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The Funerary Chapel of Cardinal Bessarion in the Basilica of SS XII Apostoli in Rome: Commemoration and Competition

Between 1463 and 1467, Cardinal Bessarion (ca. 1403–1472) constructed one of the biggest funerary chapels in Quattrocento Italy. Based on newly discovered archival material, this article will examine how Bessarion's self-fashioning for the afterlife in his chapel built on existing patterns of patronage in the basilica of Santi Apostoli while consciously standing in contrast to them. I will argue that competition for space and visibility within the basilica of Santi Apostoli were key factors informing Bessarion's choices for his chapel during its construction. A deeper understanding of this process will provide new insights into the power structures behind the erection of one of the largest funerary chapels of the Quattrocento.

Keywords: Bessarion; Santi XII Apostoli; funerary chapel; Antoniazio Romano; Franciscan order; Constantinople

Cardinal Bessarion (ca. 1403–1472) died on 24 November 1472 in the Benedictine monastery of San Giovanni Evangelista in Ravenna while returning from a papal mission in France.¹ On 10 December, a funeral service was held in the basilica of Santi Dodici Apostoli in Rome in the presence of Pope Sixtus IV.² Bessarion's remains were subsequently laid to rest in an elaborate funerary chapel which he had constructed for himself between 1463 and 1467. Dedicated to the Archangel

Michael, Saint John the Baptist, and Saint Eugenia, Bessarion's funerary chapel was among the largest of its kind in Quattrocento Italy.³ Its enormous size was matched by its lavish interior: the chapel was largely covered in elaborate frescoes by the prominent Roman painter Antonio di Benedetto Aquilo degli Aquili (ca. 1430 – ca. 1510), better known as Antoniazio Romano, and his workshop. The frescoes depicted Christ, apparitions of the Archangel Michael, and scenes from the life of Saint John the Baptist. Unfortunately, centuries of flood damage and modernizations resulted in the steady demolition of the chapel, until the final remains of the frescoes were plastered over in the seventeenth century.⁴ Even after the near-complete loss of Bessarion's funerary chapel, the memory of its lavish furnishings and decorations lingered.⁵

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1 Antoniazio Romano and workshop, View of the remaining fresco in the apse. Rome, Basilica of SS XII Apostoli

In 1662, Prior Fra Caietano Albanensi was part of the Apostolic Visitation tasked with inspecting the basilica of Santi Apostoli in Rome.⁶ Committing to paper everything the delegation observed as they moved through the ancient house of worship, Fra Caietano stopped at the chapel of Saint Anthony of Padua. Whereas he had started his entries on the other altars and chapels in Santi Apostoli without a moment's doubt, he paused his usually prosaic tone at the beginning of the entry on this chapel and wrote: "There was once here painted on the wall the image of Saint Michael the Archangel, of Saint John the Baptist, and below that was the body of Saint Eugenia."⁷ Fra Caietano's account is an early attempt to commit to memory the famous predecessor of the chapel of Saint Anthony of Padua. The basilica of Santi Apostoli was completely demolished and rebuilt between 1701 and 1723 under the direction of architect Francesco Fontana (1668–1708) and his son, which resulted in the disappearance of most remnants of Bessarion's chapel. The publication of key documents on the chapel of Bessarion by Aloysius Bandini in 1777, however, ensured that the cardinal's funerary structure remained an object of study and fascination in the centuries to come, as they gave precious insight into the structure's lavish nature.

In 1959, archaeologist Clemente Busiri Vici made the astonishing discovery that the old apse of Bessarion's chapel was still hidden behind a wall.⁸ When the walls were made visible again, it soon became clear that remains of frescoes were still present under a thick layer of white plaster. During a restoration of what was left of these frescoes in 1989–1990, a fragmentary Christ figure resurfaced, surrounded by nine rows of angels in the dome of the apse (fig. 1), and below that the two apparitions of the Archangel Michael (fig. 8). Fra Caietano's recorded memory thus became reality again. The discovery prompted a lot of scholarship on Antoniazio Romano's frescoes for Bessarion's chapel that has generated invaluable insights into the cardinal and his thought, yet there still remains more to be said on the way in which Bessarion's self-fashioning for the afterlife was shaped within the religious and spatial context of the basilica of Santi Apostoli. Based on newly discovered archival material, this article will retrace how Bessarion's choices for the location and execution of his funerary chapel built on existing patterns of patronage in the basilica of Santi Apostoli while also consciously standing in contrast to them. I will posit that competition for space and vis-

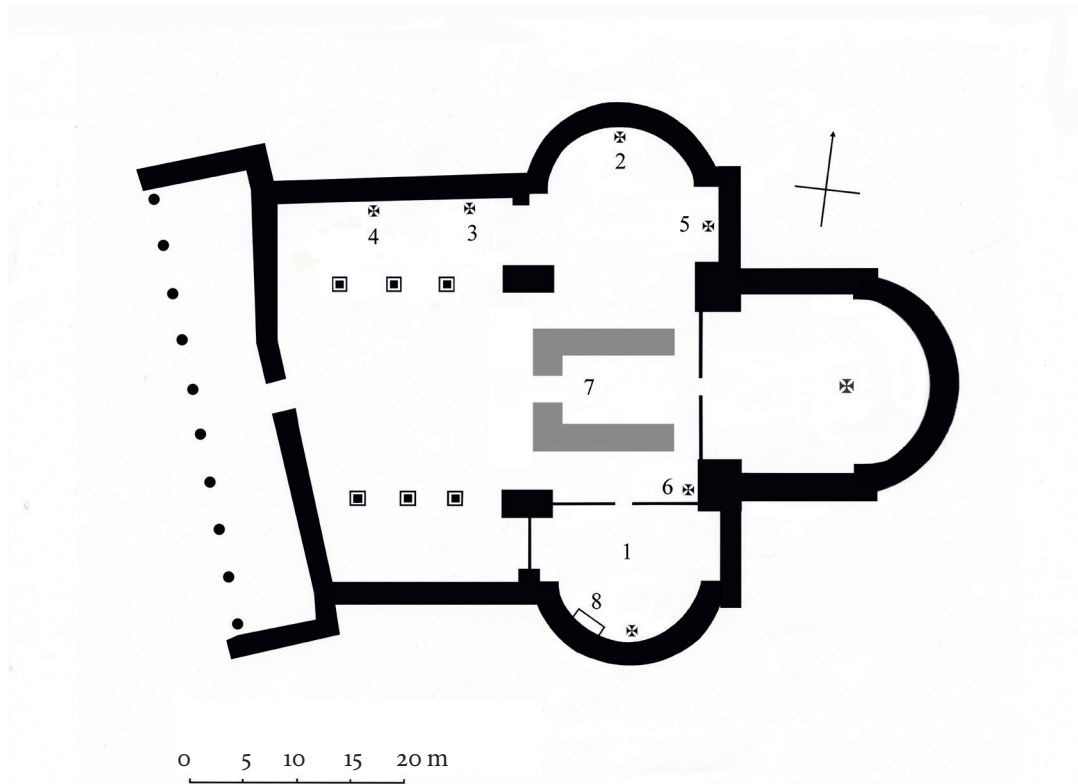
ibility within the basilica of Santi Apostoli were key factors informing Bessarion's ideas for his chapel during its construction between 1463 and 1467. A deeper understanding of this process will provide new insights into the power structures behind the erection of one of the largest funerary chapels of the Quattrocento.

Cardinal Bessarion and Santi Apostoli

The cardinal's association with the basilica had commenced more than thirty years earlier on 18 December 1439, when Pope Eugenius IV elevated Bessarion to the rank of its cardinal-priest for the latter's pro-Unionist efforts during the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–1439).⁹ This position appears to have become 'available' after Bessarion's predecessor Cardinal Niccolò de' Tudeschi (1386–1445) effectively lost it due to his active support for antipope Felix V at the Council of Basel.¹⁰ While the timing of this may have been serendipitous, Bessarion's appointment to this particular basilica must have been carefully orchestrated. In many ways, it should be seen as a conscious reference to and acknowledgement of Bessarion's background. For example, the dedication of the basilica to all the apostles, which dates to the tenth century, has been interpreted as a reference to the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, the most important sanctuary in the Byzantine capital.¹¹ The association of the Roman basilica with the Byzantine sanctuary may also have been reinforced by the resemblance between the two basilicas. Constructed in the second half of the sixth century, the basilica of Santi Apostoli in Rome had been built on a cruciform plan with a transept consisting of two substantial wings and apses which equalled the cappella maggiore in size.¹² As such, the east end of the basilica had the shape of a trefoil.¹³ Excavations in 1996 and 2021 revealed parts of the mid-sixth-century pavement in both apses of the transept.¹⁴ This plan was likely in imitation of

the aforementioned Church of the Holy Apostles which had influenced the construction of many ancient basilicas across the Italian peninsula.¹⁵ The multi-dome construction of the church in Constantinople may also have served as an example for the large apses crowning both ends of the transept at Santi Apostoli in Rome.¹⁶ The Roman basilica had been restored several times in the centuries preceding Bessarion's arrival, but the original exterior outlines of the building and the cruciform plan were still more or less intact in the fifteenth century.¹⁷

Eugenius IV's appointment of Bessarion to Santi Apostoli was not based solely on the programmatic or visual similarities of the ancient basilica with its famous counterpart in Constantinople, as other references to the cardinal's Byzantine background played a role, too. For example, it would not have gone unnoticed by the pope that Bessarion had been a prominent member of the order of Saint Basil in Constantinople and that the cardinal continued to wear their habit, as is shown in some miniatures (fig. 5).¹⁸ The religious community of Santi Apostoli in Rome had a longstanding connection with the Monastery of Santa Maria di Grottaferrata, one of the two most important seats of Basilian monks on the Italian peninsula. This monastery was a lively centre for maintaining the 'Greek' rite in the Catholic church. After his appointment to Santi Apostoli, Bessarion was eager to partake in the existing bond between Grottaferrata and his own titular basilica in Rome.¹⁹ This became more apparent after 1443, when Bessarion moved with Eugenius IV from Florence to Rome, where he became directly involved with religious life at his titular basilica.²⁰ In November 1446, he hosted a general chapter of the Basilian order inside the basilica of Santi Apostoli. Among those present were representatives of the monastery of Grottaferrata.²¹ This chapter would lead to the significant papal bull *Inter curas multiplices* on 14 December that same year, which confirmed the statutes of the order in an attempt to revive



2 Hypothetical reconstruction of the plan of the Basilica of Santi Apostoli after completion of Bessarion's chapel in 1467 and before the cardinal's death in 1472. Plan based on Finocchi Ghersi 1992 (as in note 15) and De Blaauw 2000 (as in note 71): 1) Funerary chapel of Bessarion / old chapel of Saint Eugenia; 2) Altar of Saint Francis; 3) Chapel of SS John the Evangelist and John the Baptist; 4) Chapel of Saint Thomas Becket; 5) Altar of the Holy Spirit; 6) Altar of the Deposition; 7) Choir of the canons (later friars); 8) Tomb of Bessarion

the ideals on which it had been founded.²² The cardinal would be made the first commendatory abbot of the monastery in 1462.²³ Following his appointment, the cardinal enshrined several rites of the Orthodox church at the Basilian abbey.²⁴ Bessarion's enduring relationship with the Basilian monks at Grottaferrata would have an interesting impact on his future decisions regarding his funerary chapel at Santi Apostoli, as will be discussed later.

The Old Chapel of Saint Eugenia

Given the symbolic nature of Bessarion's elevation to cardinal-priest of Santi Apostoli, the basilica would have been a natural choice as burial

place for Bessarion. After convincing his personal friend Pope Pius II, Bessarion received the papal bull *Personam tuam* on 30 April 1463 which proclaimed that the patronage (*iuspatronatus*) of the old chapel of Saint Eugenia in the south arm of the transept of the basilica of Santi Apostoli (fig. 2, no. 1) had been handed over to the cardinal so that it could be restored, expanded for the latter's eternal memory. The Archangel Michael and John the Baptist were added to the new dedication of the chapel. This must have partially sprung from Bessarion's own cultic preferences. Saint Michael and John the Baptist were already prominently depicted on the cardinal's seal which has received little scholarly attention (fig. 3).²⁵ The cardinal's interest in the Archangel also extended to other ob-

jects he surrounded himself with.²⁶ Nevertheless, the inclusion of these two saints cannot have been a complete novelty to the context of Santi Apostoli, as the cults of Saints Michael and John the Baptist, who featured heavily in Roman contexts, had already been well established in religious life at the basilica.²⁷

Bessarion's newly acquired chapel had already existed under the dedication to Saint Eugenia, a late Antique Christian martyr, since the ninth century.²⁸ Due to its long existence and location in one of the three large apses of the basilica, the cult of Eugenia was one of the most present at Santi Apostoli.²⁹ In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the chapel remained a significant part of the basilica, as is illustrated by a collection of brief documentary references. A fourteenth-century marble inscription, now preserved in one of the cloisters of the convent of Santi Apostoli, describes the chapel of Saint Eugenia as the main cultic site to the right hand of the cappella maggiore.³⁰ Other notarial sources allow for some observations on the importance of the chapel before its total refurbishment by Bessarion. While meetings for drawing up notarial acts were held inside the basilica on a regular basis, the chapel of Saint Eugenia, like the canons' choir of the basilica, is only mentioned in relation to gatherings involving parties of a more elevated social standing. For example, on 22 December 1382, two monks and the abbot of the Monastery of Santa Maria di Grottaferrata were accommodated inside the chapel for a notarial contract.³¹ As mentioned earlier, this religious community had enjoyed a close connection with the chapter of Santi Apostoli, so they would have been hosted as esteemed guests. Another gathering was recorded inside the old chapel of Saint Eugenia on 6 November 1389 in order to discuss a transfer of real estate by people of high local standing.³²

The few known notarial references to the chapel from the Quattrocento suggest that a similar degree of spatial and programmatic exclusivity was retained in the following century. For example, on



3 Impression of the seal of Cardinal Bessarion with scene of the Virgin with Child flanked by the Archangel Michael (left) and Saint John the Baptist, appended to a charter of 1 May 1460. Sankt Florian, Stiftsarchiv Sankt Florian, Urkunde 1460 V 01

23 April 1428, Odoardo Colonna, count of Celano, drew up a contract regarding fiefs in the presence of Cardinal Juan de Cervantes (ca. 1380–1453), then cardinal-priest of San Pietro in Vincoli. The wording of the document leaves no doubt about the fact that it took place inside the chapel (“*intus cappellam*”) of Saint Eugenia.³³ We may deduct from this that the old chapel did not just encompass an altar in the apse of the south arm of the transept. More revealing is a testament from 30 December 1460, less than three years before Bessarion would acquire patronage of the entire chapel. Aldo Lelli Adriani, who was a spice seller or apothecary from the *rione* of Trevi in the city of Rome, declared his wish to be buried in the basilica close to the chapel of Saint Eugenia (“*prope*

cappellam scte eugenie").³⁴ The wording shows that Adriani did not necessarily specify burial inside the chapel, which suggests he was aware that this was not available to him. He did, however, go to great lengths to ensure that his commemoration was tied to this specific part of the basilica in other ways. In the same testament, he made provisions for multiple masses to be said inside the chapel of Saint Eugenia, even adding a clause that forced the chapter of Santi Apostoli to relinquish a part of an extra donation of Adriani's real estate if the canons ceased to perform the masses in the designated area.³⁵ These sources all suggest that the old chapel of Saint Eugenia was subjected to liturgical (and spatial) exclusivity before its complete alteration from 1463 onwards. We may assume that this exclusivity of the chapel was marked by some kind of physical enclosure, but no sources on this survive.

