovanni in
Marignano, Oratory
of Santa Maria**

Maciano and Soanne. It also shines some light on a mysterious artist from Pennabilli, Giovanni Bistolli who painted it in instalments - in 1656, 1657, 1658 and 1659 - as he himself declared. He was a good artist as the well-constructed and picturesque scenes show, with fairly lively details and portraits mixed with less prestigious parts that seem mainly due to extensive 19th-century restoration work.

3. The Sanctuary of the Beata Vergine delle Grazie in Trebbio di Montegridolfo

The altar in the **Church of Trebbio** boasts a beautiful altarpiece that portrays the miraculous apparition of the Madonna.

It was painted on the basis of the eye-witness accounts of those she appeared to in 1459, Antonia Ondidei and Luca Antonio di Filippo. It was therefore, painted in “real time” by the Fano-born artist Pompeo Morganti, a master of the Renaissance.

The painting's background is particularly interesting with views of Montegridolfo, the castle, the town walls, the tower and the surrounding countryside.

4. Other Marian sanctuaries and churches in the Conca Valley

There are numerous Marian sanctuaries in the Conca Valley; we have already mentioned the ancient sanctuary of the **Madonna di Bonora** in **Montefiore Conca** that to this day welcomes pilgrims from all over Italy.

Another is the Sanctuary of the **Beata Vergine delle Grazie** in **Montegridolfo** that is popular with locals and was built following two apparitions of Our Lady in the 16th century.

We recommend continuing to **Saludecio** home to the most recent sanctuary built, the Sanctuary of the **Madonna del Monte**.

In the municipality of **Gemmano** there is a church on the hillside, on the right bank of the Conca River, called the Sanctuary of the **Madonna di Carbognano**. It was built around 1260 when a group of Franciscan monks built a small monastery dedicated to St Francis on the remains of an ancient Roman temple. In 1500 the church was consecrated to Our Lady; its popularity has grown considerably over the years and it



above
**Montegridolfo, Church
of San Rocco**

below
**Carpegna, Sanctuary
of the Madonna del
Faggio**

now welcomes thousands of pilgrims drawn here to pray and for the graces received. The arrival of so many faithful contributed to the collection of funds and the church has been extended over the years.

In the 18th century a **small Marian cell** was built in **San Clemente**; it is all in brick with an octagonal layout and pilasters.

Worth mentioning is the elegant oratory of **Santa Maria in San Giovanni in Marignano** with a portico and wide arches.

The oldest Marian sanctuary of the Conca Valley, the Sanctuary of the **Madonna del Faggio** is in **Carpegna**, just outside the provincial territory.

5. The Sanctuary of the Madonna di Casale in San Vito di Santarcangelo di Romagna

In Casale too, from 1596 on, just after the first miraculous events, a large Marian sanctuary was built and dedicated to the Visitation. It was a grand church that was begun in 1596 and was completed in 1605. It was destroyed by the Germans in retreat in 1944 and was then rebuilt in its modern form in 1964.

It stands along the route of the ancient Emilia Way, near San Vito in the village of Casale di Santarcangelo and is now entrusted to the Passionists. The Blessed Pius Campidelli, a young Passionist who offered his life for his homeland of Romagna, is venerated here (see the paragraph dedicated to him below).

6. Our Lady, patron saint of Rimini

Following so many miraculous events, the municipality of Rimini decided to include Our Lady in the list of its patron saints and in 1696 placed a bronze image of her in one corner of the town hall, adorning it with a bronze canopy and a lamp that the maidens of the town, wearing livery, lit every evening for the Ave Maria and on some occasions at the sound of trumpets.

It would take too long to recall all the places where Marian devotion is strong. We will mention a few that, even though they are “minor” are extremely beautiful and charming. They are all in municipalities in the Rimini area, except one that is in the Republic of San Marino.

above, on the left
**The Blessed Pio
Campidelli**

above, on the right
**Rimini, piazza Cavour,
Our Lady patron**

**saint of the city on
the façade of Palazzo
Garampi**

below
**Saiano di Torriana,
Sanctuary of the Beata
Vergine del Carmine**

7. The Sanctuary of the Beata Vergine del Carmine in Saiano di Torriana

In **Saiano**, in the municipality of **Torriana**, a small sanctuary was built on a rock almost in the gravel bed of the Marecchia River, beside a Romanesque cylindrical tower.

It is dedicated to the **Blessed Virgin of Carmel**, symbolized in an extremely sweet piece of plastic art perhaps dating from the 15th century. She was worshipped in particular by expectant mothers and the Virgin Mary is also said to have appeared here. It is popular with pilgrims and can be reached via a picturesque road that flanks the river. It could once also be reached from numerous nearby villages and to cross the river, ladders were laid down to act as a bridge. For this reason, a footbridge is placed across the river in summer called the *Ponte delle Scale* or Bridge of Ladders.

Here it is also possible to admire the splendid bronze entrance door created by Pomodoro, a famous sculptor born in Morciano di Romagna, and designed by the poet Tonino Guerra who worked hard to restore the sanctuary and the summer footbridge.

8. The cell in Talamello

In the Montefeltro area, in **Talamello**, just before reaching the village cemetery there is a small **cell** surrounded by lush greenery, a perfect example of late Gothic art.

It dates from 1437 and is entirely covered in frescoes by the Ferrara-born artist Antonio Alberti. It is a country cell commissioned by a Franciscan, the Bishop of Montefeltro, Giovanni Seclani, who is portrayed in it kneeling before the Virgin Mary and Child, amid lots of images of saints and below scenes of the Annunciation, the Adoration of the Magi and the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple. The cell was once preceded by a four-sided portico that was open to shelter wayfarers and pilgrims, many of whom have carved their names, the date of their stay here and sometimes also where they came from and where they were heading in the plaster; a terrible habit that for once has left us precious details on the history of the site.





above
**Talamello, frescoes by
Antonio Alberti inside
the cell**

below
**Valdragone di San
Marino, Sanctuary
of Santa Maria**

9. The Church and Convent of Santa Maria in Valdragone di San Marino

The Republic of San Marino is home to the interesting Sanctuary and annexed Convent of Santa Maria in **Valdragone**, an extremely fascinating place at the foot of Mount Titano.

The name recalls a mediaeval legend that claimed this place was overrun by dragons.

The church, which has a beautiful Renaissance portico and was built at the same time as the convent, has a 15th-century Madonna. It is Flemish made and is enclosed in a delightful 16th-century polyptych by the Rimini workshop of Coda, later embellished with intaglio and gilding.

The sacred image of Our Lady, between St Barbara and St Catherine has been the object of devotion throughout the years.

The image is known as the *Virgin of the Pear* because she is offering the Baby Jesus a pear; this is the symbolic gesture of divine love for mankind, iconographically of north European origin, and around it rotates the legend of the miracle of the roses.

It is narrated that until 1442 in San Marino prayers failed to mention Our Lady and for this reasons roses did not grow in the country. A pious monk claimed that the cause of this phenomenon was the fact that despite a large inheritance having been left, a convent had not been built. The preaching of the good monk did not fall on deaf ears and building began on an oratory where a dragon had sought refuge, hence its name - the valley of the dragon. As reward for the work, the monk gave the church a painting of the Madonna and Child. This was welcomed with great emotion and crowds soon flocked to worship the Virgin Mary. It seems this was not welcomed by the Malatesta family who were fearful of a revolt and they had the monk kidnapped and taken to Rimini. However, overnight the slopes of the mountain were covered in roses and when soldiers tried to hang him they failed because the ropes became entangled in the thorns. History and legend merge in the words on the plaques in the square and in the centuries-old custom of celebrating a pilgrimage to Valdragone every June carrying white roses. Worshipping the Madonna had been the constant commitment of the Friars of the Order of the Servants of Mary who completed the church and monastery.

above
Valdragone di San Marino, the Virgin of the Pear at the Monastery of Santa Maria

below, on the left
Valdragone di San Marino, Convent of Santa Maria

below, on the right
Romagnano di Sant'Agata Feltria, Church of the Madonna di Romagnano

In 1692 the church underwent considerable transformation and was consecrated in 1710 to Our Lady of Sorrows, who had been declared the patron saint of the Order of Servites some time earlier, and to St Philip Benizi. The monastery has now been chosen as the seat of the President of the Federation of the Servants of Mary of Italy and Spain.

10. The Church of the Madonna di Romagnano

In the diocese of San Marino and Montefeltro **Our Lady of Romagnano** is worshipped in particular. In **Romagnano**, an important outlying village of the municipality of Sant'Agata Feltria, but near the city of Sarsina, there was already a Christian community before the year 1000 that worshipped at the parish church that fell into decline during the 16th century until it finally collapsed during flooding in 1557. All that remained was the apse that can still be admired, along with conches and stones from the original building, in the more recently-built church. According to legend, on Thursday, 8 April 1563 the Virgin Mary appeared to a young shepherdess called Agata. From that miraculous moment, the most important one in the Savio Valley, the place became extremely popular and four and half centuries later this devotion is still alive and well. It led to the reconstruction of the church, the largest in the diocese after Sarsina cathedral, in 1564-1565. In fact, it became the most important Marian sanctuary in the diocese and is now also the parish church of Sapigno-Romagnano. Due to problems linked to stability, the large church was reconstructed and its original layout changed around 1805. Considerable restoration work was also carried out to mark the 400-year anniversary of the apparition in 1963 with the total reconstruction of the rectory and presbytery and a modern bell tower was added in 1971. The church and rectory were entirely renovated at the start of 2000 to welcome all the faithful and host celebrations in honour of the holy apparition.





above
**Pennabilli, Our Lady
of Graces**

below, on the left
**Trebbio di
Montegridolfo,**

**Sanctuary of the Beata
Vergine delle Grazie,
Apparition of Our Lady**

below, on the right
**Rimini, Holy Mary of
Mercy (Santa Chiara)**

Other miraculous Virgins

In July 1796 a modest image of the *Blessed Virgin waiting to give birth* painted by Costa and housed in the oratory of the ancient brotherhood of St Girolamo in **Rimini** (now in the **Oratory of San Giovannino**) began to “move its eyes”.

