Pilgrims in San Marino

Tour of history and spirituality

In 257, Marino arrived in Rimini from the seaside town of Arbe in Dalmatia. He was summoned by an edict of the Emperor Diocletian instructing workers to rebuild the port and the fortifications of Rimini. Marino was a stonemason, so he was assigned to the extraction of the stone from a quarry in the territory of Mount Titano. Visit to the **Fonte di Acquaviva:** tradition has it that here Marino converted, evangelized and baptized the first San Marino’s citizens.

Visit to the **Saint’s Sacello** del Santo, on the cliff of Montalbo, where Marino decided to retire and lead a hermit’s life, creating a bed inside the rock, still visible today. It consists of a modestly sized, slightly inclined, accessible through an uphill path. In the old town center, visit of the **Basilica del Santo**, formerly known as Pieve or Domus plebis (House of the People), the Basilica preserves the most precious treasure, the relics of its Holy Founder. The imposing marble monument protects the precious silver reliquary, in the shape of a bust, with the cranial bones of Saint Marino.

**Curiosity:** the historical vicissitudes of the relics are not unique. After the Saint’s death in the middle of the 4th century, they remained in the same location for almost three centuries. Later, in the 7th century, due to the invasions of the barbarians, who plundered the churches and stole the remains of the saints, the idea was to hide them. In the 9th century, the bones were then placed in a stone urn and placed under the pavement of the Antica Pieve. The hidden bones were such a success that the people of San Marino themselves lost the memory of their exact location for about nine centuries. On the opposite side of the monument, there is the Throne of the Captains Regent, reserved exclusively for the two Heads of State of the Republic. The undisputed protagonist of the apse, in a central position, is the marble statue of the Saint created by the artist Adam Taddolini, a student of the Canova school. In this sculpture the Saint is portrayed with a **cartouche**, engraved with the evocative word **LIBERTAS**, the legacy to his people of the Republic’s perpetual freedom.

Along the aisles, on the altars, you can admire some paintings, the most interesting is the nineteenth-century canvas depicting **St. Agatha** in glory while saying the word **LIBERTAS** so that it is engraved on a shield. The work refers to the liberation from occupation of San Marino by the Papal State (1739-1740), for which the martyr from Catania was proclaimed co-patroness of the Republic, precisely because the act took place on the day of her feast, 5 February.

**The Oratory of St. Peter’s**, is next to the Basilica. After his first stay in the sacellum, Marino decided to move to a new area of the mountain. The Saint carved his own bed out of the bare rock with a chisel and thought of building a place of worship.

On the roof you can still see some big tiles, the so-called “tegoloni”, which are believed to have been made by the Saint himself.

A few steps from the Basilica del Santo, you can admire the Palazzo Pubblico, the political and institutional heart of the Republic.

At the inauguration, Giosuè Carducci, who gave a memorable speech on the perpetual freedom of the Republic, was the speaker of honor.

Very interesting to visit is the Great and General Council Hall, overlooked by an imposing tempera of 9.30 meters by 4.22 meters, entitled San Marino, which is dedicated to its people.

**Curiosity: September 3,** 301 is the founding date of the Republic, the solemn feast of the Saint and the State. In the dating of public documents of San Marino, it is not unusual to come across the wording “d.F.R”, or “from the Foundation of the Republic”, with reference to the year 301 as the beginning of the history of the country.

There are other spiritual places in San Marino: **San Quirino Church**, built in 1593, preserves some relics of San Quirino, including some bone fragments and a molar tooth.

**The Church of San Francesco**, an exemplary architectural and artistic complex. The walls are the oldest ones in the whole Republic.

The first settlement of Franciscan Friars in San Marino dates back to the time before the death of St. Francis of Assisi (1226).

**The Sanctuary of the Immaculate Heart of Mary** is the national seat of the Guard of Honor and is the fulcrum of the Marian Center of San Marino, strongly supported by the Bl. Gabriele Allegra who was responsible for the translation of the Bible into Chinese.

**The Monastery of Santa Chiara** contains a laborious community of Poor Clare Minorite Nuns.

The Republic of San Marino, in virtue of its freedom and jurisdictional autonomy, was never subject to the Napoleonic suppressions, so that the Clarian community of San Marino is among the most long-lived in history.

(Guide by Gabriele Della Balda)