When Bessarion acquired the direct patronage of the chapel of Saint Eugenia in the south arm of the transept in 1463, it had no direct patron.³⁶ This was in contrast to the majority of other chapels in the side aisles of the nave of the basilica of Santi Apostoli which were the subject of enduring patronage held by a handful of established Roman families who maintained residences nearby. A chapel originally dedicated to SS. John the Evangelist and John the Baptist, located on the north side of the nave (fig. 2, no. 3), was patronized by the Caputgallis (Capogalli) family since the fourteenth century.³⁷ A chaplaincy was connected with it, which was occupied between 1460 and 1463 by a Fra Giovanni da Sicilia who, as documents show, actively maintained the endowment tied to his position during the aforementioned years.³⁸ In addition to the chapel, the Caputgallis family which produced several generations of notaries maintained their constant presence throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries by holding office in several parts of the basilica on many occasions.

The chapel to the left of this was dedicated to Saint Thomas Becket (fig. 2, no. 4). It was under

the patronage of the old Roman noble family of Mancini, from the Ognissanti branch, since at least the late fourteenth century.³⁹ In 1436–1437, Renzo di Pietro de' Mancini made provisions for a future burial in the family chapel in SS XII Apostoli.⁴⁰ A drawing of his tomb slab is preserved in The Royal Collection in Windsor Castle.⁴¹ The chapel of Saint Thomas Becket remained under the patronage of the Mancinis until the eighteenth century.⁴² Their patronage of the chapel seems to have been important to the basilica of Santi Apostoli given they made their presence felt around the high altar, too. In the 1440s, Bessarion explicitly included in his new statutes for the canons of the basilica that an older bequest by a member of the Mancini family for the burning of two lamps in front of the high altar be retained.⁴³ The Mancinis kept donating funds for masses at the high altar until well into the sixteenth century.⁴⁴

Several other notarial acts were drawn up *in cappella* inside Santi Apostoli, but there is no evidence to suggest that the aforementioned family chapels were actually enclosed spaces. Unlike the current state, the side aisles of the fifteenth-century basilica of Santi Apostoli were probably not separated from the middle nave by large pilasters but by a row of columns. Moreover, it is likely that the families patronized the altars themselves, while in practice their tombs in the floor demarcated the boundaries of the "chapel" by extending into the rest of the bay in which the altar itself was located.⁴⁵ The lack of clear demarcation would have also reflected the complicated patterns of patronage at Santi Apostoli, as some of these altars remained open for patronage from other families. For example, the chapel usually associated with the Caputgallis was made beneficiary of a testamentary bequest by members of an entirely different family in October 1462. Fra Giovanni da Sicilia, who held the chaplaincy of the altar, received the donation, thus accepting the patronage of the other family.⁴⁶ There were also altars which

were appended to pilasters or columns of the basilica of Santi Apostoli. One of these was the altar of the Deposition which was located against a pilaster supporting the triumphal arch of the cappella maggiore. Since at least 1455 this altar was under the patronage of the noble family Muti Papazzurri.⁴⁷ More importantly, its location means that it was appended to the left side of the arch that led directly from the nave into the chapel of Saint Eugenia (fig. 2, no. 6).⁴⁸ This altar remained in place even after Bessarion's renovations. Scant documentary references exist to other chapels or altars which were located inside Santi Apostoli in the fifteenth century. There is mention of altars dedicated to a Saint Urban, the Archangel Michael, and Mary Magdalene.⁴⁹ Nothing else is known about them.

Within this context, the cardinal's direct involvement with the chapel of Saint Eugenia illustrates the conspicuous nature of Bessarion's envisioned commemoration within the context of Santi Apostoli. The cult of Eugenia and the long presence of her relics and that of other martyrs inside the chapel in the south arm of the transept still lent significant cultic importance and historicity to the basilica in the years leading up to Bessarion's acquisition of the chapel.⁵⁰ The chapel was also much larger than the aforementioned chapels in the side aisles, with probably some kind of dividing screen. As such, the chapel of Saint Eugenia outperformed the other chapels inside the basilica both in size and in cultic importance. Apart from the cappella maggiore, the only other part of the basilica which could compete with the newly acquired chapel of Bessarion in terms of spatial and cultic prominence was the altar patronized by the prominent cardinal Prospero Colonna (ca. 1410–1463) and his family in the large apse of the north arm of the transept (fig. 2, no. 2). Like the chapel of Saint Eugenia, this part of the basilica had functioned as a significant counterpart of the cappella maggiore for many centuries. Located precisely opposite, the chapel in the north arm of the transept had once served

as the place to display relics of Saint Sabinus.⁵¹ An excavation in 2021 revealed part of the original late-Antique mosaic floor of the apse. Unlike the chapel of Saint Eugenia, however, the altar in this apse at some point had been rededicated to Saint Francis.⁵² Both apses in the nave of the basilica were important places of worship in their own right, a fact accentuated by their massive size compared to the cappella maggiore at the east end.

The Colonna family had a longstanding association with Santi Apostoli which culminated during the papacy of their relative Martin V (1417–1431), who built a substantial residence directly next door and held court in the complex.⁵³ The basilica was also partially altered, possibly with the addition of a portico to the west façade.⁵⁴ It may come as no surprise then that Prospero Colonna started cultivating a close relationship with the venerable chapter from an early stage in his life during the papacy of his relative Martin V.⁵⁵ Over the following decades, Prospero Colonna remained a continuous presence in the life of the canons and the basilica in various ways. Due to the proximity of his own palace, members of his household were often found inside the basilica up until the cardinal's death, as documents attest.⁵⁶ His enduring, close relationship with Santi Apostoli is further illustrated by the fact that, although Prospero had been cardinal deacon of the church of San Giorgio in Velabro since 1430, he chose to be buried near the altar of Saint Francis in the aforementioned basilica.⁵⁷ The Colonna family had taken a particular interest in the Franciscan order since its foundation in the thirteenth century and they could count a beatified Franciscan nun, Margherita Colonna (d. 1284), among their family members.⁵⁸ The dedication of their family altar to Saint Francis must have stood out in the context of Santi Apostoli. There is no evidence to suggest that before the introduction of the friars at Santi Apostoli there were other altars dedicated to other mendicant saints or to saints whose cult did not have a solid connection with Rome.⁵⁹ This is further



4 Follower of Luigi Capponi (?), Fragment of Francesco Colonna's funerary monument. Rome, Basilica of SS XII Apostoli

illustrated by an early fifteenth-century feast calendar which originally belonged to Santi Apostoli.⁶⁰ As Ebner noted, this calendar, which is now preserved in the Apostolic Library in Vatican City, is remarkable in its almost complete exclusion of saints from outside the city of Rome.⁶¹

In the testament which Prospero Colonna drew up on 23 March 1463, the cardinal lists among his inalienable possessions "a part of the chapel" in which he will be buried.⁶² This formulation is very important, as it shows that the dedication of the altar to Saint Francis dates from before Bessarion's eventful donation of

Santi Apostoli to the Friars Minor Conventual later in 1463.⁶³

The aforementioned passage from Prospero Colonna's testament also suggests that the cardinal held patronage over the altar but not over the entire arm of the transept, as would soon be the case with Bessarion's own funerary structure. This is further suggested by a later testament of another family member. In 1486, Laura Colonna, wife of Paolo Colonna, ordered in her testament that her remains be buried by the altar of Santo Spirito next to the tomb of her son Francesco (d. 1485).⁶⁴ It is known from another source that

Francesco's tomb was located close to the altar of Saint Francis, which means that the altar of Santo Spirito must have been located in the same bay of the basilica.⁶⁵ The fragment of a marble sculpture now preserved in the portico of the basilica was likely part of Francesco Colonna's funerary monument (fig. 4). No other altar is known to have existed in the north arm of the transept at this time, so the altar of Santo Spirito was possibly located against the east wall of the north arm (fig. 2, no. 5). While the Colonna family may not have held the entire north arm of the transept at Santi Apostoli under their direct patronage, it seems that in practice – similar to the aforementioned family altars in the nave – the tombs of the family members occupied the floor space of this part of the basilica during the fifteenth century and beyond.⁶⁶ After his death, Prospero Colonna received a suitable funeral service in the basilica, where a funeral oration was performed by the famous orator Niccolò Palmieri (d. 1467).⁶⁷ The whole service was witnessed and described with interesting detail in a prose work by Niccolò della Valle (1444–1473), canon of Saint Peter's.⁶⁸

The north and south arm of the transept of Santi Apostoli enjoyed their own liturgical and spatial prominence within the basilica, but were both nevertheless centred around the cappella maggiore and the crossing. The remains of the apostles Philip and James had been buried below the high altar for centuries already.⁶⁹ Despite the very large size and spatial prominence of the cappella maggiore, sources allowing us to reconstruct the fifteenth-century state of this part of the basilica are few and far between. The cappella maggiore was probably separated by some kind of baluster from the rest of the nave, as there is mention of a *tribuna* in 1475.⁷⁰ Later visual sources corroborate this.⁷¹ Moreover, these show that the high altar at Santi Apostoli was located below a well-preserved medieval marble ciborium from 1162 which was supported by four ancient columns in red marble.⁷² The area in

front of the cappella maggiore, between the chapels of the Colonna family and of Bessarion, was the centre of liturgical activity, as it contained a canon's choir which is very briefly referred to in a handful of notarial acts. Only one fleeting reference in a document from February 1460 suggests that each canon had his stall in the choir and that the choir was probably not directly situated next to or behind the high altar.⁷³ We may therefore assume that the choir, following traditional Roman church layout, was located outside the cappella maggiore in the crossing of the nave and the transept, i.e., between the two prominent arms and apses of the basilica (fig. 2, no. 7).⁷⁴ This would not have been uncommon for a Roman basilica of the stature of Santi Apostoli. For example, it is known that the canons' choirs of the old basilica of Saint Peter's and of the Lateran basilica were located in the nave and that they were entirely separate from the area of the high altar. They even incorporated their own altarpieces.⁷⁵ It is not known if the latter was the case for the choir at Santi Apostoli.

Bessarion's Changing Position and Patronage at Santi Apostoli

The prominence of the Colonna family and of Prospero Colonna at Santi Apostoli cannot have been ideal to Bessarion who, as we will see, preferred to keep a close watch on what went on. For example, Cardinal Colonna had been involved in a long dispute regarding land that had been usurped by his relatives from the monastery of Grottaferrata, one of Bessarion's greatly favoured religious communities.⁷⁶ Santi Apostoli was sometimes a pawn in the cardinals' different interests, too. In 1462, Pius II forfeited the palace adjacent to Santi Apostoli, which had belonged to the Colonna family since Martin V, and formally ceded it to Bessarion because of the latter's position as cardinal-priest of the basilica.⁷⁷ This, however, does not mean that the two car-

dinals would have been mortal enemies. In fact, the patronage held by the Colonna over the altar of Saint Francis appears to have been another significant step for Bessarion towards cementing a stronger position at Santi Apostoli. In his testament of 1463, Prospero Colonna had named Bessarion as the first of several testamentary executors, probably mostly because of the latter's position as cardinal-priest of Santi Apostoli.⁷⁸ This meant that, in addition to his own chapel, Bessarion now would also have a direct say in the work being done on the north arm of the basilica.

The death of Prospero Colonna set in motion the permanent change in Bessarion's position at Santi Apostoli. The year 1463 was important for Bessarion in many other ways, too. It was also the year in which some of the highest offices which Bessarion would hold were bestowed on the cardinal. Bessarion was appointed to the prestigious position of Papal Legate to Venice. In addition, he also became the Titular Patriarch of Constantinople, Dean of the College of Cardinals, and, consequently, *primus cardinalium*.⁷⁹ That same year, he was received in Venice by the Doge Cristoforo Moro (1390–1471) with the highest honours which his new ambassadorial role merited.⁸⁰ Bessarion subsequently bequeathed important relics of the True Cross and of Christ's last worn garment in a very precious *staurolitheke* – famously depicted by Gentile Bellini – to the *scuola* of the Confraternity of Santa Maria della Carità in Venice.⁸¹ Finally, it should not go unnoticed that 1463 marked the year in which Bessarion geared up his extensive preparations for a crusade against the Ottomans.⁸²

Bessarion's involvement in the alterations of the north arm of the basilica of San Apostoli would soon be intensified by another donation. The altar of Saint Francis was left a substantial gift on 6 August 1464 by Vittoria Colonna, Cardinal Prospero Colonna's sister.⁸³ She bequeathed the substantial sum of 2000 ducats to be paid by her heirs in instalments "for the fabric of the chapel and the tomb of Cardinal Colonna".⁸⁴ The large

sum suggests that Vittoria expected significant additions to the altar of Saint Francis and the burial place of Prospero Colonna the year after the cardinal's death. Vittoria Colonna would be buried next to her brother in 1464.⁸⁵ It seems that her will regarding alterations on the area of the altar of Saint Francis was being executed over an extended period. A promise of payment dated 1 August 1467 suggests that work on the area around the altar of Saint Francis in order to accommodate the permanent burial places of Prospero and Vittoria Colonna was not yet started. Importantly, the document identifies Cardinal Bessarion as one of the foremost agents in executing Vittoria's wish regarding the payment for the alterations of the altar of Saint Francis and the tomb of her brother Prospero.⁸⁶ The precise nature of the work remains unknown, but we may assume that Vittoria Colonna's elaborate tomb slab, of which the antiquarian Francesco Gualdi (1574–1657) made a woodcut, was commissioned and carved while alterations were executed under the supervision of Bessarion.⁸⁷ Thus Bessarion, next to acquiring patronage of his own chapel in Santi Apostoli and slowly starting to build the programme of the intended chapel additionally, became involved in securing important alterations in the north arm of the transept at Santi Apostoli in the period of 1463–1467. His influence over the patronage of key places in both arms of the transept meant that the chapels were interconnected to an unprecedented degree. It should also be noted that this would not be the last time that Bessarion would supervise construction works at another person's burial chapel as testamentary executor. Around 1470, he commissioned the famous Roman sculptor Andrea Bregno (d. 1503) to carve a marble relief of the Archangel Michael as part of a larger visual programme in the funerary chapel of his friend Cardinal Juan Carvajal (d. 1469) in the nearby church of San Marcello al Corso.⁸⁸

The interconnectedness of Prospero Colonna's passing and Bessarion's actions at Santi Apostoli

expressed itself in other ways too. It cannot be a coincidence that all of Bessarion's most significant interventions at Santi Apostoli date to after the death of Prospero Colonna around 23 March 1463 and that they all took place in the four months following the death of his great competitor. As discussed earlier, Bessarion received papal confirmation regarding the new patronage of the old chapel of Saint Eugenia on 30 April, only a month later. By taking possession of the other most conspicuously located, cultically significant part of the basilica, Bessarion mirrored the Colonna patronage of the altar of Saint Francis in the large apse of the opposite transept, which he was already partially supervising.