The phenomenon was verified by the Bishop's fiduciaries and by the Bishop himself and aroused surprise, enthusiasm and manifestations of faith in the entire diocese.

A Virgin Mary venerated in **Sant'Agata Feltria**, in the **Church of the Capuchins**, also moved its eyes. The *Immaculate Virgin*, a piece by the artist Angelo Angeloni of Pennabilli dating from 1786, known as the Madonna of the Capuchins, moved its eyes more than once between September 1796 and June 1850. Since then it has attracted the devotion and worship of many faithful who still venerate it. A process to recognize these miracles was written up in a 224-page book, subsequently sent to Rome to the Sacred Congregation of Rites who authorized its publication. A copy of the book is housed in the Monastery of the Capuchins in Sant'Agata Feltria.

During that period, similar miracles occurred in Rome too and in many other towns in the Papal State: more than 120 were counted and approved in canonical processes. The phenomenon continued for many months and Pius VI decreed a particular celebration on 9 July called the “Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary”. The arrival of Napoleon's troops in Rimini in February 1797 prevented the diffusion of reproductions of these miraculous Virgins and obstructed their worship.

In 1850 a copy of Our Lady of St Girolamo housed in the former chapel of the Poor Clares in Rimini, also began to “move her eyes”. Once again this miracle, recognized by everyone, aroused a great outpouring of faith throughout the area. Indeed the fame and devotion to this Madonna spread rapidly everywhere thanks also to the fact the miracle was repeated at intervals for eight consecutive months. This Madonna is still extremely popular and is known as **Holy Mary of Mercy**; the image is on the main altar of the Sanctuary of **Santa Chiara**, built in her honour in 1852.

How can we explain these miracles? It seems that the Virgin Mary on the eve of the invasion of the Napoleonic army and that of the troops of Piedmont, which was no less traumatic for the population, wanted to guarantee them her maternal presence and protection.

CHAPTER X

ART AND FAITH

1. Museums and collections

Art has always been a faithful handmaid of religion and artists have always effectively interpreted the piety and religious fervour of their time.

Naturally, places rich in spirituality are also often places rich in art.

The holy images that these houses often bear witness not only to devotion and religion, but also to culture, civilization and history.

This is not the theme of this publication, but it may be important to find some signs of art in addition to those already indicated above. The theme we are going to focus on concerns museums and some churches in particular, as we have already dwelled, albeit briefly, on most of the sanctuaries and churches and their works of art.

There are five museums on the territory that house a good number of important works of sacred art - in San Leo, Pennabilli, San Marino, Saludecio and Rimini - and some particularly unusual sites of spirituality are part of an unusual itinerant museum designed by local poet Tonino Guerra and called *The Places of the Soul*. These include the *Refuge of Abandoned Madonnas* in Pennabilli in the *Garden of Forgotten Fruits*, which houses images of the Virgin Mary created by local artists in memory of those that once adorned votive cells in the countryside. Another site, again based on an idea by the poet Tonino Guerra, is the church of *Our Lady of the Rectangle of Snow* in Ca' Romano, near Pennabilli, which was rebuilt after an earthquake in the area on a spot indicated by the Virgin Mary with a snowfall.

2. Museum of Sacred Art in San Leo

As well as some interesting paintings from various eras, the *Museum of Sacred Art* in **San Leo** also houses numerous stone sculptures from the early Middle Ages from the area and also from the cathedral and parish church.

It is a mirror of the territory and recalls its history and events. The *Lapidary* houses ancient sculptures from the city (8th-13th century), the *Room of Paintings* focuses on the early pictorial history of the territory and includes a 14th-century Crucifix, a painting of the *Madonna of the Apple* by Catarino di Marco from Venice (circa 1375) and a painting by Luca Frosino of the *Madonna with Child* (1487-1493) and the *Tabernacle Room* takes its name from the large wooden piece from the Franciscan Monastery of Sant'Igna that - thanks to its refined carvings and paintings - is one of the most unusual Renaissance pieces



above, on the left
**San Leo, Museum
of Sacred Art**

above, on the right
**Pennabilli,
A. Bergamaschi
Diocesan Museum**

below
**Sant'Agata Feltria,
"A rivedere le stelle"
diffused museum**

in the Montefeltro. A room housing numerous works of art, due largely to the liturgical dispositions of the Trent Council is dedicated to the period most represented, the 17th century.

3. A. Bergamaschi Diocesan Museum in Pennabilli

The *A. Bergamaschi Diocesan Museum* in **Pennabilli** is full of extremely important material - furniture, canvases, altarpieces, frames, ceramics, sacred vases and reliquaries - in about fifteen different rooms. This impressive collection was commissioned by Bishop Antonio Bergamaschi who in 1962 realized the importance of grouping together all the works of art from the diocese of Montefeltro, items often neglected or subject to forays, formerly housed mainly in the most distant churches and chapels. A sign of foresightedness designed to recover the key elements of popular culture, a testimony of faith that recounts the dialogue between God and man.

The new museum houses pieces by artists such as Benedetto Coda, Giovan Francesco da Rimini, Guido Cagnacci, Nicolò Berrettoni, Carlo Cignani, Giovanni Francesco and Guerrieri da Fossombrone and exponents of the Casteldurante workshops in Rome and Romagna.

It also houses a large number of liturgical items and holy vestments, sculptures, majolica and silverware. Everything is exhibited in a very unusual way in order to focus on the words of John Paul I that stated "ecclesiastical museums are not storerooms for inanimate exhibits, but perennial breeding grounds that hand down to us the geniality and spirituality of the community of believers".

4. A rivedere le stelle diffused museum in Sant'Agata Feltria

Another spiritual itinerary, consisting in numerous and unusual dioramas, in other words scenes for religious contemplation, was realized in **Sant'Agata Feltria** after three years of work supervised by the master craftsman and creator of Nativity scenes Marco Fantini. Called *A rivedere le stelle*, it is an original diffused museum that houses some of the best work by Italian and Spanish creators of Nativity scenes.

Most of these "places for meditation" are in the main town of Sant'Agata.

The itinerary begins in the rooms next to the fascinating Church of San Francesco della Rosa, in itself well worth visiting as it is what remains of a church-hermitage where St Francis of Assisi prayed in 1213, when passing through Sant'Agata. Another museum site is Fregoso Palace, formerly the town hall, where the 17th-century Mariani Theatre can be found on the ground floor, and yet another fascinating site is the Monastery of San Girolamo. Just outside the town are the charming villages of Rosciano, Pereto, Maiano and Badia Mont'Ercole.

5. St Francis Museum and Art Gallery in San Marino

St Francis Museum and Art Gallery in **San Marino** is full of liturgical furnishings and paintings of Franciscan origin, including two beautiful 16th-century altar paintings by Girolamo Marchesi of Cotignola. It is housed in the loggias that formed the 15th-century cloister of the old Franciscan monastery founded in 1361 and built by the Masters of Como. Inaugurated in 1966, the museum has a sacred art section and an art gallery. Only the most important pieces of the artistic heritage of the monastery and other Franciscan churches are on display: panel and canvas paintings, a precious fresco from the adjacent church, furnishings and ornaments and vestments dating from the 14th-18th centuries bear witness to the history of the presence of the Conventual Franciscans and their role in the growth of art and culture in the Republic.

Of the many precious liturgical items on display worth mentioning are a silver *Thurible and Incense Boat* dating from the early 16th century and attributed to the famous goldsmith Antonio Fabbri (1450-1529), engraver and ambassador to the Holy See, linked to Cellini and Raphael.

Also worth mentioning is the extremely elegant fresco of the *Adoration of the Magi* attributed to Antonio Alberti of Ferrara that is one of the oldest works of art in the Republic. It was created between 1430 and 1437 for the *Altar of the Three Kings* in the church where it was part of a larger complex sacrificed in 18th-century restoration work.

The picture gallery also houses marvellous art work, including two altarpieces by Girolamo Marchesi of Cotignola (Ravenna, circa 1472 - Rome, circa 1540) of the *Conception with St Augustine and St Anselm*





above

**San Marino, St Francis
Museum and Art
Gallery**

below

**Saludecio, Museum
of Saludecio and of
the Blessed Amato
Ronconi**

(1512) and the *Virgin Mary Enthroned with Saints* (1540). The first panel shows one of the oldest representations of Mount Titano and the other one of the first ideal portrayals of St Marino shown holding and “protecting” the city. Two small precious panels with gold background, attributed to Niccolò di Liberatore, also known as Niccolò Alunno (circa 1430 - 1502) each show pairs of Franciscan saints, *St Bonaventure and St Anthony of Padua* and *Pope Nicholas IV and St Francis* respectively.

6. Museum of Saludecio and of the Blessed Amato Ronconi

In **Saludecio**, the *Museum of Saludecio and of the Blessed Amato* houses works of art mainly from the town and linked to the worship of the Blessed Amato, including some magnificent 17th-century altarpieces by Guido Cagnacci and Centino particularly worthy of note.

One room has paintings, statues, reliquaries, liturgical ornaments, processional lamps and batons from the parish church and the ancient lay brotherhoods, showing the piety of the area and the importance of the village in the Conca Valley in the 17th and 18th centuries. The numerous silver chalices and above all, the paintings are of particular importance and include *St Sixtus Pope and the Procession of the Holy Sacrament* by Guido Cagnacci (1628), *Saints Anthony Abbot and Anthony of Padua* by Giovan Francesco Nagli, known as Il Centino (circa 1650) and *The Beheading of St John the Baptist* by Claudio Ridolfi (circa 1630). A second room is dedicated to the town's patron saint, the Blessed Amato Ronconi (13th century) whose body is venerated in the right-hand chapel in the parish church. Also on display are 17th-18th century silver items, almost all made in Rome, and numerous “historic” votive offerings. The church too is part of the museum and the crypt is a beautiful basement space with a collection of ancient liturgical vestments, Faenza-made devotional statues and paintings. Supported by angels, the “festoon” on the main altar of the crypt is by the Rimini-born sculptor Antonio Trentanove, who created all the church's stuccoes between 1798 and 1800.