Bessarion soon continued with another decisive intervention in religious life at Santi Apostoli. This merits attention of its own, as it provides important insights into his complicated relationship with the canons of Santi Apostoli in the early 1460s while he worked on the alterations of both arms of the transept. More importantly, this digression will further illustrate the atmosphere of contention in which Bessarion commenced work on his new funerary chapel. On 30 June 1463, Bessarion suppressed the old chapter of canons of Santi Apostoli with a bull from Pius II, *Sedis Apostolicae providentia*, and installed the Friars Minor Conventual. The transferral at Santi Apostoli was presented and communicated to the canons by Bessarion's protégé and representative Niccolò Perotti inside the basilica on 1 July 1463.⁸⁹ The keys to the basilica were officially handed over to Giovanni Dacri (d. 1485), Minister General of the Franciscan Order, on 3 July in the presence of Cardinal Bessarion.⁹⁰ This was followed on the same day by a celebration of the Divine Office during which Bessarion was thanked by Giovanni for his efforts.⁹¹ All the prebends and other resources of the former canons and chaplaincies of the chapels in the basilica were seized and reverted to the friars.⁹² Left without their old sources of income from Santi Apostoli, one of the former canons soon lobbied to become part of

the metropolitan chapter of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence while some others remained in Rome and held positions at the papal court.⁹³ Pius' bull in favour of the transferral draws an image in which the titular cardinal made sustained, personal effort towards battling the spiritual decline of the old chapter of Santi Apostoli. It notes that many years earlier, in February 1443, Eugenius IV had already ordered to decrease the number of canons at Santi Apostoli to four.⁹⁴ This had been part of an initiative on the part of Bessarion to reform the statutes of the chapter and to rekindle religious fervour and enthusiasm for the ideal of poverty, as he would do with the Basilian order a couple of years later.⁹⁵

In reality, things were a bit more complicated, as by 1463 the number of non-resident canons at Santi Apostoli had been quite stable for almost a century.⁹⁶ More importantly, other sources suggest that Bessarion's dedication towards suppressing the canons had not always been as consistent as Pius' bull purports to show. This becomes clear from a series of events which took place at the basilica in early 1460. On 4 February that year, the canons of Santi Apostoli convened in their choir. The session was presided over by Lorenzo de Venetiis who was canon of the basilica and also vicar of Cardinal Bessarion.⁹⁷ The purpose of the meeting was to appoint Niccolò di Angelo de Gaiettis, a chaplain of the cardinal, a canon of the venerable chapter. Bessarion seems to have played an active role in this appointment. The contract goes on to describe that Niccolò was given a stall in the canons' choir and that the tabernacle of the Holy Sacrament near the high altar of Santi Apostoli was opened and closed for the occasion.⁹⁸ A couple of days later, on 7 February, another meeting was called, again under the supervision of Lorenzo de Venetiis. This time the main topic was that the rectorate of the church of San Silvestro al Quirinale be assigned to Bessarion's chaplain Niccolò, thus securing an extra source of income for him.⁹⁹ A document drawn up on 17 February 1460 shows

that Niccolò di Angelo de Gaiettis was a full member of the chapter of Santi Apostoli by that time.¹⁰⁰ All this effort suggests that Niccolò was a very valued member of Bessarion's entourage.¹⁰¹

More importantly, the preceding presents a rather different image from the tone of the papal bull of 1463. In February 1460, Bessarion was not (yet) contemplating another decrease of the number of canons or the suppression of the chapter altogether. In contrast, this shows that less than three years before the introduction of the Friars Minor Conventual, the cardinal was actively involved in appointing a second member of his entourage as canon of Santi Apostoli, thus going against Pope Eugenius' earlier order to decrease the number of canons. Prospero Colonna's death, which finally gave Bessarion free rein, likely prompted the cardinal's radical change.

The suppression in favour of the friars was certainly the culmination of Cardinal Bessarion's long relationship with the different Franciscan branches. Bessarion had been general protector of the Franciscan order since 1458.¹⁰² Long before that, he had already suppressed other religious communities in favour of the Observant branch of the Franciscan Order.¹⁰³ As Liberale Gatti rightly emphasized, the transferral of Santi Apostoli gave the Friars Minor Conventual their first permanent seat in the ancient city.¹⁰⁴ The newly installed mendicant community certainly outperformed the former chapter in terms of numbers. In 1475, three years after Cardinal Bessarion's death and burial in his funerary chapel, at least thirteen friars were resident in the convent of Santi Apostoli.¹⁰⁵ In addition, the recorded names show that, while some friars were from the city of Rome itself, the community in terms of geography was more diverse than the old chapter had ever been. Most other members came from different parts of the Italian peninsula, while two friars were from England.¹⁰⁶ A document from 1477 lists additional friars from France, Spain, Flanders, and Muscovite Russia.¹⁰⁷ In this aspect, the recently installed religious

community reflected the strongly international character which the members of Bessarion's household, who were from all parts of the European continent, had already brought to Santi Apostoli in the years leading up to the suppression of the canons.¹⁰⁸

Despite the substantial change which the introduction of the Friars Minor Conventual caused to religious life at Santi Apostoli, there were probably no significant alterations to the fabric of the basilica in order to adapt it more to Franciscan use and liturgy in the first years. There is no evidence to suggest that work was started on the construction of new choir stalls or the erection of a choir screen at Santi Apostoli in the fifteenth century.¹⁰⁹ The existing patronage of altars (and their dedications) by established families did not change either. Instead, other concerns seem to have occupied the time and energy of the mendicant community. In May 1464, for example, the friars managed to establish a *studium* of theology in the complex of Santi Apostoli.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, this does not mean that the recently installed friars took no active control whatsoever of the already-present altars and other liturgical furnishings inside the basilica, as is illustrated by one legal case. In 1465 or 1466, the friars took legal action against the heirs of Paolo de Carbonibus (d. 1465), who had bequeathed half of his estate to the basilica in his testament.¹¹¹ In their petition to claim their share of the estate, the friars left no doubt about the fact that the procurator and *guardianus* of the convent would decide themselves to which altar in the basilica they would assign the stipulated weekly masses for Paolo's soul.¹¹²

Bessarion's New Chapel

All this was in stark contrast to the elaborate and costly works which would soon commence on Bessarion's own chapel in 1463. As discussed earlier, Cardinal Bessarion initiated the con-

struction of his chapel in what turned out to be a crucial year for him. This is reflected by the extraordinary effort he took to establish and secure his future commemoration at Santi Apostoli. On 17 February 1464, several months after Pius II had already issued the bull in support of Bessarion's patronage and rededication of the chapel, the cardinal drew up a testament during his stay in the Benedictine monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice with the sole purpose of guaranteeing the construction of the funerary structure according to his wishes.¹¹³ In the same testament, Bessarion also ordered that the Franciscan friars he had recently installed in the basilica were to say daily masses inside the funerary chapel, with special services on the feast days of the Archangel Michael, Saint John the Baptist, and the Trinity. In addition, there was to be a mass for the dead three times a week, with special reference to Cardinal Isidore of Kiev (ca. 1385–1463), his former tutor Bishop Dositheus of Trebizond, (possibly) his parents Theodore and Theodora, and some others whom the cardinal had “in his intention”.¹¹⁴ Lorenzo de Venetiis, who had been canon of Santi Apostoli in the early 1460s and who was still part of the cardinal's entourage, was given the mandate to sell a number of vineyards in order to secure the financial survival of Bessarion's funerary chapel.¹¹⁵

According to the testament, the whole bay which the new chapel occupied in the basilica was to be closed off with a marble railing topped by columns and an architrave with candelabras.¹¹⁶ Despite the fact that a relatively large part of the basilica was taken up by the funerary chapel, the cardinal's vision for his new chapel shows that he wanted to maintain the exclusivity which had probably already characterized the old chapel of Saint Eugenia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, anticipating accessibility only on certain (liturgical) occasions to particular groups. This is suggested also by some known events not long after Bessarion's death. On 29 September 1474, the feast day of Saint Michael,

Bessarion's stipulated yearly mass for the Archangel served as a backdrop against which Federico da Montefeltro (1422–1482), newly created Duke of Urbino, received the regalia of the Order of the Ermine.¹¹⁷

The exclusivity of the new chapel is further suggested by a remarkable decision from not much later. On 24 May 1476, the College of Acolytes of the Apostolic See decided, likely with approval from the friars of Santi Apostoli, that the cardinal's funerary chapel be used from then on as the main seat and office space for the administration of the said College.¹¹⁸ It was common in fifteenth-century Rome to allocate to certain administrative bodies of the papal court the (temporary) use of liturgical or monastic spaces which were not habitually open to religious visitors or which could be closed off easily.¹¹⁹ Santi Apostoli had already seen this practice during the papacy of Martin V.¹²⁰ While Bessarion's chapel would have still been used for the weekly and yearly liturgical events in accordance with the stipulations made by the cardinal himself, the decision by the College of Acolytes implies that the chapel was indeed enclosed. Moreover, the choice of words (“inessere”) suggests that Bessarion's funerary chapel remained a spatially and liturgically exclusive space within the context of the basilica to such a degree that it was deemed suitable to offer the privacy necessary for the College to perform their administrative tasks there. Apart from the cappella maggiore, Bessarion's chapel was probably the only substantial space within the basilica which was closed off.

The sheer size of Bessarion's chapel, which took up the entire south arm of the transept, must have also contributed to its visual presence in the basilica. In another attempt to increase this effect, Bessarion stipulated in his testament that the entire vault and roof of the chapel be rebuilt.¹²¹ This would have made the chapel stand out even more compared with the nave and the other chapels in the basilica, not in the least the altar of Saint Francis itself. According



5 Unknown miniaturist, Miniature of Bessarion kneeling in front of an apparition of Christ as Saviour, ca. 1455. Cesena, Biblioteca Malatestiana, cor. Bessarione 5, fol. 1r

to Schelbert, we may also attribute to Bessarion the breaking up of the colonnades of the nave for the insertion of two great arches which opened up to the arms of the transept.¹²² If true, this means that for the first time in the history of the basilica the large apses of both ends of the transept became directly visible from the crossing. This would have greatly enhanced the visibility of the altar of Saint Francis and of Bessarion's new chapel and motivated a direct visual association between the places of worship. The importance that Bessarion held for visibility is corroborated by other sources. In an epitaph verse composed in Greek by Bessarion for himself, the cardinal wrote how his funerary chapel, despite having been made with human hands, was "divine looking" (θεοειδής) and "beguiling" (θέλγον), thus underlining the importance that

the act of viewing held in his anticipated commemoration.¹²³ As this was composed during the construction of the chapel, the epitaph gives us precious insight into Bessarion's considerable interest in the power of visibility.

In order to further the visual impact which the sheer size and location of the chapel already made on the basilica, especially after the insertion of a new vault and sizeable arch, Bessarion stated in his 1464 testament that his entire funerary chapel be decorated with frescoes ("omnino depingatur") according to a design by the Roman painter Antoniazio Romano.¹²⁴ Bessarion's testament stated that the wall of the altar was supposed to receive a fresco depicting Jesus Christ seated on a throne and assisted by, respectively, the Virgin Mary, Saint Michael, Saint John the Baptist, and Saint Eugenia. Bessarion was to be depicted kneeling at Christ's feet, with his coat of arms.¹²⁵ The cardinal had prior experience with this composition. During his time in Bologna, he had himself depicted kneeling in a fresco, now lost, of the Assumption of the Virgin in the round church of the Madonna della Monte.¹²⁶ A similar composition is used in an initial in which Bessarion had himself portrayed kneeling as if experiencing a vision of Christ the Redeemer (fig. 5).¹²⁷ This depiction of the cardinal in combination with Christ seated on clouds comes close to the composition stipulated in his testament for the chapel at Santi Apostoli. In the fresco for his funerary chapel, Bessarion intended to make himself an indispensable part of the vision of Christ, like he had done in the aforementioned artistic commissions in different contexts. This was particularly relevant in the case of the funerary chapel at Santi Apostoli, because, in another attempt to further his visual presence, Bessarion's marble tomb was to be placed to the right of the altar, with a conspicuously located inscription referring to him on the marble coffin (fig. 2, no. 8).¹²⁸ Two parts of the tomb containing inscriptions are still preserved by the Friars Minor Conventual in the adjacent convent. A panel



6 Panel painting of Bessarion's marble tomb in the Chapel of Saint Eugenia at Santi Apostoli, ca. 1592. Venice, Biblioteca Marciana

from a late sixteenth-century diptych shows the original state of Bessarion's tomb (fig. 6).¹²⁹ The cardinal's 1464 testament makes no secret of the importance that this tomb had in ensuring Bessarion's visual presence during future use of the chapel: "This building will be constructed with such Credence [in anticipation of] when a pope will have celebrated Mass in it, and that is why a beautiful marble epitaph must be placed in a high enough position."¹³⁰ Placed to the right of the altar in 1466, Bessarion's tomb was probably also meant to play an integral part in the liturgical activities. Fashioned to look like a chest, the monument would have been able to accommodate the liturgical objects used for the services on the nearby altar inside the chapel.