7. Ethnographic Museum of Valliano di Montescudo

Valliano di Montescudo is home to a small, yet precious museum called the *Ethnographic Museum of Valliano* that pays homage

above
**Saludecio, Museum
of Saludecio and of
the Blessed Amato
Ronconi**

below
**Valliano di
Montescudo, Church
of Santa Maria del
Soccorso**

to farming life. It is housed in the former vestry and stands alongside an ancient, but particularly interesting former parish church dedicated to Our Lady of Succour, which is also an integral part of the museum.

The material housed inside comes entirely from the Montescudo area and from nearby Monte Colombo and is displayed with particular focus on the theme of the centrality of the home in farming life and the various activities that revolved around it. There are a huge variety of authentic and well-preserved items on display and photographs that support the anthropological history.

There is considerable focus on farming and popular religion, in particular, the devotion to the Virgin Mary; the many pieces housed in the church bear witness to this.

It has excellent 15th-century frescos, some of which are votive offerings, a venerated image of the *Virgin of the Rosary*, 16th and 17th-century canvases and numerous precious votive offerings.

8. Municipal Museum of Rimini

In **Rimini** many of the paintings in the *Municipal Museum* come from churches closed during the post-Napoleonic and post-Unity of Italy periods. As well as 14th-century paintings, these include a masterpiece by Giovanni Bellini, a panel painting by Ghirlandaio and canvases by Cagnacci, Centino, Guercino and Cantarini.

The collection includes paintings and sculptures, ceramics and medals, coins, inscriptions and architectural fragments from the city and the surrounding area.

The room known as the Judgement Room has a large, 14th-century fresco of the *Last Judgement* from the Augustinian Church of San Giovanni Evangelista. It is one of the oldest (circa 1310) and most important pieces by the “14th-century School of Rimini”, active in the first half of the century in the regions of Emilia Romagna, the Marche and Veneto. The museum has pieces by Giovanni, Giuliano and Pietro da Rimini, the three main artists of the “school” whose development coincided with the ascent to power of the Malatesta family. Stone coats of arms and inscriptions concern this family and in particular Sigismondo Pandolfo (1417-1468) who commissioned Castel Sismondo and the Malatesta Temple. The





museum houses almost the entire series of Malatesta medals cast for him by Pisanello and Matteo de' Pasti, masterpieces of this art form and a *Young Bearer of the Coats of Arms* by Agostino di Duccio originally from the Malatesta Temple, as was the museum's jewel, a panel of the *Pietà* painted by Giovanni Bellini around 1470. Dating from the 17th century are two wonderful little paintings by Francesco Maffei and some masterpieces by Simone Cantarini and Guercino, as well as two great local artists, Guido Cagnacci (1601-1663) and Giovan Francesco Nagli, known as Il Centino (circa 1605-1675). The museum has some charming pieces by the former including *St Anthony Abbot and the Vocation of St Matthew*, a *Cleopatra* and a beautiful *Portrait of a Doctor-Monk*, whilst by the second it has some canvases and altarpieces that show his harsh, devout style.

CHAPTER XI

FROM THE YEAR 1000 TO THE 20TH CENTURY

These were extremely important centuries for sacred art in the province of Rimini and have left a rich and precious heritage that can be encountered travelling around its valleys, towns, cities and villages. This art bears witness to a particularly deep-rooted spirituality.

Unable to indicate a comprehensive itinerary here, we have focused on the most important pieces from both a devotional and at the same time historical and artistic point of view.

1. Parish churches and Romanesque art

Santarcangelo di Romagna, Verucchio, San Leo and Ponte Messa di Pennabilli all boast ancient parish churches that are well worth visiting.

They are the result of the diffusion of Christianity in the lands of the Malatesta and Montefeltro that occurred fairly early on given the key role played by the port of Rimini in trade with Africa and the Orient in the late Roman period and the close links the city had with the inland area. Mediaeval documents confirm the presence of a network of parish churches dating from before the 10th and 11th centuries in the most densely populated and important towns, situated along roads linking the city with other main towns such as the well-known Roman consular roads Via Emilia and Via Flaminia, Via Aretina (now the Marecchiese road) and *Flaminia Minor* or *Via Regalis* (towards the Marche). Most of these churches have been destroyed, but those that remain are worthy of mention. The oldest and most fascinating is in **Santarcangelo di Romagna** and is dedicated to the *Archangel Michael*. It is a kilometre from the village and is a well-proportioned, single nave building with a bright interior and all the features typical of 6th-century Ravenna-Byzantine art such as a polygonal apse, thin brick walls and arched windows. Built in the 12th-13th century, the bell tower and memorial stone on which the only altar - a Mediaeval sculpture with shoots of leaves and a Barbarian-style bird of prey clutching a small quadruped - stands are proof that it continued to be used over the years.

In **Villa Verucchio** visitors can admire the parish church of *San Martino* built in Romanesque Gothic rustic architecture on a slope shaded by olive trees, at the foot of a large rock on which stands the main town of the Malatesta and the Villanovans, **Verucchio**.

The most characteristic Romanesque parish church is in **San Leo**. Dedicated to *St Mary of the Assumption* it dates from the 11th century although it was built on a sacred building that was at least two centuries older, as the elegant ciborium inside shows. Overlooking the town's main square, it has three Lombard-inspired apses topped by small arches and

above
**Santarcangelo di
Romagna, Parish
church of San Michele
Arcangelo**

below, on the left
**Verucchio, Parish
church of San Martino**

below, on the right
**San Leo, inside the
Parish church of Santa
Maria Assunta**

the entrance is at the side. In fact, like the splendid cathedral dedicated to St Leone adjacent to it, its façade faces east and overlooks a precipice. It has a central nave and two side aisles with pilasters and columns, recovered from other buildings, with Roman capitals. The ciborium by Duke Orso has been recomposed on the raised presbytery; supported by four columns with contemporary capitals the white limestone ciborium has writing around the perimeter with the name of the commissioner, Duke Orso, and the period - between 881 and 882.

Climbing the course of the Marecchia River we come across the parish church of **Ponte Messa**, in the municipality of Pennabilli, a fine example of late 12th-century Romanesque architecture. Dedicated to St Peter it too was built on a place of worship dating from at least two centuries earlier. It retained its function as a parish church with a baptismal font at least until the mid-16th century and then began to fall into decay. The aisles were used for agricultural purposes and it lost its apse, roof, bell tower and the upper part of the façade that were rebuilt at later dates. Today it is a very narrow space, divided into three naves by pillars with rounded arches and a high presbytery with crypt below. The top of the only altar in the presbytery is supported by a Roman memorial stone. The most interesting part of the building is the façade that features horizontal stringcourses and pilasters that form a quadrangular grid and above all, a beautiful portal with porch. The latter, like some of the capitals inside, has several, Barbarian-style sculptures with imaginary and monstrous animals.

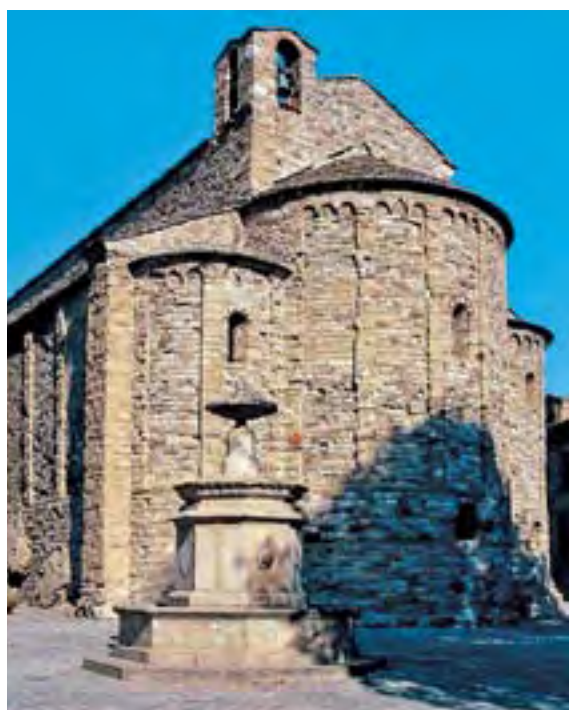
Of the other churches with Romanesque layout that are still well-preserved we should mention the Oratory of Santa Marina in **Novafeltria** that dates from 1191; it has stylized forms and seems almost grafted onto a rocky spur.

In the same municipality, in **Secchiano Marecchia**, is the ancient parish church of Santa Maria in Vico.

In **Casteldelci** two ancient churches in particular deserve a mention; Santa Maria in Sasseto, which houses interesting frescoes by the School of Rimini and the parish church of Casteldelci, now privately owned.

Moving from the Marecchia Valley to the Conca Valley it is worth visiting the Romanesque church of **San Salvatore**. It is inland





above
**Pennabilli, Parish
church of San Pietro
in Ponte Messa**

below, on the left
**Novafeltria, Oratory
of Santa Marina**

below, on the right
**San Leo, Parish
church of Santa Maria
Assunta**

from Rimini, in the countryside on the road that leads towards Ospedaletto and Cerasolo Ausa. It was built between the 8th and 9th centuries, but has unfortunately undergone considerable renovation work since then and has been partly rebuilt. It does however retain a 13th-century apse with stone capitals that recall typically Byzantine decorative weaving and forms. In fact, until the end of the 13th century the Coriano area was part of the territories governed by the Church of Ravenna.

Climbing towards Montescudo, in **Trarivi** visitors will find the remains of an ancient mediaeval church, formerly a 9th-century Benedictine abbey. It was seriously damaged during the Second World War and now houses the Museum of the Eastern Gothic Line.

In **Onferno** in the municipality of Gemmano is the parish church of **Santa Colomba**, currently deconsecrated. It houses the Natural History Museum of Onferno Nature Reserve and Caves.

The village of **Pieggia** near Mondaino is home to the 6th-century church of **Sant'Apollinare**.

2. A brief excursus into sacred art in the territory from the 13th - 18th century

The oldest pictorial image of the territory is represented by a fragment, limited only to the face of Christ, from a monumental Crucifix once housed in the Cathedral of San Leone. Painted in 1205, it is now housed in the Museum of Sacred Art in San Leo.

With regard to the 14th century, we should refer to the Crucifix by Giotto in the Malatesta Temple and the work of the "14th-century School of Rimini" which we have looked at in detail.

The 15th century is naturally well represented by the Malatesta Temple in Rimini and by the works of art housed within, including the unforgettable fresco by Piero della Francesca dated 1451 and portraying Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta kneeling before St Sigismondo.

We should also not forget the extraordinary ceramics housed in the Church of Santa Maria d'Antico in Maiolo that portray a candid Madonna with Benedictory Child by Andrea della Robbia; dating from the end of the 15th century it is a real masterpiece that is still fairly unknown.

The "best" of the 16th century is represented by the Riminese

above
Trarivi di Montescudo,
remains of the
Benedictine abbey

below, on the left
Maiolo, Church of
Santa Maria di Antico,
Madonna with Child by
Andrea or Luca della
Robbia

below, on the right
Maiolo, Church
of Sant'Apollinare

paintings of Giorgio Vasari, in the former Abbey of Scolca (San Fortunato) and the Malatesta Temple, whilst the 17th century is represented by the work of Cagnacci and Centino; many of their paintings can be found in the area's churches and in the museums in Rimini, Saludecio and Pennabilli.

In the area, the 17th-century "Baroque" period boasts an unmissable work of art; an altarpiece by Pietro da Cortona in the Church of San Girolamo in Sant'Agata Feltria, in the upper Marecchia Valley.

There are some beautiful churches dating from the 18th century, in particular those in Rimini belonging to the Augustinians (San Giovanni Evangelista), the Carmelites (San Giovanni Battista), the Jesuits (Church of Suffrage) and the Servants of Mary (Santa Maria in Corte); the latter is adorned with gilded stuccoes by Antonio Trentanove and important altarpieces by the Bolognese artists Albani, Massari and Gandolfi.

Of the many works of art in the Conca Valley we should mention two in particular. One is in the municipality of **Monte Colombo** where the Church of San Martino has a marvellous 18th-century painting of St Martin by Brancaloni.

The second is in the Church of **San Clemente** that was built in 1836 on a previous 14th-century one. It houses a canvas of the Holy Family by Giovanni Battista Costa, an important 18th-century Rimini-born artist.

In the Marecchia Valley there are numerous artistic pieces from the 17th-18th centuries. Unable to list them all we will point out only the large altarpieces and wooden sculptures in the parish church of San Biagio in **Sartiano** di Novafeltria and several canvases in the collegiate churches of **Santarcangelo di Romagna** and **Verucchio**.

3. In the Republic of San Marino, a sanctuary that is the sign of contemporary architecture and the Second Vatican Council

In San Marino there is a modern church of great historical and architectural importance well worth visiting. It is the Sanctuary of the Beata Vergine della Consolazione, known also as the Church of the Beata Vergine, in the district of Borgo Maggiore. It is owned by the brotherhood of Our Lady of Consolation and is now also used as a parish church.

It was designed by one of the most prestigious, well-known and popular architects in the history of Italian and European architecture.





Giovanni Michelucci, a top 20th-century architect and town planner, is famous for having designed Santa Maria Novella railway station in Florence and the church on the Autostrada del Sole motorway amongst others.

For the above reasons, the church designed by Michelucci in Borgo Maggiore is subject to heritage protection laws and has been studied in universities; it is a much more mature piece compared to the extremely famous church on the motorway near Florence.

Thanks to the church in San Marino, Michelucci became part of a very precise historical context that comes after the Second Vatican Council. According to the dictates of the Council, mass would no longer be in Latin and the priest would no longer face the church, but the congregation. The priest would no longer be only the connection between man and God, but part of the community itself. Therefore, the architect placed the altar facing the congregation and did not design long aisles leading to the cross. The church is seen as a meeting of the community and the one in the Republic of San Marino is one of the first, if not the first, in the world to have been designed entirely in this new direction.

Work on the church began in February 1964 and it was consecrated on 11 June 1967. The complex has an irregular, trapezoidal layout with a series of internal walkways that develop around the main space, which is about four metres below road level.

Entrance is through a narthex from which two corridors begin; one leads directly to the gallery reserved for women whilst the other, thanks to a covered stairway, leads along the churchyard to the lower hall.

Originally in lead, the roof of the building is now copper and it consists in two pitches resting on parabolic arches.

It is not an isolated building, but is part of a much vaster complex that opens onto the surrounding area, precisely because it was designed as a place where social relations could be developed - a kind of small town designed to favour interior and exterior dialogue.

CHAPTER XII

LOCAL SAINTS

The early Middle Ages gave us a series of saints whose memory is entrusted only to ancient and uncertain traditions. These include **St Paula** of Roncofreddo, a young shepherdess of whom only some poetic legends are known and **St Arduinus** and **St Venerius**, a priest and abbot respectively, who are said to have lived in Rimini in the 10th century.

1. In Rimini

The severe **St Aldebrandus**, on the other hand, was a 13th-century saint who according to hagiography preached against the Patarines, but who probably merely sought to defend the prerogatives and material assets of the Church of Rimini from usurpation by the municipality. Aldebrandus was forced to flee the city, but became Bishop of Fossombrone, where he died shortly before being proclaimed a saint around 1250.

The **Blessed Amato** of Saludecio is from the same century; a farmer, pilgrim and founder of a hospice for pilgrims he died around 1300 after completing one of his devout journeys to Santiago de Compostela. Details of the museum dedicated to him can be found in the pages above.

From a little later are **Gregorio Celli** and **Giovanni Gueruli** from Verucchio - the former an Augustinian hermit and the latter a canon - and the **Blessed Simone Balacchi** of Santarcangelo, a Dominican.

Born in Verucchio in 1225, the Blessed Gregorio Celli still has a good following to this day. He died at the age of 118 with all the floridity of a young man. His famous devotees include Pope Ganganelli, Clement XIV, who decreed his beatification. According to tradition, after his death a mule appeared and carried his dead body to the Monastery of Sant'Agostino in Verucchio where Galeotto Malatesta commissioned an arch and chapel for his holy relics that today rest in the collegiate church of Verucchio. Several miracles have been attributed to him since the 17th century.

Another important figure is the **Blessed Chiara of Rimini**, who died in 1326: a bigot who lived without rules, she became zealous and penitent after her sudden conversion following a life of excess, becoming a mystic who also did a lot of charitable work. She also founded a convent for poor women dedicated to Our Lady of the Annunciation, which closed in 1797.

The dispersion and movement of the relics of saints and blessed figures caused by the Napoleonic suppressions and the Second World War means that only some of them still have a large following to this day. These include the Blessed Gregorio Celli of Verucchio, the Blessed Simone Balacchi of Santarcangelo, whose remains are housed in the town in a chapel in the collegiate church and attract numerous faithful who seek

above
**Santarcangelo di
Romagna, collegiate
church, chapel of the
Blessed Simone**

below, on the left
**Saludecio, Museum of
the Blessed Amato**

below, on the right
Blessed Gregorio Celli

his protection in virtue of his ability to perform miracles, and the Blessed Amato, venerated in the parish church of Saludecio and for whom a process of canonization is underway. The latter also has a very interesting museum dedicated to him adjacent to the town's church.

It seems that after the 14th century and almost to the present day, the Church of Rimini did not offer its faithful the example of other figures noted for their spirituality and saintliness. In fact, there are no other local saints or blessed figures until the modern day, with the exception of the older brother of Sigismondo Malatesta, **Galeotto Roberto**, lord of Rimini from 1429 to 1432. Gripped by religious zeal, Galeotto Roberto was uninterested in governmental problems, so much so that he had to be called on by the Pope himself to fulfil his "state duties", but soon after his early death (he was just 20 years old) he was proclaimed blessed by the people. We do not know how much the influence of the Malatesta family and the Franciscans (he was a Franciscan of the Third Order) weighed on this decision, but he had a considerable following, supported by numerous miracles. Worship to him weakened when his mortal remains were moved to the Church of San Francesco (in 1687), ending completely in the early 19th century.

2. In the diocese of Montefeltro

Naturally the diocese of Montefeltro also has its saints.

In Miratoio in the municipality of Pennabilli it is still possible to venerate the remains of the **Blessed Rigo** (or Enrico) housed in the marvellous ancient Augustinian monastery-hermitage where he lived at length in solitude and penitence and where he died in 1347.

Also in the municipality of Pennabilli, another highly-respected and venerated figure is **Brother Matteo of Bascio**, founder of the Capuchins who was beatified in 1625 (see below).

The body of the Dominican monk **Domenico Spadafora** is still preserved and venerated in Montecerignone, in the Montefeltro area though a little outside the province of Rimini. He was a master of theology and founded the local Dominican monastery where he lived for 30 years and where he died in 1521. He was proclaimed blessed exactly four centuries later in 1921.





3. Matteo of Bascio, founder of the Capuchins

Born in 1495 near the castle of Bascio, now in the municipality of Pennabilli, Matteo is described in a manuscript as being “tall, with a long, slim face, who smiled little and was also not very happy” and a Capuchin chronicler who met him in 1543 stated “he was rougher in handling himself, not at all sociable and this came from a certain natural characteristic that made him lean towards melancholy”. These characteristics are befitting of the Capuchin Rule he wanted to create at any cost. He became a Franciscan monk in 1515, joining the Monastery of Montefiorentino near Frontino where he was ordained a priest. From here he began to evangelize the villages of the Montefeltro, preaching in an apocalyptic and penitential tone that made him famous in the area. In particular, he preached respect of Franciscan rule and frequently lamented the failure of his brothers to observe it. Due to his growing dissatisfaction and restlessness he decided to abandon the monastery in 1525 and head to Rome to request permission from Pope Clement VII to follow the example of St Francis and live a life of poverty and itinerant preaching. He was granted authorization by the Pope to lead the life of a hermit outside the monastery, following Franciscan rule to the letter, preaching without a fixed abode and wearing a new style of habit with a pointed hood sewn onto the tunic, but without a devotional scapular. The only obligation imposed by the Pope was that he should present himself each year on the occasion of the Chapter before the provincial minister of the Observants as a sign of obedience. In April 1525, the Franciscans held their Chapter and Matteo went there as an act of submission, but he was arrested as an apostate. Once freed he continued to preach and continued to attract followers. But his vicissitudes with the ecclesiastical institutions did not end there. His life as a prophetic, penitential and recalcitrant preacher continued throughout Italy. He used simple rhythmical phrases so that they could easily be understood even by the illiterate and asked them to sing pious songs, “preached the Crucifix” and ended by shouting “to hell all sinners”. He died on 6 August 1552 in Venice while resting in a corner of the bell tower of the Church of San Moisè, where he had been offered shelter for the night. He had a common burial, but on 3 October his body was exhumed and transferred to the Church of the Osservanti di San Francesco della Vigna where he began to be venerated as a saint.