On 14 September 1464, Cardinal Bessarion had another notarial act drawn up in which his prior agreements with Antoniazio Romano re-

garding the iconography were formalized and expanded. The painter formally promised to finish decorating the funerary chapel of Santi Apostoli according to plan and on time.¹³¹ For some unknown reason, possibly for the sake of clarification or confirmation, a second contract was drawn up with the painter Antoniazio Romano on 23 August 1465. This time, Bessarion was more specific about some parts of the chapels which had not been covered by the earlier testamentary description.¹³² The newly built vaults of the chapel were to be covered with azurite and golden stars, with Christ in the middle surrounded by four angels and the four Evangelists, who in turn would each be accompanied by a Doctor of the Latin and the Greek Churches. These Doctors were to be depicted writing *in studio*, very likely as a reference to Bessarion's own erudition and to his famous library which he

would donate to the Basilica of San Marco and the Republic of Venice in 1468, the year after the completion of his burial chapel.¹³³ These frescoes are now completely lost, but a similar composition of the Evangelists joined by a Doctor of both churches was completed in the vaults of the Mazzatosta chapel in the church of Santa Maria della Verità in Viterbo in 1469. Earlier studies have shown that this chapel has direct links with Bessarion's new construction at Santi Apostoli.¹³⁴

The cardinal did not rest until he was confident that he would witness the completion of his funerary chapel. On 10 April 1467, when the chapel was nearly completed, Bessarion drew up the second and last version of his testament.¹³⁵ Whereas his first testament had served only to secure his burial chapel, the second testament was written at a moment when Bessarion took the time to consider his other – and seemingly less prominent – interests such as the proper dispersal of his worldly possessions. Later that same year, as a final attempt of consolidation, he convinced Pope Paul II to draw up a second bull, *In eminenti Apostolicae Sedis*, which confirmed the cardinal's patronage and rededication of the old chapel of Saint Eugenia in the basilica of Santi Apostoli. The decoration of the chapel, including Antoniazio Romano's frescoes, was described by the bull as "worthy" and "fitting".¹³⁶ In its completed state, Bessarion's lavishly decorated chapel, which took up a substantial area inside the basilica, would have been a much more elaborate and visually impressive counterpart of the north arm of the transept where Prospero Colonna and his niece Vittoria had been buried close to the altar of Saint Francis not much earlier.

Alterations to the Programme

The remaining frescoes in the apse, rediscovered in 1959, suggest that there was a complex visual programme of different types of apparitions, which was supposed to enhance the visual im-

pact of the chapel as a whole. The remnants of the apse fresco at Santi Apostoli show that Antoniazio Romano's Christ seated in a long mantle on clouds. Bessarion appears to have anticipated a chapel which would create a vision-like experience of Christ. The remains of the apse fresco show no trace of Bessarion kneeling below the feet of Christ, as had been stipulated by the 1464 testament. Did it not survive the later alterations to the chapel? Or was the iconography of the apse fresco altered at Bessarion's request? The latter is certainly possible, as the depiction of Christ in the apse is surrounded by nine rows of distinctively ranked angels even though there was no such specification in the testament either (fig. 1). The inclusion of the rows of angels in the apse is an interesting choice which betrays influences from Byzantine iconography and other Eastern ecclesiastical traditions. Their presence in Antoniazio Romano's apse fresco in Santi Apostoli has been correctly identified as a reference to Pseudo-Dionysius' treatise *On the Celestial Hierarchy* (*De Coelesti Hierarchia*; Περὶ τῆς Οὐρανίας Ἱεραρχίας). This treatise explains at length the existence of the nine orders of angels.¹³⁷

Moreover, it is probably no coincidence that a thirteenth-century fresco of the Trinity in a similar composition of a mandorla encircled by ranks of different types of angels (fig. 7) featured prominently on the triumphal arch inside the abbey church of Grottaferrata directly above an older mosaic of the Pentecost.¹³⁸ This iconography at the Basilian abbey would not have gone unnoticed to Bessarion, as he had included the Trinity among the celebratory services in his funerary chapel at Santi Apostoli.¹³⁹ The comparison with Grottaferrata is made all the more relevant because of another visual and programmatic similarity with Bessarion's funerary chapel. Probably sometime around the completion of the frescoes at Santi Apostoli, Antoniazio Romano created a large panel painting of the Virgin with Child which took a central posi-



7 Fresco of the Trinity and angels, ca. 1280. Grottaferrata, Monastery of Santa Maria di Grottaferrata

tion on the altar inside the funerary chapel.¹⁴⁰ It is known that Bessarion donated a thirteenth-century icon of the Madonna with Child to the monastery of Grottaferrata.¹⁴¹ Bessarion may have twinned his donations of objects to his two most important religious communities to a certain degree.

The theme of apparitions in the funerary chapel at Santi Apostoli is continued in the register directly below in the apse, where we can see that Antoniazio Romano and his workshop painted other scenes which were not explicitly mentioned in Bessarion's first testament. The upper section of the wall of the apse still contains the frescoes depicting the two apparitions of the Archangel Michael on, respectively, Monte Gargano and Mont-Saint-Michel (fig. 8). Antoniazio Romano's surviving frescoes of Saint Michael's apparitions on Monte Gargano and Mont-Saint-Michel and the now lost frescoes on the life of Saint John the Baptist in the apse of the chapel have been convincingly interpreted as a visual defence of hierarchy, with both Saints Michael and John the

Baptist serving as beacons of Christian religiosity and of the supremacy of the Church against the existential threat posed by the Ottoman Empire and conciliar disputes.¹⁴² Tiberia's reconstruction of the chapel, which is based on Bessarion's minute testamentary descriptions, shows that even with the marble enclosure, the scenes of the apparitions of the Archangel Michael would have been visible from the nave of the basilica.¹⁴³ The prominence of the Archangel can be related to contemporary burial chapels for other high prelates connected with Rome.¹⁴⁴

Bessarion's sizeable chapel, with its visible focus on the cult of Saint Michael, must have left a significant impression on viewers. It may have even influenced patronage in the same parish. For example, on 25 July 1468, Giovanni dei Foschi de Berta, canon of Santa Maria Maggiore, bequeathed 50 ducats to have his funerary chapel in the nearby church of San Nicola next to the Column of Trajan decorated with, among others, an image of the Archangel Michael and a fresco of the saint's apparition on Monte Gargano.¹⁴⁵



8 Antoniazio Romano and workshop, Fresco showing part of the apparition of the Archangel Michael at Mont-Saint-Michel. Rome, Basilica of SS XII Apostoli

It is probably no coincidence that this bequest dates to shortly after the completion of Bessarion's funerary chapel. Moreover, it is known that Giovanni was no stranger to the context of Santi Apostoli.¹⁴⁶ The canon's bequest may therefore present us with very rare insight into the local artistic influence which the frescoes by Antoniazio Romano and his workshop might have exerted.

The Completion of a Visual Statement

By now it should be clear that even though the chapel was not easily accessible for most religious visitors, it still accommodated a vision-

like experience for those viewing it from the crossing of the basilica and outside the marble enclosure of the chapel. During services, the presence of elaborate and visually appealing furnishings was another important factor in ensuring this. Bessarion's 1464 testament contains an exhaustive list of all the precious objects which were to be donated to the chapel after the cardinal's death. Among the many fabrics, liturgical vestments, and other objects, some testify to the consideration the cardinal gave to selecting his bequest. For example, Bessarion mentioned a missal which he had purchased from the estate of Cardinal Isidore of Kiev who, as mentioned earlier, was included in the *memento mortuorum* of the funerary chapel.¹⁴⁷ Bessarion also included



9 Chalice of Bessarion, before 1465, silver-gilt and enamel. Grottaferrata, Monastery of Santa Maria di Grottaferrata



10 Paten of Bessarion, before 1465, silver-gilt. Grottaferrata, Monastery of Santa Maria di Grottaferrata

a black liturgical vestment from Isidore's estate, which would be used for the weekly Masses of the Dead. Interestingly, Bessarion's list of objects also included a liturgical vestment from the estate of Prospero Colonna. Unlike Isidore's vestment, this one had the coat-of-arms of Bessarion embroidered on it.

More importantly, the list of objects allows for some interesting insights into the art found in-

side the chapel. Bessarion's testament mentions two chalices, one of which came with a paten, and that they were made by a goldsmith called Simeon.¹⁴⁸ None of the objects have survived in situ in the chapel or in the convent of Santi Apostoli. There are, however, some objects which have been identified as parts of the original furnishing but which have escaped attention in art-historical studies of Bessarion's funerary chapel.

The first example is a set of a chalice and paten in the treasury of the monastery of Grottaferrata (figs. 9, 10).¹⁴⁹

The chalice of Grottaferrata has been variously attributed to the Tuscan, Viterban, Bolognese, and Roman schools.¹⁵⁰ Zandri suggested that Bessarion's chalice is of Siennese production or even from a Roman workshop influenced by the Tuscan school.¹⁵¹ In fifteenth-century Italy, chalices remained heavily influenced by fourteenth-century Siennese examples. It may come as no surprise then that Bessarion's chalice bears a strong resemblance to older chalices which were produced by Tuscan or Siennese-influenced workshops. Several parts of the decorations and the enamelled images on the foot and knob are very similar to a chalice inscribed by Duccio di Donato (ca. 1315) and another one by Tondino di Guerrino and Andrea Riguardi (ca. 1315–1325).¹⁵² Similar features are found on a chalice created in Naples sometime after 1348 by the Florentine goldsmith Giovanni di Ser Iacopo.¹⁵³ Mention should also be made of the strong stylistic resemblance to a chalice from Vellano (near Pistoia) which has been attributed to a Florentine workshop of the 1420s or 1430s.¹⁵⁴ Finally, many parts of the decoration of Bessarion's chalice are almost identical to those of a chalice signed by the Viterban goldsmith Pietro Giovanni detto il Giudice and dated to 1427.¹⁵⁵

It is generally assumed that Bessarion donated the chalice and paten to the Basilian monastery on 13 August 1465, two years after he made his first bequest to his funerary chapel.¹⁵⁶ However, the enamelled images on Bessarion's chalice suggest that originally the two liturgical objects were part of the furnishings of the cardinal's funerary chapel in the basilica of Santi Apostoli. The foot displays individual enamelled representations of the four Evangelists together with Saint Eugenia and the Archangel Michael; on the knob are depicted the Man of Sorrows, the Virgin Mary, Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Saint John the Evangelist, and the Archangel Michael (fig. 11). Two of



11 Detail of the enamelled depiction of the Archangel Michael on the knob of the handle of Bessarion's chalice (fig. 9)

the saints, Eugenia and Michael, are dedication saints of Bessarion's chapel at Santi Apostoli. What is even more interesting is that the Archangel is the only saint to be depicted twice on the chalice and that the enamelled image of Eugenia is the only one with an inscription explicitly identifying the saint (fig. 9).¹⁵⁷

The appearance of these saints must have sprung from Bessarion's own choice, as it is known that the iconography of chalices was often subjected to the owner's personal demands who may or may not have had the intended context of the chalice in mind.¹⁵⁸ The prominence of the enamelled images of Archangel and Eugenia led Zandri to propose that this set of chalice and paten were originally associated with the cardinal's bequest for his funerary chapel.¹⁵⁹ If the cardinal had indeed planned for this set of liturgical objects to go to Santi Apostoli, one can ask how they ended up in the monastery of Grottaferrata. An explanation may be found in the fact that Bessarion often retained use of objects from his own donations until his death. This was the case for his bequest to the monastery of Grottaferrata



12 North Italian workshop, Miniature of the Crucifixion from Bessarion's missal, ca. 1455–1458. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Barb. lat. 562, fol. 170v

and for his own funerary chapel at Santi Apostoli.¹⁶⁰ The descriptions of objects in both bequests are not very detailed, so while Bessarion may have had a different set in mind, his testamentary executors may have (unintentionally) mixed up the objects from the cardinal's estate and sent the present chalice and paten to the Basilian monastery after the cardinal's death in 1472.

In his 1464 bequest to his funerary chapel, Bessarion also included a large missal.¹⁶¹ This has been identified beyond doubt as a Franciscan missal preserved in the Apostolic Library in Vatican City.¹⁶² Among its decorations is Bessarion's coat of arms, and there are inscriptions that leave no doubt about its former use in the cardinal's funerary chapel in Santi Apostoli. The illumination of the manuscript is generally attributed to a

North Italian workshop.¹⁶³ This missal is the only surviving object with an uninterrupted chain of provenance that reaches back to the cardinal's funerary chapel, yet it has been overlooked in most art-historical studies of Bessarion's patronage at Santi Apostoli.¹⁶⁴ This modestly decorated missal contains an elaborate first folio as well as a particularly fine illumination of Christ on the Cross flanked by a sorrowful Mary and John the Evangelist (fig. 12). Beside the remnants of Antoniazio Romano's frescoes, the illumination of the missal provides one of the very few known examples of visual art which once functioned on a regular basis inside the funerary chapel for the benefit of the cardinal's fully orchestrated daily commemoration. The chalice, paten, and manuscript might have even been placed on top of Bessarion's marble sarcophagus directly next to the altar during services, where they would have created a direct association with the cardinal's remains buried below.

The Beginning of the End

Bessarion's funerary chapel is a good example of the committed effort of a fifteenth-century cardinal in Rome to secure a strongly orchestrated commemoration within a highly symbolic, liturgical setting. As has been shown, Bessarion at every step of the process of arranging his funerary chapel was aware of how his commemoration was to be in dialogue with that of others. By choosing a conspicuous location, the cardinal tried to impose his permanent presence on a space which had already been heavily patronized by successive generations of ambitious individuals. As cardinal, however, he was in a unique position to bring his commemoration to new artistic heights which had not yet been seen at Santi Apostoli. What is also remarkable about the whole process is that Bessarion completed one of the largest funerary chapels on the Italian peninsula in just under four years. There was probably

more than one reason for Bessarion's haste to build his chapel and secure its finances. It seems that Bessarion may have felt that time was not on his side because his first testament explicitly mentioned that he wanted to ensure the continuation of the chapel "as long he was physically and mentally fit to do so".¹⁶⁵ Even years after Bessarion's death, Vespasiano da Bisticci, a friend and former employee, would refer in his *Vite* to the cardinal's enduring poor health.¹⁶⁶ Another concern which Bessarion must have had probably sprang from his own experience of the death of other cardinals. As Richardson has shown, a cardinal's death often created a 'vacuum' in which his estates became prone to the interests of other parties.¹⁶⁷ The funerary chapels which cardinals had erected during their lives were no exceptions to this, as their assets were often stripped. Sometimes, they even had to make way for newer additions to churches by successive generations of ambitious cardinals. Over the years, Bessarion had created a significant endowment for his funerary chapel.¹⁶⁸ This came under threat soon, despite the accumulation of bulls from Pius II and Paul II, who had ratified its foundation and underlined its legal status.