Father Orazio Olivieri della Penna “The White-Haired Llama”

Although Father Orazio Olivieri from Pennabilli has not been beatified he worked extensively for evangelization and communion between people. The Capuchin monk left the Malatesta town where he was born in 1680 to found a mission in Tibet for the first time. In Lhasa he built a great relationship with the local monks and population. He took printing material with him and wrote an Italian-Tibetan dictionary that was also translated into English. He was so esteemed that he was called the “White-Haired Llama” by the Tibetan clergy.

Although it has recently been found, all traces of the dictionary had been lost, but there was information about a bell taken there by Father Orazio. It was discovered in 1994 and its sound was recorded and brought back to Pennabilli.

On 15 June 1994, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, visiting Pennabilli to mark the 250th anniversary of the death of the missionary, listened to the toll of the bell and was thus able - after being in exile since 1959 - to hear a sound from his beloved homeland, thanks to the memory of Father Orazio. On his house in Via Olivieri, two memorial tablets recall the figure of the missionary Capuchin and the visit of the Dalai Lama.

Blessed Amato, from Saludecio to Santiago in the footsteps of St Francis

Born in 1226, Amato Ronconi attended the Franciscan monastery of Formosino in Mondaino before deciding, like Francis, to live a life of wandering that took him to the Sanctuary of Santiago de Compostela in Spain five times. He wore a pilgrim's tunic, tied with a leather strap and with a small bag for alms and the shell of the pilgrims of Santiago around his neck. When not travelling, he sheltered and fed pilgrims in his home, which he had turned into a hospice. If food ran out he performed a miracle like the one with turnips - he had planted them in his garden the same morning and when he sent someone to pick them they were already fully grown. During his fifth pilgrimage to Santiago, an angel appeared to him and predicted his death so on his return he gave away all his worldly goods. He died in 1292. On touching his body, that did not decompose, many returned to full health so people began to call him blessed, a title he was officially given by the Church in 1776. His miracles include protecting his home town during the war. Preliminary investigations into his sanctification have now closed with the publication of a *positio* by the Sacred Congregation of the Causes of Saints.

CHAPTER XIII

MODERN SAINTS

In the Rimini area, there have been numerous important spiritual figures. However, in the 17th and 18th centuries the local Church showed a lack of attention towards them, despite some being celebrated in published biographies. It was necessary to wait until the late 18th century for their sainthood to be officially recognized.

It was the Popes of "Romagna" - Santarcangelo-born Clement XIV (Pope Ganganeli who abolished the Order of the Jesuits and to whom the town dedicated the main square and triumphal arch) and Cesena's Pius VI and Pius VII - who included them in the register of blessed figures after certifying that locals had venerated them since ancient times.

After the Second World War the pastoral importance of offering the faithful figures that stood out for their exemplary life was fully understood and in recent years they have officially been declared either lay or religious blessed figures.

1. Contemporary blessed figures

In the province of Rimini there are many contemporary blessed figures. These include **Pio Campidelli**, a young Passionist born in Poggio Berni, where his house can still be visited, who died in 1889 and was beatified in 1985. Another is **Sister Elisabetta Renzi**, an educator born in Saludecio in 1786, who died in 1859 and was beatified in 1989 (see page 59), **Sister Maria Rosa Pellesi**, a Franciscan tertiary from Sant'Onofrio, who died in 1972 and was beatified in 2007 and a lay person, engineer **Alberto Marvelli**, who died in 1946 and was beatified in 2004.

Several other figures have been proclaimed venerable and canonization processes are underway for Amato Ronconi, Pio Campidelli and Alberto Marvelli; the latter is particularly well-known and venerated thanks to his social commitment and his activity in carrying out various charitable initiatives.

2. Father Agostino of Montefeltro, illustrious 19th-century scholar and preacher

In the second half of the 19th century in the diocese of San Marino and Montefeltro, a figure who stood out was **Father Agostino of Montefeltro**. He was born Luigi Vicini in Sant'Agata Feltria on 1 March 1839, where his birth home in Via Giannini can still be visited. He was a Franciscan, an illustrious scholar and preacher considered a benefactor of the Risorgimento as he supported and promoted the ideals of freedom and patriotism. He had a great personality and worked hard, not only in religious terms, but above all as a man of culture heavily involved in the

above
**Santarcangelo
di Romagna,
Archaeological
History Museum**

below, on the left
Sister Elisabetta Renzi

below, on the right
**Father Agostino
of Montefeltro**

political events linked to the Unity of Italy. He was famous for his sermons and did not disdain talking about extremely delicate topics for the period concerning for example, the motherland and politics and attracting criticism and accusations from the ecclesiastical world and other areas. Born in 1839, the first son of a wealthy family, he became a clergyman at the age of 22. In 1867 he experienced a deep moral and religious crisis that led him first to flee to Florence and Milan with a girl from his village and then to seek refuge in Switzerland where he attempted suicide.

His crisis ended in 1870 and having regained his vocation he decided to join the Order of Friars Minor, taking the name **Father Agostino of Montefeltro**. It was then that his fame as a great orator began to spread and attract people of different educational backgrounds and social rank. His most famous sermons were those given for Lent in 1889 in Rome in the Church of San Carlo al Corso. These caused great uproar and enthusiasm and were even published. In the social field, his speeches helped to prepare the ground for the *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII and he promoted various initiatives in Pisa and its province where he founded various types of school and the Marine Institute of Pisa for orphaned girls. He also founded a congregation of sisters, the *Daughters of Nazareth*, who professed the Rule of the Regular Third Order of St Francis.

He died in Pisa in 1921 and a few years later, in 1939, the cause for his beatification began, although it was initially rejected due to a negative opinion regarding his youth. In 2007 the sisters of the *Daughters of Nazareth* again forwarded a request on the basis of new documents found in the library of the Franciscan fathers in Florence.

3. Pasquale Tosi of San Vito, missionary and explorer

Pasquale Tosi was a Jesuit who visited the Red Indian tribes of America and the Eskimos of Alaska, becoming an impassioned missionary and explorer. He was born in the parish of San Vito di Santarcangelo in 1837. Ordained a diocesan priest in 1861, Tosi joined the Company of Jesus the following year. He lived for twenty years with a Red Indian tribe in the Rocky Mountains and twelve years with the Eskimos of Alaska, learning dozens of local dialects to the extent that he was able to draw up a grammar





of the Eskimo language and an Eskimo-English dictionary later published by the federal government of the United States. He also undertook a long journey to explore beyond the Behring Straits where no European had ever set foot. He fell ill and died in the capital of Alaska in 1898.

4. The Blessed Pio, a Passionist at 14 years of age

In the diocese of Rimini, **Pio Campidelli** was one of the figures dearest to the faithful of southern Romagna and had a great following. Born in the village of Trebbio near Poggio Berni in 1868 the fourth of six children he proved to be a kind soul from an early age, inclined to pray and study; he could often be seen removing stones from the road to stops passersby swearing.

He found out about the Passionists at the age of 12 and immediately decided to follow them, but was asked to wait as he was too young. Finally, in 1882, he entered the monastery and donned the habit of the Passionist, bearing witness to everyone of his coherent and joyful life and standing out for his extraordinary devotion to the Eucharist, the Crucifix and Our Lady. He was not ordained because he contracted tuberculosis and died on 2 November 1889, as he himself had predicted, at just 21 years of age. During his illness he had often repeated: "I offer my life for the Church, the Supreme Pontiff, the congregation, the conversion of sinners and especially, the good of my beloved Romagna". He was buried in the cemetery of San Vito, but in 1923 the mortal remains of the person referred to as the "little saint of Casale" were moved to the sanctuary of Casale. On 21 March 1983, Pope John Paul II declared Pio "venerable", acknowledging there had been unequivocal signs of sainthood in his life. On 6 December 1984 the miracle received by Sister Maria Foschi by intercession of Pio was approved. In 1985 his bones, found in a perfect state of preservation, were recognized and on 17 November 1985 he was declared "blessed" by the Pope. The Church commemorates him on 2 November, whilst Passionist congregations celebrate him on 3 November.

CHAPTER XIV
**PATRON
SAINTS' DAYS
AND RELIGIOUS
CELEBRATIONS
AND EVENTS**

1. Patron saints' days and religious celebrations

On 9 February, **Bellaria Igea Marina** celebrates **Saint Apollonia**, the town's patron saint. The event officially begins on Saturday and continues for two weeks with cultural events, shows and entertainment, including the *Palio of the Quarters* and *The Eve of St Apollonia* with traditional music and dancing. A fair of the same name is also held, an event that attracts numerous visitors that come to the town each year for this celebration. The packed programme of events includes celebrations for St Valentine's day, in honour of all lovers.

On 2 September, **Casteldelci** commemorates the **Feast of Our Lady** with processions and liturgical celebrations.

In **Cattolica**, whose name in Greek means "parish church", the 30 April is a day of religious celebrations in honour of the town's patron saint **St Pius V**. He was born Michele Ghisleri in 1504 in a small village near Tortona in the province of Alessandria. His first act as Pope was to give the money previously used to celebrate the Pope's election to the poor. He was responsible for numerous liturgical reforms, including the Tridentine Breviary and Missal. After his election, as a sign of humility, he decided to keep the habit of the Dominican Order and Papal vestments changed from red to white.

Various religious feasts are held in **Coriano** and several outlying villages. In August in **Passano** an ancient celebration is held in honour of the **Blessed Henry of Hungary** who died on 1 August in an unspecified year, but probably in the 13th century. The day attracts former inhabitants, but not only and the programme includes various sacred rites and convivial dinners.