Already around the beginning of 1475, less than three years after Bessarion's burial, Giuliano della Rovere (1443–1513), Bessarion's successor as cardinal-priest of Santi Apostoli, had found a potential buyer for a house in Rome named La Cicognola Nova.¹⁶⁹ This was significant, as the notarial act explicitly mentions that the house was actually part of the endowment which Bessarion had created for his funerary chapel.¹⁷⁰ The purchase probably did not take place, but Giuliano did not give up and decided to take a different approach when on 11 April 1477 he proposed to the friars that they break up a part of Bessarion's endowment so that the house

La Cicognola could be sold "for the fabric of the church and the convent" and "for the improvement of the church".¹⁷¹ Ironically, Bessarion's most significant legacy at Santi Apostoli – the introduction of the friars and the construction of his funerary chapel – were used against him. Firstly, his introduction of the Friars Minor Conventual in 1463 was now being used as an opportunity to undo some of the cardinal's elaborate efforts to safeguard the financial future of his funerary chapel. Giuliano's request was granted by the friars based on the reasoning that, when Bessarion donated the basilica to the Franciscan community in 1463 and introduced a new hierarchy, the mandate of any assets had automatically reverted to the newly appointed head ("guardianus") of the resident friars.¹⁷² Fra Antonio da Vicenza, the *guardianus* at Santi Apostoli in 1477, was in agreement.¹⁷³ Secondly, it was argued by the friars that Giuliano, as Bessarion's successor at Santi Apostoli, was supposed to continue the former cardinal's formidable architectural additions by improving the convent buildings.¹⁷⁴ The endowment of the funerary chapel, apparently, was now supposed to fund that. Bessarion's elaborate efforts to adapt the basilica of Santi Apostoli for his own commemoration had thus come back to haunt him. The construction of the funerary chapel had been marked by how it was in dialogue with other forms of patronage, often consciously in an attempt to outdo them. Bessarion's vision, however, would soon be outdone by a successive generation of ambitious patrons.

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- 1 Bessarion was made commendatory abbot of the religious community in 1442 or 1443. It appears that he relinquished this position in 1459. Cf. Aloysius Bandini, *De vita et rebus gestis Bessarionis cardinalis Nicaeni commentarius*, Rome 1777, 43–44; Alphonse Raes, Le cardinal Bessarion, abbé commendataire de l'abbaye de S. Jean l'Évangéliste à Ravenne, in: Rino Avesani, Giuseppe Billanovich, and Giovanni Pozzi (eds.), *Miscellanea marciana di studi bessarionei*, Padua 1976, 325–332. A coat of arms of the cardinal in the *chiostro* of the monastery was copied in a drawing ca. 1700. The drawing is currently preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum, classmark E.240-1940.
- 2 Cf. John Monfasani, Platina, Capranica, and Perotti: Bessarion's Latin eulogists and his date of birth, in: Augusto Campana and Paola Mediolli Masotti (eds.), *Bartolomeo Sacchi il Platina: atti del convegno internazionale di studi per il V centenario*, Padua 1986, 97–136, here 103, n. 23; Egmont Lee, *Sixtus IV and Men of Letters*, Rome 1978, 25.
- 3 See Lorenzo Finocchi Ghersi, Bessarione e la basilica romana dei Santi XII Apostoli, in: *Bessarione e l'Umanesimo* (exh. cat. Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana), ed. by Saverio Ricci and Gianfranco Fiaccadori, Naples 1994, 128–136, here 129–131.
- 4 See Francesco Malvasia, *Compendio storico della venerabile Basilica di SS. Dodico Apostoli di Roma*, Rome 1665, 17–18; Vitaliano Tiberia, *Antoniazio Romano per il Cardinale Bessarione a Roma*, Todi 1992, 111–117.
- 5 See Malvasia 1665 (as in note 4), 35–40.
- 6 The author identifies himself at the beginning of the document of the Apostolic Visitation: Archivio di Stato di Roma (hereafter ASR), Corporazioni religiose maschili (hereafter Corporazioni), Frati Minori Conventuali SS XII Apostoli, Busta 1, fol. 2r.
- 7 Ibid., fol. 9r: “Era prima qui dipinta al muro l’immagine di S. Michele Archangelo, di S. Giovanni Battista, e sotto ci era il corpo di S. Eugenia.”
- 8 See Clemente Busiri Vici, Un ritrovamento eccezionale relative alla basilica dei SS. Apostoli a Roma, in: *Fede e Arte* 13, 1960, 70–83.
- 9 Cf. Henri Vast, *Le cardinal Bessarion (1403–1472): Étude sur le chrétienté et la renaissance vers le milieu du XV^e siècle*, Paris 1878, 53–123, 126–127; Ludwig Mohler, *Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist und Staatsmann*, 3 vols., Paderborn 1923–1942 (reprint: Aalen 1967), vol. 1, 179, 248–249; Giuseppe Coluccia, *Basilio Bessarione: lo spirito Greco e l'occidente*, Florence 2009, 71.
- 10 See Knut Nörr, *Kirche und Konzil bei Nicolaus de Tudeschis (Panormitanus)*, Cologne 1964, 3–5. A charter dated 11 March 1442 shows that at the Council of Basel Niccolò still styled himself cardinal-priest of SS XII Apostoli: Munich, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Kloster Baumburg Urkunden, no. 362.
- 11 See Emma Zocca, *La basilica dei SS. Apostoli in Roma*, Rome 1959, 36; Carol Richardson, *Reclaiming Rome: Cardinals in the Fifteenth Century*, Leiden 2009, 167.
- 12 Cf. Richard Krautheimer et al., *Corpus basilicarum christianarum Romae: le basiliche cristiane antiche di Roma (sec. IV – IX)*, vol. 1, Rome 1937, 77.
- 13 Ibid., 78.
- 14 See Simone Schiavone, Nuove acquisizioni e lettura preliminare dei risultati di un recente scavo nel chiostro del complesso dei Santi XII Apostoli in Roma, in: *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 97, 2021, 379–396.
- 15 Cf. Malvasia 1665 (as in note 4), 2–3; Zocca 1959 (as in note 11), 19. Finocchi Ghersi rightly suggested that the plan of the Byzantine basilica was transmitted through the verbal descriptions of Eusebius of Caesarea (Lorenzo Finocchi Ghersi, *La basilica dei SS. Apostoli a Roma: le modifiche dell’impianto medievale nel Quattrocento*, in: *Quaderni dell’Istituto di Storia dell’Architettura: saggi in onore di Renato Bonelli*, ed. by Corrado Bozzoni, 2 vols., Rome 1992, vol. 1, 355–366, here 364). The lost basilica of Santi Apostoli in Milan is one other such example of its influence; see Zocca 1959 (as in note 11), 19.
- 16 See August Heisenberg, *Grabeskirche und Apostelkirche: Zwei Basiliken Konstantins*, vol. 2, *Die Apostelkirche in Konstantinopel*, Leipzig 1908, 26–28, 87–90, 112–117.
- 17 See Finocchi Ghersi 1992 (as in note 15), 355–361; Georg Schelbert, SS. Apostoli a Roma: il coro-mausoleo rinascimentale e il triconco rinato, in: Sabine Frommel (ed.), *La place du chœur: Architecture et liturgie du Moyen Âge aux temps modernes*, Paris 2012, 101–112, here 103.
- 18 Bessarion had entered the Basilian order in 1423, and became abbot of the monastery of Saint Basil in Constantinople in 1436. See Bandini 1777 (as in note 1), 77–78; Mohler 1923–1942 (as in note 9), vol. 1, 13, 50; Raymond-Joseph Loenertz OP, Pour la biographie du cardinal Bessarion, in: *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 10, 1944, 116–149, here 125–126; Teodoro Minisci, Il quinto centenario della morte del Card. Bessarione, in: *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata*, new series 26, 1972, 157–160, here 158.
- 19 In the 1380s, the abbot of Grottaferrata, Giovanni de Caputgallis, was a member of a family that held patronage over a chapel in SS XII Apostoli; see Renzo Mosti, *Un notaio romano del Trecento: i protocolli di Francesco di Stefano de Caputgallis (1374–1386)*, Rome 1994, 423, 460, 475, 494, 529. A representative of the abbot of Grottaferrata is recorded as present in the

- basilica of Santi Apostoli on 30 December 1460, less than two years before Bessarion became commendatory abbot of this religious community; ASR, Collegio dei Notai Capitolini (hereafter Notai Capitolini), vol. 484, fol. 11v.
- 20 Cf. Mohler 1923–1942 (as in note 9), vol. 1, 248–249; Raes 1976 (as in note 1), 325.
 - 21 Cf. Bandini (as in note 1), 78–79; Mohler 1923–1942 (as in note 9), vol. 1, 257; Raymond-Joseph Loenertz OP, Statuti disciplinari del capitolo generale della 'Religione di Santi Basilio' celebrato a Roma nel 1446, in: *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata*, new series 1, 1947, 179–184; Paolo Gianni Archimandrita, Il monachismo basiliano in Italia, in: *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata*, new series 41, 1987, 5–18, here 16.
 - 22 Cf. Teodoro Minisci, Il monastero di S. Giovanni di Castaneto, in: *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata*, new series 6, 1952, 27–31, here 27.
 - 23 Bessarion had been spiritual leader of the Basilian monastery of San Salvatore in Messina since 1456, relinquishing this position in 1462. See Concetta Bianca, L'abbazia di Grottaferrata e il cardinale Bessarione, in: *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata*, new series 41, 1987, 135–152; Coluccia 2009 (as in note 9), 88. On 1 August 1462, Niccolò Perotti represented the Cardinal in Santi Apostoli regarding his patron's new position as commendatory abbot of Grottaferrata; see Antonio Rocchi, *La Badia di S. Maria di Grottaferrata*, Rome 1884, 37–42, 46; Mohler 1923–1942 (as in note 9), vol. 1, 252–257; Giovanni Mercati, *Per la cronologia della vita e degli scritti di Niccolò Perotti*, Arcivescovo di Siponto, Rome 1925, 50–53. For the most complete overview of primary sources on Bessarion's activity at Grottaferrata see Maria Teresa Caciorgna (ed.), *Santa Maria di Grottaferrata e il cardinale Bessarione: fonti e studi sulla prima commenda*, Rome 2005, 39–158.
 - 24 For example, Bessarion allowed the monks to maintain the use of unleavened bread and the Greek language, as becomes clear from a Decretal issued by Pope Benedict XIV on 24 April 1747; Hessisches Staatsarchiv, Marburg, Urk. 75, 2281.
 - 25 Cf. Günther Schuhmann, Kardinal Bessarion in Nürnberg, in: *Jahrbuch für fränkische Landesforschung* 34–35, 1975, 447–466, here 455–459.
 - 26 The cardinal also owned a collection of Byzantine portable mosaics and painted depictions of Saint Michael which he bequeathed to the papal basilica of Saint Peter's; see Eugène Müntz, *Les arts à la cour des papes pendant le XV^e et le XVI^e siècle*, 3 vols., Paris 1878–1882, vol. 2, 298; Fabrizio Lollini, Bessarione e Perotti diffusori della cultura figurativa bizantina, in: *Studi umanistici Piceni* 11, 1991, 127–142, here 129–130. For more information and context on portable mosaics in the entourage of Bessarion, see Gabriele Barucca, I reliquiari donati da Niccolò Perotti a Sas-
 - soferrato, in: *Studi umanistici Piceni* 12, 1992, 9–46, here 15–17.
 - 27 There had been an altar or chapel dedicated to Saint Michael in Santi Apostoli since at least 1396; see Pasquale Adinolfi, *Roma nell'età di mezzo*, 2 vols., Rome 1881, vol. 2, 9, 18. A feast calendar from ca. 1400 shows that John the Baptist and the Archangel Michael were among the most important saints to be venerated in the liturgical year in the basilica; see Adalbert Ebner, *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte und Kunstgeschichte des Missale Romanum im Mittelalter: Iter Italicum*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1896, 147.
 - 28 The chapel had contained the relics of Saint Eugenia and her mother Saint Claudia and other local martyrs since Pope Stephen VI's donation of them to the basilica in 885–891. Bandini 1777 (as in note 1), 133–134; Zocca 1959 (as in note 11), 16.
 - 29 Ibid., 16–22.
 - 30 Ibid., 8, 82–83.
 - 31 Cf. Mosti 1994 (as in note 19), 459–460. The abbot was Giovanni de Caputgallis, a member of the family who patronised the chapel of SS John the Evangelist and John the Baptist inside the basilica of Santi Apostoli.
 - 32 ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 477, fols. 58v–61v.
 - 33 The formulation of the location is interesting, as the choice of words stresses that the meeting took place inside the said chapel, which means that it could not have simply been an altar: "Actum Rome intus [...] cappellam sancte Heugenie manentem intus ecclesiam Duodecim Apostolorum." Document transcribed in Rodolfo Lanciani, Il patrimonio della famiglia Colonna al tempo di Martino V, in: *Archivio della Società romana di storia patria* 20, 1897, 369–449, here 434–437.
 - 34 ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 484, fol. 8v. He is likely the same person as Oddelo Lelli Adriani who was present as witness for a notarial act on 4 February 1460 in Santi Apostoli; ibid., fol. 50r.
 - 35 Ibid., fols. 9v, 10v.
 - 36 Adinolfi suggested the Porci family, but it is unclear on what grounds; see Adinolfi 1881 (as in note 27), vol. 2, 21–22.
 - 37 The earliest known burial of a member of the Caputgallis family in this chapel is that of Caterina (d. 1383), wife of Santoli de Caputgallis. Cf. Tassilo Blittersdorff et al., *Die mittelalterlichen Grabmäler in Rom und Latium*, 2 vols., Rome 1981–1994, vol. 1, 73. The strong association of the chapel with the Caputgallis family is illustrated by a phrase found in a testament. In 1444, Nardo de Caputgallis stipulated that his remains be interred "in ecclesia xii apostolorum de Urbe in cappella sancti johannis de caputgallis"; ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 470, fol. 4r. The chapel's dedication was later changed to Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Sebastian; see Lanciani 1897 (as in note 33), 379.

- 38 Giovanni da Sicilia is first mentioned in a notarial act dated 6 November 1460. His final documentary appearance is in a contract from 15 February 1463, when he leased some pieces of land belonging to the chaplaincy. ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 484, fols. 154r–155r, 214r–215v, 329r–v.
- 39 The earliest known burial of Pietro Mancini is documented in 1384; see Adinolfi 1881 (as in note 27), vol. 2, 20.
- 40 Pietro Egidi, *Necrologi e libri affini della provincia romana*, Rome 1908, 363. He probably was the son of Pietro Mancini alias Ognissanti and may be the same person as Lorenzo di Pietro Ognissanti who is mentioned in two notarial acts from 1441; ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 480, fols. 405r–v, 426r–v.
- 41 Preserved under the accession number RCIN 911812. The tomb slab was identified as that of Renzo in Blittersdorff et al. 1981–1994 (as in note 37), vol. 1, 75.
- 42 A drawing from 1701 shows the state of the Baroque altar inside the Mancini family chapel; ASR, Collegio dei Trenta Notai Capitolini (hereafter Trenta Notai), Ufficio 18 (10), no. 565, fol. 464r.
- 43 Bessarion even made sure that this bequest was respected by the chaplain of Saint Thomas in the new statutes of the chapter which he drew up; see Bandini 1777 (as in note 1), 121.
- 44 ASR, Corporazioni, Frati Minori Conventuali SS XII Apostoli, Busta 1, fol. 4r.
- 45 Cf. Deborah Brown, *Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, Patron of Architecture, 1471–1503*, Ph.D. dissertation, The Courtauld Institute, London 1988, 86.
- 46 ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 484, fol. 214v. Similarly, the adjacent chapel of Saint Thomas Becket was made beneficiary of a donation by a different family than the Mancinis in 1465; ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 849, fol. 27r.
- 47 See Zocca 1959 (as in note 11), 93. The Muti Papazzurri family lived in a palace directly next to the basilica of Santi Apostoli and had a longstanding connection with its canons. The first family member known to have been buried in the basilica was Niccolò Muti Papazzurri (between 1315–1350). His (now lost) tomb slab was reproduced by Francesco Gualdi. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (hereafter BAV), Vat. lat. 8254, pt. 1, fol. 52v. Cf. Blittersdorff et al. 1981–1994 (as in note 37), vol. 1, 72–73; Robert Brentano, *A New World in a Small Place: Church and Religion in the Diocese of Rieti, 1188–1378*, London 1994, 113. Around 1400, a silver chalice was donated to Santi Apostoli in memory of Francesco Papazzurri; see Egidi 1908 (as in note 40), 303.
- 48 The altar of the Deposition would remain in its original location and under the patronage of the Muti Papazzurri until the demolition of the basilica from 1701, as becomes clear from a plan of the basilica from 1701 (ASR, Trenta Notai, ufficio 18, no. 565). The family lost patronage of the altar when they failed to claim it after the completion of the new basilica in 1723; see Giovanni Bonelli, *Memorie storiche della Basilica Costantiniana dei SS. XII Apostoli di Roma*, Rome 1879, 33.
- 49 The chapel or altar of Saint Urban is mentioned only once in 1457; ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 476, fol. 351r. The chapel or altar of Mary Magdalene is mentioned a couple of times between 1393 and 1432; *ibid.*, vol. 477, fols. 156r, 250v, 355v, vol. 480, fol. 109v.
- 50 This was still the case in 1453, when Bessarion commissioned a history of the basilica of Santi Apostoli to be written; BAV, Vat. lat. 5560, fol. 2r.
- 51 Cf. Zocca 1959 (as in note 11), 82–83, 98.
- 52 It is uncertain when the association of the Colonna family with this altar began; cf. Brown 1988 (as in note 45), 66.
- 53 Cf. Malvasia 1665 (as in note 4), 21–25. Brown throws a critical light on Pope Martin's patronage of the basilica; Brown 1988 (as in note 45), 65–66. See also Georg Schelbert, *Der Palast von SS. Apostoli und die Kardinalsresidenzen des 15. Jahrhunderts in Rom*, Norderstedt 2007, 55–65, 94.
- 54 The first explicit reference to a portico dates from 1432, the year after the death of Pope Martin V. On 14 December that year, a notarial act was drawn up “in portico ante ecclesiam sanctorum apostolorum.” Among those present was Lorenzo de Surdis, canon of the basilica of Santi Apostoli; ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 480, fols. 45v–46v.
- 55 Already in 1425, when Prospero was about fifteen years old, he seems to have been involved in the purchase of real estate for the canons of Santi Apostoli together with his relative Odoardo Colonna who was mentioned earlier in this article. Biblioteca Statale di Santa Scolastica (hereafter BSSS), Archivio di Colonna di Paliano (hereafter Archivio Colonna), III BB 48 15.
- 56 Mention is made of Mariano de Pigno da Neapoli who as *famulus* between 1460 and 1463 arranged some of the cardinal's finances. ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 484, fols. 75r–77r, 302r–v, 309r–v, 312r–315r. Some of Prospero Colonna's *familiars* also acted as witnesses for notarial acts inside the basilica; *ibid.*, vol. 484, fols. 154r–155r, 199r, 207r, 215r, 284v.
- 57 Prospero Colonna is referred to in his capacity as cardinal-deacon of San Giorgio in Velabro in 1458; ASV, Reg. Vat. 468, fols. 44r, 47r.
- 58 See Donal Cooper and Janet Robson, *The Making of Assisi: The Pope, the Franciscans and the Painting of the Basilica*, New Haven 2013, 18–21, 27–33, 35–45.
- 59 The Apostolic Visitation of 1662 mentions that there was once a statue of Saint Anthony of Padua in the current chapel of the Madonna dei Miracoli, but it is not certain if this was already the case in the fifteenth century; ASR, Corporazioni, Frati Minori Con-

- tuali SS XII Apostoli, Busta 1, fol. 13r. The same applies to an altar dedicated to Saint Peter Martyr; *ibid.*, fol. 14v.
- 60 BAV, Barb. lat. 563. Cf. Egidi 1908 (as in note 40), 303; exh. cat. *Bessarione e l'Umanesimo* 1994 (as in note 3), 445, cat. no. 62 (Andrea Cuna).
- 61 Ebner 1896 (as in note 27), 146–147.
- 62 BSSS, Archivio Colonna, III BB 54 33 (“unam partem capelle in qua ipse testator sepelliendus erit”).
- 63 Bonelli posited that the Colonna family have held patronage of the chapel since 1404, but he provides no evidence for this; Bonelli 1879 (as in note 48), 34. Without access to many sources, Zocca rightly assumed that the Colonna patronage of the chapel dated from long before 1463; Zocca 1959 (as in note 11), 98.
- 64 ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 263, fol. 15r.
- 65 The location of Francesco’s tomb was recorded in a later document on inscriptions, now preserved in the Colonna archive. BSSS, Archivio Colonna, 11 Raccolta epigrafica, no. 7.
- 66 The remains of the marble monument were once identified as belonging to the lost tomb of Lorenzo Oddone Colonna (d. 1484), who was apostolic protonotary. This seems unlikely because, apart from a lack of documentary evidence, the iconography of the marble remains does not suggest that the man depicted held a position at the papal court. Cf. Adolfo Venturi, *Storia dell’arte italiana*, vol. 6, *La scultura del quattrocento*, Milan 1908, 972. For more information on Lorenzo Oddone Colonna, see Nele de Raedt, Papal and Municipal Authority in the City: House-destruction as a Legal Punishment in Renaissance Rome, in: *Urban History* 2022, 1–17, here 1–2, 6 (DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963926822000748> [last accessed 15 December 2023]). The Colonna archive contains many documents on the later burials of family members in the area around the altar of Saint Francis.
- 67 The funeral oration is preserved in BAV, cod. Vat. lat. 5815, fol. 119r–126r. For a comprehensive list of bibliography and editions, see John McManamon, *An Incipitarius of Funeral Orations and a Smattering of other Panegyric Literature from the Italian Renaissance (ca. 1350–1550)*, s.l. 2016, 44 (URL: http://www.luc.edu/media/lucedu/history/pdfs/Incipit_Catalogue.pdf [last accessed 22 February 2023]).
- 68 The text is preserved in Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale (hereafter BNCF), cod. Magl. VIII.1434, fols. 110v–115v. The only study and edition I am aware of is Renata Fabbri, Nota biografica sull’umanista romano Niccolò della Valle (con un inedito), in: *Lettere italiane* 28, 1976, 48–66.
- 69 Cf. Malvasia 1665 (as in note 4), 33; Kaare Lund Rasmussen et al., Investigations of the Relics and Altar Materials Relating to the Apostles St James and St Philip at the Basilica dei Santi XII Apostoli in Rome, in: *Heritage Science* 9, 2021, 1–30 (DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40494-021-00481-9> [last accessed 20 October 2023]).
- 70 Bartolomeo Platina praised Pope Sixtus IV for his reconstruction of the tribune of the high altar at Santi Apostoli; Bartolomeo Platina, *Liber de vita Christi ac omnium Pontificum* (Rerum Italicarum scriptores, 3.1), ed. by Giacinto Gaida, Città di Castello 1932, 418. A 1475 bill makes mention of repairs to the tribune; Müntz 1882 (as in note 26), vol. 3, 155. See also Finocchi Ghersi 1992 (as in note 15), 358, 360; Isabelle Frank, Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere and Melozzo da Forlì at SS. Apostoli, in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 59, 1996, 97–122, here 116; Lorenzo Finocchi Ghersi, *La basilica dei SS Apostoli a Roma: storia, arte e architettura*, Città di Castello 2011, 15.
- 71 Two frescoes in the Apostolic Library in Rome show the state of the interior of Santi Apostoli in ca. 1588. See Finocchi Ghersi 1992 (as in note 15), 360; Sible de Blaauw, Grabmäler statt Liturgie? Das Presbyterium vom Santi Apostoli in Rom als private Grablege 1474–1571, in: Wilhelm Maier, Wolfgang Schmid, and Michael Viktor Schwarz (eds.), *Grabmäler: Tendenzen der Forschung an Beispielen aus Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, Berlin 2000, 179–199, here 185–186.
- 72 De Blaauw 2000 (as in note 71), 193.
- 73 ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 484, fol. 50r: “[...] prefatum dominum Nicolaum presentem in canonicatum prebendatum dicte ecclesie [...] ad osculum pacis unius quisque de persona receperunt et locum in choro predictis dederunt stallo sibi de coro et predictum [...] canonico et prebenda invescierunt et [...] ducendi ad altare maius dicte ecclesie faciendi dictum salarii pulsandi campaneos dicte ecclesie et ostia claudere et aperire et alia omnia alia et singula facere [...]” ([...] [they welcomed] the aforementioned master Niccolò in the canonry and the prebend of the said church [...] each of them received him with a kiss of the pax and they gave him his own stall in the choir [...] and they invested him with the position of canon and with the prebends [...] they led him to the high altar of the said church to chime the bells of the said church and they opened and closed the tabernacle of the Sacrament and they performed all the other things [...]).
- 74 Adinolfi was the first to suggest this; Adinolfi 1881 (as in note 27), vol. 2, 17–18. Reiterated in Finocchi Ghersi 1992 (as in note 15), 360.
- 75 Sible de Blaauw, *Cultus et Decor: liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale*, 2 vols., Vatican City 1994, vol. 1, 249–256, vol. 2, 656–668; idem, Private Tomb and Public Altar: The Origins of the “Mausoleum” in Rome, in: *Memory & Oblivion: Proceedings of the XXIXth International Congress of the History of Art*, Dordrecht 1999, 475–482, here 476–478.

- 76 Bessarion would immediately set to resolve this dispute after Colonna's death in 1463; cf. Giovanna Falcone, *Il monastero di S. Maria di Grottaferrata in regime di commenda (1463–1824)*, in: *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata*, 3rd series 1, 2004, 9–62, here 15–18.
- 77 BSSS, Archivio Colonna, III BB 33 23; Finocchi Ghersi 2011 (as in note 70), 10; Schelbert 2007 (as in note 53), 141–142.
- 78 Prospero Colonna appointed as his testamentary executors Cardinal Bessarion, followed by Cardinal Juan Carvajal (d. 1469), Cardinal Angelo Capranica (1415–1478), Girolamo da Rieti, and Francesco Gonzaga (1444–1483); BSSS, Archivio Colonna, III BB 54 33.
- 79 Bessarion had succeeded his close friend Cardinal Isidore of Kiev as Patriarch; cf. Mohler 1923–1942 (as in note 9), vol. 1, 312–314; Carlotta Labowsky, *Bessarion's Library and the Biblioteca Marciana*, Rome 1978, 4–5; Caroline Campbell, "Almost another Byzantium": Gentile Bellini and the Bessarion Reliquary, in: Holger A. Klein, Valeria Poletto, and Peter Schreiner (eds.), *La stauroteca di Bessarione fra Costantinopoli e Venezia*, Venice 2017, 331–349, here 335–342.
- 80 Cf. Holger A. Klein, Cardinal Bessarion, Philippe de Mézières, and the Rhetoric of Relics in late medieval Venice, in: Klein, Poletto, and Schreiner 2017 (as in note 79), 3–39, here 24–25.
- 81 Bandini 1777 (as in note 1), 61. The most recent and comprehensive study of the *stauroteke*'s material aspects and historic and art historical context is Klein, Poletto, and Schreiner 2017 (as in note 79).
- 82 The most comprehensive overview of Bessarion's efforts for the crusade in 1463–1464 is given in Panagiotis Kourniakos, *Die Kreuzzugslegation Kardinal Bessarions in Venedig (1463–1464)*, Ph.D. dissertation, Universität zu Köln 2009.
- 83 Vittoria Colonna, daughter of Lorenzo Colonna, had been widowed for a long time, as her husband Carlo Malatesta died in 1438. Although Vittoria did not live in Rome permanently, she did own property in the vicinity of the basilica of Santi Apostoli, as becomes clear from a notarial act from 1451–1452; ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 482, fols. 668v–669r. She was a wealthy landowner in her own right. In 1454, Sigismondo Malatesta transferred the castle of Tomba close to Senigallia to Vittoria; BSSS, Archivio Colonna, III BB 20 96. A document from 1461 mentions that she also owned the castle of Piglio; *ibid.*, III BB 64 12. Finally, there is mention of a castle in Nemi; *ibid.*, III BB 61 6; III BB 63 8. Vittoria's testament of 1464 further lists a house located close to the basilica, next to that of her kin. Vittoria lived in Paliano when she drew up her testament.
- 84 "Item voluit et legavit quod de duobus milibus ducatis cum melioramento [...] solvavit fabrice Cappelle et Sepulture Reverendissimi domini domini P. Cardinalis de Columna [...]." The aforementioned castle of Nemi was supposed to be used as a pledge for financing work on the altar of Saint Francis. BSSS, Archivio Colonna, III BB 54 80.
- 85 In his description of the funeral of Prospero Colonna, Niccolò della Valle already referred to Vittoria's wish to be buried alongside her brother; see Fabbri 1976 (as in note 68), 64.
- 86 BSSS, Archivio Colonna, 3 amministrazione C 9 IAC 1 Conti diversi di Casa Colonna con i loro ministri e coi banchieri, stato dei creditori nel regno di Napoli, 1464–1581, document dated 1 August 1466: "Antonius de Columna Salerni princeps: ac alme Urbis prefectus [...] ne confessamo havere pagati al Reverendissimo Cardinale Monsignor de Roano cento cinquanta ducati: ut circa li quali denari ne era debitore la bona memoria de monsignor de la Colonna mio fratello e noi pro rata como herede havemo pagati li dicti denari de quelli denari dovea havere la bona memoria de Madonna Victoria mia sorella: li quali dapoi la sua morte secondo appare pro suo testamento erano & sonno lassati a noi pro rata per le doi parta de le tre. Li quali denari lo Reverendissimo monsignore de niceno ha facti sostenere & sequ[...] perche la sua Reverendissima S dice noi essere debitori pro essecutione del testamento de la bona memoria de Monsignore nostro fradello & per questa ragione et per levare lo sequestro promettemo a esso Reverendissimo Monsignore de niceno essere debitori di li dicti denari & summa che rasonevolmente pro essecutione del dicto testament [...] (Antonio Colonna, prince of Salerno and prefect of Rome [...]) confesses to have paid to the Reverend Cardinal of Rouen 150 ducats: that these funds are paid for the memory of Cardinal Colonna my brother and we, as heir, have paid the said funds which are bequeathed for the memory of Madonna Vittoria our sister; two thirds of which funds after her death, as per her testament were and are left to us. Cardinal Bessarion supported and followed up these funds as the cardinal stated that we are tasked with executing the testament of our late brother; and for this reason and to solve the sequester we promise to the Reverend Cardinal Bessarion to be fulfil the debt of the said funds and sum for the said testament [...]).
- 87 BAV, Vat. lat. 8254, pt. 1, fol. 217r. According to a handwritten note in the Colonna archive, Vittoria's tomb slab was lost during the reconstruction of the basilica of Santi Apostoli in the eighteenth century; BSSS, Archivio Colonna, 11 Raccolta epigrafica, no. 4. Niccolò della Valle's description suggests that Bessarion knew Vittoria personally. BNCF, Magl. VIII.1434, fols. 114v–115r.
- 88 The marble relief of the Archangel Michael is currently preserved in the musée Jacquemart-André in