In September, **Ospedaletto** hosts the **Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows** a traditional religious feast with solemn processions and entertainment with folk music, dancing, games and food and wine stands.

Also in September, **Cerasolo** and **Mulazzano** host two separate feast days in honour of **Our Lady of the Sun**, with religious celebrations with sacred rites and entertainment.

A month later, in October, **Sant'Andrea in Besanigo** celebrates the **Feast of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary** where sacred events culminate in a solemn procession.

Around 20 January, **Gemmano** hosts the **Feast of St Sebastian Martyr** who is the patron saint of the village and of **Coriano**.

In **Carbognano** in the municipality of Gemmano celebrations have been held every 1 May since 1982 for the feast of **St Vincent**. The procession ends with a mass and celebrations continue with food and wine stands and folk music with a local band.



In **Misano Adriatico** and **Maiolo, St Blaise, the Armenian**, the patron saint of the two municipalities, is celebrated on 3 February. He is the protector of the throat and all those who use their vocal chords. So in many churches candles are blessed on the feast of St Blaise and the *Feast of Candlemas*, the day before. The priest crosses two blessed candles and places them under the chin and on the throats of those who wish to be protected. The faithful kneel before the altar as the priest says; "By intercession of St Blaise, Bishop and martyr, may God free you from sore throats and any other illness, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen".

Misano Adriatico also hosts another celebration on Easter Monday - the **Feast of the Agina**. A holy mass is held in the morning and at lunchtime there are food and wine stands and traditional music and dancing. The feast has been held for centuries; it was abolished for a certain period of time until a group of locals, led by the parish priest, tried to give it back its ancient and strong sense of piety and community. It is preceded on Good Friday by a procession after which cake and wine are served.

In **Misano Monte** another important religious celebration is held on 26 August that has for over 100 years celebrated the **Feast of the Crucifix**.

On 29 September, the patron saint **St Michael Archangel** is celebrated in **Mondaino** where the parish church, the most important in the village, is dedicated to him. Built on the site of a former temple to Diana in the 18th century, it boasts interesting canvases by the Marche School that date from the 15th and 16th century.

Also in **Mondaino** on the 5 August **Our Lady of the Snow** is celebrated in the church of Tavollo, whilst in **Morciano** the patron saint **St Michael Archangel** is held on 29 September.

For a few days in March, starting from the second week, a thousand-year-old tradition is repeated that announces the arrival of spring. It is **St Gregory's Fair** that was historically held in the Monastery of San Gregorio in Conca, founded around 1060 by St Peter Damian.

On 11 November each year, **Monte Colombo** celebrates its patron saint **St Martin of Tours** to whom the parish church is dedicated. It was seriously damaged during the Second World War because the Gothic Line passed nearby.

above, on the right
Secchiano Marecchia
di Novafeltria, Parish
church of Santa Maria
in Vico

below
Maiolo, Church of
Santa Maria di Antico

In **Novafeltria**, the 29 June is the feast of **St Peter and Paul**, celebrated in the church dedicated to them. The original village nucleus dates from around 950 with the Church of San Pietro in Culto built, along with other parish churches in the valley, during the process of evangelization of the Montefeltro.

Also in the municipal territory, in August the village of **Miniera di Perticara** celebrates the **Feast of Our Lady of Miniera** to recall and venerate the Blessed Virgin of Ca' del Tozzo, a symbol and light for miners. Events include religious celebrations, photographic exhibitions, dance evenings and concerts, fireworks and food and wine stands.

Another small village, **Secchiano Marecchia**, celebrates **Our Lady of Graces**, also known as Our Lady of Sorrows. This is a two-day event held on the Sunday after Easter in **Ca' Rosello**, where a small and gracious oratory stands in the centre of the small square, and on 15 August with the celebration of the patron saint in **Santa Maria in Vico**.

For hundreds of years on **Good Friday, Montefiore Conca** has celebrated a traditional and very famous dramatic procession. The procession, with hooded members of the congregation, the Cyrene carrying the Cross, Roman soldiers, angels and other figures from the Passion of Christ leaves from the monastery of the Capuchins on Mount Auro and ends in the old town centre in the 15th-century Church of the Ospedale della Misericordia, which houses frescoes from the period, where the statue of the dead Christ is laid and kissed. The costumes, torches and a band make this rite an extremely evocative event of religious piety and popular culture.

On 25 January in the same town, the patron saint **St Paul**, to whom the ancient church in the old town is dedicated, is celebrated.

St Rocco, patron saint of **Montegridolfo** is celebrated there on 16 August.

Pennabilli celebrates **Our Lady of Graces**, known as *Beautiful Friday*, every year on the third Friday in March. The event marks the anniversary of the miraculous tears shed here on the third Friday in March 1489. An inscription on the Church of San Cristoforo reads; "To posterity. This image of the Mother of God, as a premonition of future calamity, moved by compassion for the people, shed tears that were dried





three or four times and returned, as testified by the annals written by eye witnesses, 20 March in the year of the Lord 1489". A procession is held after mass, which is officiated by the Bishop.

The feast day of the patron saint of **Pennabilli, St Pius V** is held on 5 May with grand liturgical celebrations and prayer in the cathedral named in his honour.

On Good Friday, the old town centre of Pennabilli hosts the evocative **Procession of the Jews** organised by the Confraternity of Our Lady of Sorrows. The procession, which winds its way through the town's streets, leaves from the ancient oratory of Santa Maria della Misericordia.

On 15 August in the Church of Madonna delle Grazie or of Sant'Agostino, the most famous in Pennabilli, a mass is celebrated with a sermon by the Bishop and a speech by the mayor in honour of locals who emigrated from here. The celebration is known as the **Feast of Return**, although traditionally it is not only locals who participate in this religious and lay festivity.

The outlying hamlets of Pennabilli are traditionally linked to ancient religious feasts. These include **Maciano** where, on the Sunday closest to 16 May, **St Pasquale** is honoured with religious and lay celebrations.

In **Ponte Messa** the entire village celebrates the **Feast of the Parish Church of San Pietro in Messa** on the Sunday after 15 August.

In **Scavolino**, the Bishop officiates holy mass and blesses agricultural tools on 1 August for the **Feast of the Community**.

Poggio Berni celebrates its patron saint, **St George**, on 23 April.

Several religious feasts are celebrated throughout the year in **Rimini**. The patron saint, **St Gaudentius** is celebrated each year on 14 October. Every two years however, it takes the name of **Feast of the Borough of Sant'Andrea** where the parish church dedicated to the saint stands. It is when the city returns to its origins and traditions after the summer months, celebrating also the feast of its history. There are numerous events including religious functions on the morning of the 14 October, including a procession with a statue and relics of the saint, led

by the Bishop of the diocese of Rimini. Later there's entertainment, music, exhibitions, meetings, guided visits, stands and food and wine.

The quarter of **Colonnella** celebrates the **Blessed Virgin of Colonnella** on 25 March, the day of the Annunciation. The municipality of Rimini, which had the *jus patronatus* on the church, used to send two councillors to represent it, but this custom fell by the wayside after the Unity of Italy.

In **Covignano**, the **Sanctuary of the Madonna delle Grazie**, which is flanked by a 16th-century Franciscan cloister, hosts all Marian festivities and on Good Friday an important Stations of the Cross celebration is held that winds its way from the marble Crucifix at the foot of the hill to each of the 14 ceramic aedicules by the Rimini-born master Elio Morri.

Here too, as in other Franciscan monasteries and convents, the **Feast of the Pardon of Assisi** is celebrated on 2 August.

Every year in the first half of June, the feast of **St Anthony of Padua** is celebrated in **Rimini** near the **Bridge of the Resistance**, known as the **Bridge of Miracles**. This is a popular and religious two-day celebration that recalls the saint's visit to Rimini and his miracles. The bridge, where it is said St Anthony preached to the fish, becomes the centre of celebrations that begin on Friday evening with processions and stops at places dear to the saint too; for example, near the Church dei Paolotti and the small chapel dedicated to the saint in Piazza Tre Martiri where the miracle of the mule took place. It continues on Saturday with lots of events, excursions, exhibitions, meetings, workshops, music, stands and as a grand finale, the illuminated fountains that light up at midnight.

The patron saint of **Riccione** is **St Martin** celebrated on 11 November with three days of religious celebrations with a procession and holy mass attended by the Bishop of the diocese.

In the parish church of San Martino in **Riccione Paese** on the first weekend after Easter, Alessio Monaldi is celebrated. He lived in the late 15th century and is venerated almost like a blessed figure although in fact a process of beatification has never been undertaken and he is only venerated by the religious fervour of believers thanks to the miracles attributed to him.

The festivities that take place on 8 May dedicated to the figure





of the **Blessed Amato Ronconi**, a Franciscan of the Third Order who lived in **Saludecio** during the 13th century and whose body is venerated in the parish church, are amongst the oldest religious celebrations held in the province. The celebration dates back to 1448, as Giuseppe Malatesta Garuffi described in the "Life of the Blessed" published in 1693. The celebrations do not end on 8 May, but continue to the following Sunday with the *Procession of Tomba in Pesaro*, a pilgrimage that has been held for centuries. The faithful from the village of Tavullia (formerly Tomba in the province of Pesaro and Urbino) take the image of Our Lady housed in their church in procession to the Sanctuary of the Blessed Amato in Saludecio. Every thirty years, magnificent celebrations are held in Saludecio in his honour and the urn with his remains are taken in procession on a cart drawn by oxen from the church to the house where he was born.

Every second Sunday after Easter **Saludecio** also hosts the **Feast of St Vincent** in the Church and Sanctuary of Santa Maria del Monte.

On the 13th day of every month, from May to October, pilgrimages have been promptly held since the early 20th century to the sanctuary to commemorate the apparition of **Our Lady of Fatima** here, precisely on the 13th.

On 23 November, **San Clemente** celebrates its patron Clement, Bishop of Rimini, third successor of Peter from 88 to 97 AD to whom the parish church is dedicated. Father Oreste Benzi, a presbyter and founder of the Community of Pope John XXIII who died in 2007, was born here in 1925.

In **San Giovanni in Marignano** two celebrations combine the sacred and the profane; one is dedicated to the patron **St John the Baptist** and the other to **St Lucy**.