- Paris; cf. Francesco Caglioti, *Sui primi tempi romani d'Andrea Bregno: un progetto per il cardinale camerlengo Alvisse Trevisan e un San Michele Arcangel per il cardinale Juan de Carvajal*, in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 41, 1997, 213–253. For more historical context, see Vast 1878 (as in note 9), 383–384.
- 89 Cf. Bandini 1777 (as in note 1), 130–133; Mohler 1923–1942 (as in note 9), vol. 1, 284; Zocca 1959 (as in note 11), 34; De Blaauw 2000 (as in note 71), 181; Ulrich Hüntemann and José Maria Pou y Martí (eds.), *Calixtus III, Pius II et Paulus II, 1455–1471: Continens constitutiones, epistolae, diplomata* (Bullarium franciscanum, n.s., 2), Grottaferrata 1939, no. 1125.
- 90 Bonelli 1879 (as in note 48), 21; Isidoro Liberale Gatti, *Sedis apostolicae circumspecta providentia: L'Apostoleion di Roma ai Frati Minori Conventuali*, in: Roberto di Paola, Arianna Antoniutti, and Marco Gallo (eds.), *Enea Silvio Piccolomini: arte, storia e cultura nell'Europa di Pio II*, Vatican City 2006, 229–244, here 240.
- 91 Kourniakos 2009 (as in note 82), 272–273.
- 92 This was confirmed by Sixtus IV in 1475; BSSS, Archivio Colonna, III BB 93 1.
- 93 Maestro Antonio Laziori da Forlì, who had been associated with Santi Apostoli, joined the metropolitan chapter in Florence on 24 November 1464 but soon returned to Rome to become canon of Saint Peter's; Archivio di Stato di Firenze, *Diplomatico*, Firenze, Santa Maria della Badia detta Badia Fiorentina, 14 November 1464; 24 November 1464; 9 January 1468; 6 July 1468; 16 March 1469; 23 March 1469. See also Salvino Salvini, *Catalogo cronologico de' canonici della chiesa metropolitana fiorentina*, Florence 1782, 51.
- 94 See Malvasia 1665 (as in note 4), 80–82; Bandini 1777 (as in note 1), 23, 115–118; Zocca 1959 (as in note 11), 33.
- 95 Bessarion's attempt at reforming the statutes of the chapter of Santi Apostoli was not unprecedented. In 1370, the chapter of Santi Apostoli had ratified a new set of statutes. This act is transcribed in BAV, Vat. lat. 5560, fols. 14r–16v.
- 96 At a gathering inside the basilica on 2 December 1380, to cite just one example, four canons were present who officially declared that they were the majority of the venerable chapter; Mosti 1994 (as in note 19), 373. The statutes of 1370 mention five canons who represented the entire chapter; Vat. lat. 5560, fol. 16r. The number appears to have remained the same during a meeting held on 30 April 1392; ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 477, fol. 153v. A comparison of the canons listed in both documents shows that only one of the canons, Andrea di Pietro Speciarì/Spetiarì, was present at both meetings. At a meeting held on 1 August 1423, six canons were present inside Santi Apostoli who declared that they were the majority of their chapter. ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 849, fol. 416r.
- 97 ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 484, fols. 49r–50r. A notarial act from 26 August 1460 further adds that Lorenzo de Venetiis then was a canon at the papal basilica of Saint Peter's; *ibid.*, vol. 484, fol. 100v.
- 98 On the same day, another notarial act was drawn up with the brother of the newly appointed canon Niccolò; *ibid.*, fol. 50v.
- 99 *Ibid.*, fol. 51r.
- 100 *Ibid.*, fols. 52v–53v.
- 101 The cardinal's ever-loyal protégé Niccolò Perotti would later receive the church of San Silvestro al Quirinale in commendam. The appointment of Niccolò di Angelo de Gaiettis as rector of the same church suggests that he, too, was close to Bessarion; Mercati 1925 (as in note 23), 52, n. 2.
- 102 See Malvasia 1665 (as in note 4), 83–86.
- 103 In 1444, the cardinal suppressed the Benedictine community of San Mamante in Ravenna. According to Bandini, this happened at the request of the citizenry of Ravenna; Bandini 1777 (as in note 1), 23–24; Vast 1878 (as in note 9), 159–160; Ulrich Hüntemann (ed.), *Eugenius IV et Nicolaus V, 1431–1455: Continens constitutiones, epistolae, diplomata* (Bullarium franciscanum, n.s., 1), Grottaferrata 1929, no. 790. Bessarion donated the convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie alle Paludi in the town of Spoleto in 1450; *ibid.*, no. 1338.
- 104 Liberale Gatti 2006 (as in note 90), 229–244. Friars of the newly established convent of Santi Apostoli were recorded by name as witnesses to a notarial act in 11 July 1464: Fra Giorgio de Monte Calero (?), Fra Leone de Monte Saeculo, Fra Arricho de Alemanania, Fra Clemente de Messa, Fra Martino di Gerardo de Francia, and Fra Bartolommeo de Bologna; ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 849, fol. 2r. Six more friars from Santi Apostoli are mentioned as witnesses to a slightly later notarial act of 1464, namely: Fra Alessandro di Fano, sacre theologie magister Fra Jacopo di Utetonico (?), Fra Francesco de Rausmia (?), sacre theologie bachelarius Fra Crispolito de Viscovia (?), Fra Giovanni de Francia, and Fra Giovanni de Calabria; *ibid.*, fol. 4v.
- 105 ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 470, fol. 241v.
- 106 The latter two friars were called Tomas de Anglia and Andreas de Anglia; *ibid.*, fol. 241v.
- 107 ASR, Corporazioni, Frati Minori Conventuali SS XII Apostoli, Busta 1, fol. 170v.
- 108 In the 1460s, members of his *familia* at Santi Apostoli included, among others, a Michael de Belgrado in 1460; ASR, Collegio dei Notai Capitolini, vol. 484, fols. 50r, 110v. Another was Stefano Feretti from Constance; Carmelo Capizzi, *Spigolature bessarionee da fonti notarili inedite*, in: *Studi albanologici, balcanici, bizantini e orientali in onore di Giuseppe Valentini S. J.*, Firenze 1986, 205–246, here 213. A significant number of them were from the Low

- Countries. A case in point is Enrico de Zoemerem from the diocese of Liège, who in 1458 was referred to as chaplain to the cardinal; ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 1104, fol. 6r; Capizzi 1986 (as above), 213. For more information on his other known activities, see John Monfasani, *Fernando of Cordova: A Biographical and Intellectual Profile*, Philadelphia 1992, 35–36, 93–94; Concetta Bianca, *Da Bisanzio a Roma: studi sul cardinale Bessarione*, Rome 1999, 28–29. A list has survived of all the *familiares* of Bessarion from 1472; *ibid.*, 169–172.
- 109 De Blaauw has convincingly argued that a new choir was not realised in the area of the cappella maggiore at Santi Apostoli until much later; De Blaauw 2000 (as in note 72), 195.
- 110 Liberale Gatti 2006 (as in note 90), 242; Kourniakos 2009 (as in note 91), 233.
- 111 A member of an old Roman family, Paolo de Carbonibus became conservator of the Campidoglio in 1429 and was appointed as one of the *signori guardiani* of the Compagnia del SS Salvatore ad Sancta Sanctorum in 1438. He participated in the procession of the miraculous image of the Salvatore in 1464. Giovanni Marangoni, *Istoria dell'antichissimo oratorio o cappella di San Lorenzo nel patriarcho lateranense comunemente appellate Sancta Sanctorum*, Rome 1747, 316. For the versions of Paolo's testament, see ASR, Pergamene dell'Ospedale dell'SS. Salvatore ad Sancta Sanctorum, S. Giovanni, Roma, cassetta 425, no. 18AA.
- 112 *Ibid.*, no. 18BB, a, 1: "[...] tunc voluit et mandavit quod dicta bona pervenirent essent et remanerent pro media parte ecclesie sanctorum apostolorum de urbe pro remedio anime sue tenerent quod procurator conventus et guardianus dicte ecclesie assignare unam capellam in eadem ecclesia in qua celebrari facere teneantur duas missas pro ebdomada in perpetuum pro anima sua et suorum tali conditione adiecta et apposita in codicillis [...]" ([...] and then he [Paolo] wished and ordered that half of the said property be transferred and remain with the church of Santi Apostoli in Rome for the remedy of his soul, that the procurator of the convent and the guardian of the said church retain the power to assign an altar in the same church where they are obliged to perform two masses weekly in perpetuity for his soul and the souls of his relatives, on the conditions set forth in the codicils [...]).
- 113 See Bandini 1777 (as in note 1), 139.
- 114 His contemporary Michael Apostolis mentions Dositheus as Bessarion's early teacher; Mohler 1923–1942 (as in note 9), vol. 1, 41–42.
- 115 Cf. Bandini 1777 (as in note 1), 136. Other real estate was added to the new funerary chapel. For detailed discussions on one such case, see Capizzi 1986 (as in note 108), 205–228.
- 116 See Bandini 1777 (as in note 1), 139.
- 117 Archivio di Stato di Mantova, AG 845/172, letter by Giovanni Pietro Arrivabene from Rome, 1 October 1474. See Brown 1988 (as in note 45), 89, 109.
- 118 ASR, Notai Capitolini, vol. 470, fol. 266r: "[...] In presentia mei notarii et Congregati Collegiali [...] in venerabili ecclesia sanctorum apostolorum de Urbe et in cappella sancta eugenie sive in dicta ecclesia quem locum pro inessere omnibus et singulis faciendis gerendis et administrandis deputaverunt Reverendissimi presbyteres et domini dominus Gabriel de Schafenatis decanus Venerabilis Collegii dominorum accolitorum Sedis apostolice dominus Hieronimus Blondus Dominus Appollonius de Valencinis Dominus Lodovicus Toca Sedis apostolice acoliti ministrarii [...]" (In the presence of me, the notary, and the collegiate congregation [of acolytes], in the venerable church of Santi Apostoli in Rome and in the chapel of Saint Eugenia, or the place in the said church, which the Reverend presbyters and master Gabriel de Schafenatis, dean of the Venerable College and of the acolytes of the Apostolic See, and master Hieronimus Blondus, master Apollonius de Valencinis, master Lodovicus Toca, the minister acolytes of the Holy See [...] have chosen as the location for performing all their administrative responsibilities [...]). The phrase *quem locum* was immediately added by the same hand after the sentence was written, to further specify that the chapel was the designated spot inside the basilica of Santi Apostoli.
- 119 A well-known example is the Roman Rota, the highest ecclesiastical court of the Holy See, which had no permanent location. Instead, depending upon availability and other circumstances, they convened in the old basilica of Saint Peter's, Santa Maria della Rotunda (i.e., the Pantheon), Saint'Eustachio, or Santa Maria sopra Minerva. For a recent discussion of this practice, see Kirsi Salonen, *Papal Justice in the Late Middle Ages: The Sacra Romana Rota*, London 2016, 73–74. See also ASR, Camerale I – Mandati camerali, no. 828.
- 120 In 1429, for example, the Camera Apostolica had operated from inside the basilica for some time. This is known from a notarial act transcribed in Tobias Daniels, *Das Rom der Frührenaissance in den Imbreviaturen des Notars Angelo degli Atti da Todi 1423–1432*, in: *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 101, 2021, 232–347, here 333.
- 121 See Bandini 1777 (as in note 1), 137–138.
- 122 Cf. Schelbert 2012 (as in note 17), 105. The insertion of the two great arches in the sides of the nave has also been dated to the time of Giuliano della Rovere; see Finocchi Ghersi 1992 (as in note 15), 361–362.
- 123 BAV, Barb. gr. 123, fol. 607r.