Around 13 December, for three days, the small town celebrates the **Fair of St Lucy** its oldest celebration and one of the key annual events in the Conca Valley since the 19th century. The celebration is also known as the feast "of light" and announces in spiritual terms the end of shadows and the birth of the Saviour. The fair programme is packed with religious rites, food and wine tasting and shows at Massari Theatre.

Each year around 24 June - the saint's feast day - and lasting

above
**Sant'Agata Feltria,
Church of the Madonna
del Soccorso**

below, on the left
**Montefiore Conca,
Church of San Paolo**

below, on the right
**Torriana, Church
of San Vicinio**

several days, **San Giovanni in Marignano** celebrates **Witches' Night** that brings back to life the traditions and charm of ancestral Romagna, in which the sacred and the profane combine to drive away the fear of demons and bad luck.

On 1 August, the town of **San Leo** celebrates the feast of its patron, **St Leone**, and *Feast of the diocese of the Montefeltro*. The cathedral, a splendid example of Romanesque art, is dedicated to the saint. For the entire day, as well as religious celebrations, shows are held in the town centre with bands, mediaeval shows and fireworks at the fortress of Francesco di Giorgio Martini.

Also in San Leo, the Franciscan monastery of **Sant'Igne** celebrates the **Feast of the Pardon of Assisi** on 2 August each year as is tradition in all Franciscan sites.

In September, **Sant'Agata Feltria** celebrates **Our Lady of the Capuchins** with a solemn procession through the streets of the town and a firework display in the evening. The event is celebrated by carrying the bas-relief of "Our Lady of the Swallow" in procession. It is housed in the Church of the Beata Vergine delle Grazie, dedicated to St Girolamo. It was taken there after a farmer found it while ploughing a field close by. According to legend, when the image was unearthed the oxen knelt before it so it was taken in procession to the church and the rite is repeated each year.

Sant'Agata Feltria celebrates its patron, **St Agatha**, on 5 February with a mass, a procession and also a civil feast accompanied by a ban, in place since time immemorial, on working and having fun. Families and the community pray together for the intercession of the saint and protection of the city named in her honour. Worshipping St Agatha here has been strongly felt since the Fregoso Lords purchased a precious relic, housed in the collegiate church. The saint's body is in Catania where she was born in 230 and died a martyr in 251.

Also in **Sant'Agata Feltria**, the Sunday before 15 August is the **Feast of Our Lady of Succour** at the church of the same name that stands in an isolated spot on the plateau between Mount Ercole and Sant'Agata, on the ancient road that from Sarsina led to Perticara and Rimini. It was originally a small cell, known as the "glasshouse of defeat", built





above
**Talamello, Church
of San Lorenzo**

below, on the left
**Saiano di Torriana,
Sanctuary of the
Madonna di Saiano**

below, on the right
**Montefiore Conca,
Church of San Paolo**

because locals managed to defeat their enemy, thanks to the intercession of the Virgin Mary. Hence the name of the new church built in 1520 that housed the Madonna to whom various miracles have been attributed.

Santarcangelo di Romagna celebrates two traditional feasts: **St Michael Archangel** and **St Martin**. The first is held on 29 September and the weekend nearest to it. It is dedicated to the Archangel and is also known as the *Feast of Birds* due to the song birds exhibited at the fair at dawn. The second, held around 11 November, is the feast of St Martin, the town's patron saint that has been extended to neighbouring municipalities in the Marecchia Valley including Poggio Berni, Verucchio and Torriana. Known for centuries as fairs given this predominant trade aspect, both combine religious and profane initiatives. Both are also extremely ancient and have been linked since the time of ancient Rome to the need to cope with the changing seasons and changes in life linked to the land and work in the field. St Martin's Fair has also adopted popular European traditions including the need to exorcise and scorn adultery; hence its second name the *Cuckold's Fair*. A huge pair of horns - the sign of cuckolds in Italy - is hung under the arch dedicated to Pope Ganganelli so that they can respond to cuckolds passing underneath. Meanwhile, ballad singers hold their national event and sing stories from all over Italy and the world.

Talamello celebrates its patron **St Laurence**, to whom the church is dedicated, on 10 August and the **Feast of the Holy Crucifix** on Whit Monday. Attributed to the "14th-century School of Rimini", the 14th-century Crucifix is carried in procession and attracts the faithful from all the surrounding area. The Giotto-style wooden cross is housed above the main altar in the 17th-century parish church of San Lorenzo that also boasts a 15th-century Madonna with Child and another 16th-century wooden Crucifix. This cross comes from Poggiolo Church in the countryside near Talamello. The church, which is still standing although not in a very good state, was overlooked by an Augustinian monastery built in the 14th century, but now no longer standing.

Torriana celebrates its patron, **St Vicinius**, on the last weekend in August with religious functions, holy mass and a solemn procession, but also music, dancing and games.

above
**Republic of San
Marino, Corpus Domini
in Piazza della Libertà**

below, on the left
**Pompeo Batoni,
St Marino holding
the republic**

below, on the right
**Francesco Menzocchi,
St Marino**

The small village of **Saiano** celebrates **Our Lady of Mount Carmel**. For centuries, this traditional *Feast of the Assumption* begins in the early morning with a pilgrimage on foot and recital of the Rosary. Then for the rest of the morning, masses and collective prayer sessions are held, whilst the afternoon is dedicated to music with watermelons, cake and wine for everyone.

Valliano di Montescudo celebrates the **Feast of Our Lady of Succour** around 15 August with two days dedicated to religious functions both in the morning and the afternoon with convivial moments, stands, music and traditional dancing. There's also a firework display in the evening on 15 August.

Verucchio solemnly celebrates the **Blessed Gregorio Celli** on the last Sunday in May with a mass and procession that attract many faithful. Functions are held at the collegiate church which has housed his unspoilt body since it was transferred here from the deconsecrated church of the Augustinians, which still has two small chapels dedicated to him, one of which from the Malatesta period.

On 2 August, also in **Verucchio** but at the monastery of St Francis, as in all Franciscan church and monasteries, celebrations are held for the **Feast of the Pardon of Assisi**. On this day, plenary indulgence is dispensed.

On 3 September, the **Republic of San Marino** hosts a great celebration in honour of **St Marino** who, according to tradition, founded the first community on this very date. After a solemn mass celebrated in the basilica, the relics of St Marino are taken in procession through the streets of the town. The feast continues with various popular attractions including crossbow events, flag-waving, historical processions, concerts by the symphonic orchestra and band and in the late evening, firework displays and much more.

Another important religious feast for the Republic is 5 February when **St Agatha**, patron of the state along with St Marino deacon and St Quirinus, is celebrated. This day is celebrated because it is the anniversary of the republic being freed from Alberoni Occupation. On that occasion, it was St Agatha who protected the republic, hence the celebration.





Yet another key celebration in the republic is the feast of **Our Lady** in **Valdragone** on the second Sunday after Easter.

Outside the province, the **Feast of Our Lady of the Beech** is celebrated on **Mount Carpegna** on the Sunday after 15 August with a procession on the mountain and holy mass, as well as popular games, music and conviviality.

2. Events

The members of **Renewal in the Holy Spirit** meet each year, between April and May, in **Rimini**. This Catholic ecclesiastical movement belongs to the spiritual current of charismatic renewal that began with the experience of a new effusion of the Holy Spirit. Founded in Italy in 1967 at the end of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council it is organised like a private association recognized by the Italian Episcopal Conference and formed mainly of lay people, although it also includes ordained ministers and consecrated figures. The Rimini event is their most important and is known as the **National Convocation of Groups and Communities**. It is held every year over four days between April and May and on average is attended by 20,000 people including guests, speakers, leaders of ecclesiastical movements, witnesses of the renewal movement, cardinals and bishops, civilian and political authorities and representatives of several Christian denominations. The programme includes group prayer sessions, praying for intercession for healing and freedom, the daily Eucharistic liturgy, confessions and moments of Eucharistic adoration, as well as speeches and cultural round tables, shows, concerts, video links, exhibitions and book reviews. *Rinnovamento nello Spirito Santo - Via degli Olmi, 62 - Rome.*

Every year, during the last week in August, **Rimini** hosts the **Meeting for Friendship Amongst People**. The event began in 1980, thanks to the initiative of some friends from Rimini who shared the Christian experience. Their aim was to promote opportunities for people of different faiths and cultures to meet and bring to Rimini everything that was good and beautiful in the culture of the time. Since then, every year it attracts numerous politicians, managers, religious and cultural representatives, intellectuals and artists, sportsmen and women and leading world figures.

above
**Montefiore Conca,
Church of San
Simeone**

below, on the left
**Morciano di Romagna,
ruins of the Abbey of
San Gregorio**

below, on the right
**Gemmano, Sanctuary
of the Madonna di
Carbognano**

The stories of men are the focus of the meetings, exhibitions, shows and sports events held over the 7-day event that over the years has become one of the world's most popular festivals. Since it was founded, the Meeting, which is also a foundation, has focused on the desire for beauty, truth, justice and ideals that Father Luigi Giussani, founder of the Communion and Liberation movement, had called an elementary experience, common ground for meeting and dialogue. For each edition, thousands of volunteers come to Rimini from all over Italy and the world to organise and run the Meeting and many figures of various denominations - including Jews, Buddhists, members of the Orthodox church, Muslims and even atheists - participate and meet around a specific title given to each edition to talk about the economy, art, literature, science, politics, social problems and music with the public institutions, diplomatic representations and public and private bodies. The numbers speak for themselves: 800,000 people of over 20 different nationalities, 4,000 volunteers, over 100 meetings, with more than 250 speakers, dozens of exhibitions, shows and sports events covering 170,000 m², 1,000 accredited media operators and over 200 partners and sponsors. *Meeting Rimini - Via Flaminia, 18 - Rimini.*



above
**Sartiano di Novafeltria,
Church of San Biagio**

below, on the left
**Rimini, Romanesque
Parish church of San
Salvatore**

below, on the right
**Saludecio, Claudio
Ridolfi, Our Lady
of Mercy**



above, on the left
**Rimini, Monastery of
the Natività di Maria
(San Bernardino)**



above, on the right
**Covignano di Rimini,
Convent and Sanctuary
of Santa Maria delle
Grazie**



below, on the left
**Rimini, Monastery of
the Minimi Paolotti
and Sanctuary of
Sant'Antonio da Padova**



below, on the right
**Rimini, remains of
the Cathedral of Santa
Colomba**



Calendar of events

Date	Place	Type of celebration
various dates of the Marian calendar	Covignano (Rimini), Sanctuary delle Grazie	All Marian celebrations
20 January	Gemmano	St Sebastian Martyr
25 January	Montefiore Conca	St Paul
3 February	Misano Adriatico	St Blaise, the Armenian
3 February	Maiolo	St Blaise, the Armenian
5 February	Sant'Agata Feltria	St Agatha
5 February	Republic of San Marino	St Agatha
9 February	Bellaria Igea Marina	St Apollonia
2nd week of March	Morciano di Romagna	St Gregory
3rd week of March	Pennabilli	Beautiful Friday, Our Lady of Graces
25 March	Rimini, Church of the Colonnella	Blessed Virgin of the Colonnella
Good Friday	Covignano (Rimini), Sanctuary delle Grazie	Stations of the Cross
Good Friday	Montefiore Conca	Commemoration in period costume
Good Friday	Pennabilli	Procession of the Jews
Easter Monday	Misano Adriatico	Feast of the Agina
Sunday after Easter	Secchiano Marecchia, Ca' Rosello (Novafeltria)	Our Lady of Graces
Sunday after Easter	Riccione Paese	Blessed Alessio Monaldi
2nd Sunday after Easter	Saludecio	St Vincent
2nd Sunday after Easter	Valdragone (Republic of San Marino)	Feast of Our Lady
23 April	Poggio Berni	St George
30 April	Cattolica	St Pius V
between April and May	Rimini	national convocation of Renewal in the Holy Spirit
1 May	Carbognano (Gemmano)	St Vincent
5 May	Pennabilli	San Pius V
8 May	Saludecio	Blessed Amato Ronconi
13th day of the month from May to October	Saludecio, Church of Santa Maria del Monte	Our Lady of Fatima
Sunday close to 16 May	Maciano (Pennabilli)	St Pasqual
last Sunday in May	Verucchio	Blessed Gregorio Celli
Whit Monday	Talamello	Holy Crucifix
1st half of June	Rimini, Bridge of the Resistance and old town	St Anthony of Padua
24 June	San Giovanni in Marignano	St John the Baptist, Witches' Night
29 June	Novafeltria	St Peter and Paul

August	Miniera di Perticara (Novafeltria)	Our Lady of Miniera
August	Passano (Coriano)	Blessed Henry of Hungary
1 August	Scavolino (Pennabilli)	Feast of the Community
1 August	San Leo	St Leone
2 August	Covignano (Rimini), Sanctuary delle Grazie	Pardon of Assisi
2 August	San Leo, Monastery of Sant'Igne	Pardon of Assisi
2 August	Verucchio, Monastery of San Francesco	Pardon of Assisi
5 August	Mondaino	Our Lady of the Snow
10 August	Talamello	St Laurence
Sunday before 15 August	Sant'Agata Feltria	Our Lady of Succour
15 August	Pennabilli	Feast of the Return
15 August	Saiano (Torriana)	Our Lady of Mount Carmel
15 August	Valliano (Montescudo)	Our Lady of Succour
15 August	Secchiano Marecchia, Santa Maria in Vico (Novafeltria)	Our Lady of Graces
16 August	Montegridolfo	St Rocco
Sunday after 15 August	Monte Carpegna	Our Lady of the Beech
Sunday after 15 August	Ponte Messa (Pennabilli)	Feast of the parish church of San Pietro in Messa
26 August	Misano Monte	Feast of the Crucifix
last week in August	Rimini	Meeting for Friendship Amongst People
last weekend in August	Torriana	St Vicinius
September	Ospedaletto (Coriano)	Our Lady of Sorrows
September	Sant'Agata Feltria	Our Lady of the Capuchins
September	Cerasolo, Mulazzano (Coriano)	Our Lady of the Sun
2 September	Casteldelci	Feast of Our Lady
3 September	Republic of San Marino	St Marino
29 September	Mondaino	St Michael Archangel
29 September	Morciano di Romagna	St Michael Archangel
29 September	Santarcangelo di Romagna	St Michael Archangel, Feast of Birds
October	Sant'Andrea in Besanigo (Coriano)	Our Lady of the Holy Rosary
14 October	Rimini	St Gaudentius (every 2 years Feast of the Borough of Sant'Andrea)
11 November	Monte Colombo	St Martin of Tours
11 November	Riccione	St Martin
11 November	Santarcangelo di Romagna	St Martin, Cuckolds' Fair
23 November	San Clemente	St Clement
13 December	San Giovanni in Marignano	St Lucy

CHAPTER XV

ITINERARIES

Marian itinerary



Carpegna

- Sanctuary of the Madonna del Faggio

Gemmano

- Sanctuary of the Madonna di Carbognano

Montefiore Conca

- Sanctuary of the Madonna di Bonora

Montegridolfo

- Sanctuary of the Beata Vergine delle Grazie in Trebbio

Pennabilli

- Sanctuary of the Madonna delle Grazie
- Church of Santa Maria dell'Olive in Maciano

Rimini

- Convent and Sanctuary of Santa Maria delle Grazie
- Church della Colonnella
- Sanctuary of the Madonna della Misericordia (Santa Chiara)
- Oratory of San Giovannino

Saludecio

- Sanctuary of the Madonna del Monte

San Giovanni in Marignano

- Oratory of Santa Maria

San Marino

- Sanctuary of Santa Maria di Valdragone

Sant'Agata Feltria

- Church of the Madonna di Romagnano
- Church of the Capuchins

Santarcangelo di Romagna

- Sanctuary of the Madonna di Casale di San Vito

Talamello

- The cell

Torriana

- Sanctuary of the Madonna di Saiano

above
**Petrella Guidi
di Sant'Agata
Feltria, Church
of Sant'Apollinare**

below, on the left
**San Giovanni in
Marignano, Church
of San Pietro**

below, on the right
**Montefiore Conca,
Church of San Paolo**



Franciscan itinerary



Mondaino

- Convent of the Clarisse (not open for visits)

Rimini

- Convent and Sanctuary of Santa Maria delle Grazie
- Convent of the Santo Spirito
- Monastery of the Natività di Maria Vergine (San Bernardino)
- Monastery of the Minimi Paolotti and Sanctuary of Sant'Antonio da Padova

San Leo

- Monastery of Sant'Igne
- Monastery of Montemaggio (not open for visits)

Sant'Agata Feltria

- Convent of Santa Maria Maddalena

San Marino

- Convent of Santa Chiara di Valdragone

Santarcangelo di Romagna

- Monastery and Church of San Francesco (destroyed)
- Monastery of the Capuchins
- Convent of the Suore Francescane dei Sacri Cuori

Verucchio

- Monastery of San Francesco

CHAPTER XVI
**DIOCESES,
CATHEDRALS
AND PLACES
OF WORSHIP**

Catholic church

Dioceses

Diocese of Rimini
via IV Novembre, 35 - Rimini
www.diocesi.rimini.it

Diocese of San Marino-Montefeltro
piazza Giovanni Paolo II - Pennabilli
www.diocesi-sanmarino-montefeltro.it

Cathedrals

Basilica - Malatesta Temple
via IV Novembre, 35 - Rimini

Basilica of San Marino
piazzale Domus Plebis, 1 - San Marino

Cathedral of Pennabilli, Parish of San Pio V Pope
piazza Vittorio Emanuele II - Pennabilli

Cathedral of San Leone
piazza Dante Alighieri - San Leo

In Rimini, **foreign Catholic communities** have the possibility to hold liturgical functions at the following venues:

- Romanian community: in via Bonsi at the Sisters of Sant'Onofrio.
- Senegalese community: at the Church della Colonnella.
- Ukrainian, Filipino and Latin-American communities: at the Church of the Madonna della Scala.

Places of worship for other denominations

Christian Evangelical Church
via Portogallo, 3 - Rimini
via Jano Planco, 9 - Rimini

Seventh-Day Adventist Church
via delle Piante, 28/a - Rimini (Celle)

Christian Evangelical Church (of the Brethren)
via Forzieri - Rimini (San Giuliano)

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)
via del Capriolo, 12 - Rimini (Grotta Rossa)

Valdese Evangelical Church
via Trento, 63 - Rimini

Mosque and Islamic Community
corso Giovanni XXIII, 100 - Rimini

Orthodox Church of the Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple
via Emilia, 1 - Rimini (Celle)

Priorate of Our Lady of Loreto (Lefevbre)
via Mavoncello, 25 - Rimini (Spadarolo)

Jehovah's Witnesses Kingdom Hall
via Rosmini, 35 - Rimini (Marebello)

Jewish Community
Via Mazzini, 95 - Ferrara
Via De' Gombruti, 9 - Bologna
Synagogue: Via Delle Scuole, Pesaro
Cemetery: Colle San Bartolo, Pesaro



above
**Novafeltria, Church
of Uffogliano**



below, on the left
**Montefiore Conca,
Church of the Ospedale
della Misericordia**



below, on the right
**Rimini, Sanctuary
of the Madonna della
Misericordia (Santa
Chiara)**



above
**Mondaino, Church of
San Michele Arcangelo**

below, on the left
**Mondaino, Convent
of the Clarisse**

below, on the right
**Monte Colombo,
Church of San Martino**



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Where to find us



Distances

Amsterdam 1,405 km
Berlin 1,535 km
Brussels 1,262 km
Budapest 1,065 km
Frankfurt 1,043 km
Copenhagen 1,770 km
London 1,684 km

Munich 680 km
Paris 1,226 km
Prague 1,089 km
Stockholm 2,303 km
Warsaw 1,533 km
Vienna 887 km
Zürich 645 km

Bologna 121 km
Florence 165 km
Milan 330 km
Naples 586 km
Rome 325 km
Turin 447 km
Venice 270 km



Provincia di Rimini

www.riviera.rimini.it



MALATESTA & MONTEFELTRO