- 124 Gisela Noehles-Doerk, *Antoniazio Romano: Studien zur Quattrocentmalerei in Rom*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Münster 1973, 15–20; Anna Cavallaro, *Antoniazio Romano e gli antoniazzeschi: una generazione di pittori nella Roma del Quattrocento*, Udine 1992, 33–42; eadem, Antoniazio Romano, pittore “dei migliori che fossero allora in Roma”, in: *Antoniazio Romano, pictor urbis: 1435/1440–1508* (exh. cat. Rome, Palazzo Barberini), ed. by Anna Cavallaro and Stefano Petrocchi, Milan 2013, 20–47, here 22 (see also *ibid.*, cat. no. 4).
- 125 Cf. Bandini 1777 (as in note 1), 137; Bianca 1999 (as in note 108), 159.
- 126 Fabrizio Lollini, *L'iconografia di Bessarione: Bessarion pictus*, in: Ricci and Fiaccadori 1994 (as in note 3), 275–283; Bianca 1999 (as in note 108), 160.
- 127 See Roberto Weiss, *Two Unnoticed ‘Portraits’ of Cardinal Bessarion*, in: *Italian Studies* 22, 1967, 1–5; Bianca 1999 (as in note 108), 161. Bessarion has also been proposed as one of the many identifications of the bearded figure in Piero della Francesca’s *Flagellation*. For an overview of the relevant literature on this topic, see Lollini’s summary in Pier Davide Accendere and Ivano Privitera (eds.), *Bessarione: la natura delibera. La natura e l’arte*, Milano 2014, 290–291. See also Giordana Mariani Canova, *Una illustre serie liturgica ricostruita: i corali del Bessarione già all’Annunziata di Cesena*, in: *Saggi e memorie di storia dell’arte* 11, 1978, 7, 9–20, 129–145, here 9–20, 129–145.
- 128 See Ricci and Fiaccadori 1994 (as in note 3), 517–518, cat. no. 126 (Franco Bacchelli); Carlo La Bella, *Incontri di Antoniazio Romano con la scultura*, in: Cavallaro and Petrocchi 2013 (as in note 124), 48–55, here 49–50.
- 129 Cf. Jan de Jong, *Tombs in Early Modern Rome (1400–1460): Monuments of Mourning, Memory and Meditation*, Leiden 2022, 79–80.
- 130 “Hoc autem sic factum aedificium erit Credentia, si quando Pontifex aliquis in Capella celebraverit, et ideo ponatur superius una pulchra tabula marmorea” (Bandini 1777 [as in note 1], 138).
- 131 Müntz 1879 (as in note 26), vol. 2, 82; Noehles-Doerk 1973 (as in note 124), 265.
- 132 Müntz 1879 (as in note 26), vol. 2, 82–83; Noehles-Doerk 1973 (as in note 124), 266.
- 133 See Labowsky 1978 (as in note 79), 28; Marino Zorzi, *Bessarione e Venezia*, in: Klein, Poletto, and Schreiner 2017 (as in note 79), 397–427, here 419.
- 134 See Sabina Isidori, *Il Cardinale Bessarione e gli affreschi della Cappella dei Santi Eugenia, Giovanni Battista, Giovanni Battista e Michele Arcangelo nella basilica dei Santi XII Apostoli in Roma*, 135–155, here 142, in: Andrzej Gutkowski and Emanuela Prinzivalli (eds.), *Bessarione e la sua Accademia*, Rome 2012; Simonetta Angeli, *I Mazzatosta nel Quattrocento tra Viterbo e Roma: dal commercio alla nobiltà*, 97–118, 108, in: Barbara Aniello and Elisabetta Gnignera (eds.), *Lorenzo da Viterbo: “magister pictor” del Rinascimento italiano, 1469–2019*, Rome 2018.
- 135 Cf. Bandini 1777 (as in note 1), 141–150.
- 136 *Ibid.*, 152: “Cum [...] ipsam dictam Capellam repaverit, & dignis picturis, ac paramentis, & ornamentis tam ferreis, quam argenteis divino cultui aptis decenter ornaverit [...]” (When [...] he repaired the said chapel itself and decorated it with worthy painted scenes, vestments, and both metal and silver ornaments for Mass in a fitting manner).
- 137 See Tiberia 1992 (as in note 4), 13–16. Pseudo-Dionysius explains the nine types of angels as “nine explanatory designations for heavenly beings” (*Patrologia Graeca* 3, 200D).
- 138 See Valentino Pace, *La chiesa abbaziale di Grottaferrata e la sua decorazione nel medioevo*, in: *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata*, new series 41, 1987, 47–87; Per Olav Folgerø, *The Iconography of S. Maria a Grottaferrata: A Reading of the Pictorial Cycles in the Light of the Byzantine Liturgy and Mariology*, in: *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata*, new series 56–57, 2002–2003, 257–261; Emiliano Fabbriatore, *San Nilo: il Monastero italo-bizantino di Grottaferrata 1004–2004. Mille anni di spiritualità e cultura*, Rome 2005, 79–89.
- 139 Bessarion also kept writing on the nature of the Trinity shortly before and after his appointment as commendatory abbot of Grottaferrata. For example, in his famous treatise *In calumniatorem Platonis* (1459) he argued that the Trinity was anticipated by Plato’s philosophical thought; Bessarion, *In calumniatorem Platonis libri IV*, ed. Ludwig Mohler, Paderborn 1927, 283–311 (III, 15, 1–11; 16, 1–2; 17, 1–5; 18, 1–4; 19, 1).
- 140 Noehles-Doerk 1973 (as in note 124), 17–19.
- 141 Another thirteenth-century icon of the Virgin with Child in Santa Maria dei Servi in Bologna has also been identified as a gift from Bessarion; see Lollini 1991 (as in note 26), 130.
- 142 Cf. Tiberia 1992 (as in note 4), 76; Meredith J. Gill, “Where the Danger was Greatest”: A Gallic Legacy in Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 59, 1996, 506–522; Isidori 2012 (as in note 134), 144–149; Vasileios Pappas, *The First Political Printed Book in Europe: The Epistolae et Orationes Contra Turcos by Cardinal Bessarion*, in: *International Journal of Language and Literature* 2, 2014, no. 3, 37–55, here 43–45; Klaus Ley, *Die Wiederkehr des “Sublimen”: Die Kontroverse um Platon und die Kunst der Rede nach 1453. Zur Grundlegung des Programms künstlerischer Erneuerung der römischen Basilika “SS. XII Apostoli”*, Berlin 2005, 120–130.
- 143 See Tiberia 1992 (as in note 4), 17.
- 144 See Gill 1996 (as in note 142), 498–522; Melena Hope, *Ferry de Clugny’s Chapelle Dorée in the Cathedral*

- of Saint-Lazare, Autun, in: *Gesta* 50, 2011, 113–135; Roberta Cerone, Un committente catalano nel monastero di Santa Scolastica a Subiaco: Lluís de Prades e la cappella degli Angeli, in: *Locus Amoenus* 19, 2021, 23–38.
- 145 Cf. Malvasia 1665 (as in note 4), 74; Ottorino Montenovesi, Pergamene dell'Archiospedale di Santa Maria della Consolazione, in: *Archivi d'Italia e Rassegna internazionale degli Archivi* 9, 1942, 25–45, here 36; Anna Esposito, La documentazione degli archivi di ospedali e confraternite come fonte per la storia sociale di Roma, in: Paolo Brezzi and Egmont Lee (eds.), *Sources of Social History: Private Acts of the Late Middle Ages*, Toronto 1984, 69–79, here 71–72. For the most recent discussion of Giovanni dei Foschi de Berta's testament, see Andreas Rehberg, Ascesa sociale del clero canonico e formazione di ecclesiastici e laici a Roma, in: Christina Carbonetti Vendittelli and Marco Vendittelli (eds.), *Roma e la Chiesa (secoli XII–XV)* (La mobilità sociale nel Medioevo italiano, 5), Rome 2017, 39–73, here 52–53. For more information on Giovanni's family, see Andreas Rehberg, Familien aus Rom und die Colonna auf dem kurialen Pfründenmarkt (1278–1348/78), in: *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 78, 1998, 1–122; 79, 1999, 99–214.
- 146 The friars of Santi Apostoli were included among the beneficiaries of Giovanni's many pious donations; see Rehberg 2017 (as in note 145), 52, n. 52.
- 147 The two cardinals had already exchanged manuscripts during their lives; see Giovanni Mercati, *Scritti d'Isidoro il Cardinale Ruteno e codici a lui appartenuti che si conservano nella Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, Rome 1926, 69–76, 100–101.
- 148 Müntz identified Simeon as the goldsmith Simone Ghini who worked for the Roman papal court; Müntz 1879 (as in note 26), vol. 2, 299. This identification is held up in Ebe Antetomaso, La collezione di oggetti liturgici del cardinale Bessarione, in: Anna Cavallo (ed.), *Collezioni di antichità a Roma tra '400 e '500*, Rome 2007, 225–232, here 227; Marco Collareta, *Riflessioni sulla montatura quattrocentesca*, in: Klein, Poletto, and Schreiner 2017 (as in note 79), 323–330, here 327, n. 15. Giuliana Zandri, on the other hand, cast doubt on this identification; see *Tesori d'arte sacra di Roma e del Lazio dal Medioevo all'Ottocento* (exh. cat. Rome, Assessorato antichità, belle arti e problemi della cultura), Rome 1975, 33–34, cat. no. 75. See also Marco Petta, L'Eucologio e altri cimeli del cardinale Bessarione nell'Abbazia di Grottaferrata, in: *Miscellanea Franciscana* 73, 1973, 367–370.
- 149 Cf. David Farabulini, *Archeologia ed arte rispetto ad un nuovo monumento greco conservato nella Badia di Grottaferrata*, Rome 1883, 61; Rocchi 1884 (as in note 23), 163.
- 150 See exh. cat. *Tesori d'arte sacra di Roma e del Lazio* 1975 (as in note 148), cat. no. 75 (Giuliana Zandri); Annarena Ambrogi, *L'abbazia di San Nilo a Grottaferrata: il complesso monumentale e la raccolta archeologica*, Tivoli 2013, 45.
- 151 Cf. exh. cat. *Tesori d'arte sacra di Roma e del Lazio* 1975 (as in note 148), cat. no. 75 (Giuliana Zandri); Collareta 2017 (as in note 148), 327.
- 152 Cf. Elisabetta Cioni, Guccio di Mannaia e l'oreficeria senese del XIII secolo, in: Flavia Callori di Vignale and Ulderico Santamaria (eds.), *Il Calice di Guccio di Mannaia nel Tesoro della Basilica di San Francesco ad Assisi: storia e restauro*, Vatican City 2014, 17–88, here 73–75; Glyn Davies, *The Chalice in Central Italy, 1250–1500: Making, Ownership, Use*, Ph.D. dissertation, The Courtauld Institute, London 2014, 139–141.
- 153 Giovanni Travagliato, *Iugalia vetustissima: argenti, avori e smalti nel Tesoro della Chiesa Madre (XIV–XV secolo)*, in: Salvatore Anselmo (ed.), *I tesori delle chiese di Petralia Soprana*, Palermo 2016, 19–32, here 23.
- 154 Cf. *Oreficeria sacra italiana* (exh. cat. Florence, Museo nazionale del Bargello), ed. by Marco Collareta and Antonella Capitanio, Firenze 1990, 106–109, cat. no. 28 (Marco Collareta).
- 155 This chalice, together with a paten, is kept in the Cathedral of Montefiascone; see exh. cat. *Tesori d'arte sacra di Roma e del Lazio* 1975 (as in note 148), 27, cat. no. 55 (Maria Andaloro).
- 156 Cf. Petta 1973 (as in note 148); Bianca 1999 (as in note 108), 152.
- 157 Cf. exh. cat. *Tesori d'arte sacra di Roma e del Lazio* 1975 (as in note 148), cat. no. 75 (Giulietta Zandri). The Archangel Michael had also held a particular importance to Saint Nilo of Rossano, the founder of the monastery of Grottaferrata, who kept a small altar devoted to the saint in his cave.
- 158 Cf. Johann Fritz, Zwei toskanische Kelche berühmter Kardinäle des Quattrocento, in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 13, 1968, 273–288.
- 159 Cf. exh. cat. *Tesori d'arte sacra di Roma e del Lazio* 1975 (as in note 148), cat. no. 75 (Giulietta Zandri). Others, apparently unaware of Zandri's catalogue entry, came to the same conclusion; see exh. cat. *Bessarione e l'Umanesimo* 1994 (as in note 3), 453–454, cat. no. 67a–b (Fabrizio Lollini); Fabbriatore 2005 (as in note 138), 41.
- 160 Bianca 1999 (as in note 108), 152. Another famous example is the donation of the aforementioned stauotheke to the confraternity of Santa Maria della Carità in Venice, which did not take place until 24 May 1472; see Klein 2017 (as in note 80), 7–8, 23–26.
- 161 See Bandini 1777 (as in note 1), 137. Bessarion would donate a thirteenth-century Franciscan missal to the abbey of Grottaferrata around 1465; see Bianca 1999 (as in note 108), 151–157.

- 162 BAV, Barb. lat. 562. The former classmark of this missal was cod. XII 5 of the Biblioteca Barberiniana. The first folia contain inscriptions explicitly identifying both Bessarion and the Franciscan convent of Santi Apostoli as owners. It also contains the commemoration list for Bessarion's funerary chapel. Cf. Adalbert Ebner, *Historisches aus liturgischen Handschriften Italiens*, in: *Historisches Jahrbuch* 13, 1892, 748–770, here 752; Ebner 1896 (as in note 27), 145–146; Victor Saxer, *Le missel du cardinal Bessarion*, in: *Scriptorium* 26, 1972, 302–313, here 302; John Monfasani, *The Bessarion Missal Revisited* (Vatican, Barb. Lat. 562), in: *Scriptorium* 37, 1983, 119–122.
- 163 Saxer 1972 (as in note 162), 303–305; Monfasani 1983 (as in note 162), 120.
- 164 One of the most recent references to this important manuscript is found in Bianca 1999 (as in note 105), 155.
- 165 Bandini 1777 (as in note 1), 135 (“donec in corporeis membris quies viget, et ratio mentem regit”).
- 166 Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Le vite*, ed. by Aulo Greco, 2 vols., Florence 1970, vol. 1, 174.
- 167 Richardson 2009 (as in note 11), 423–486.
- 168 Cf. Vast 1878 (as in note 9), 294.
- 169 ASR, Corporazioni, Frati Minori Conventuali SS XII Apostoli, Busta 1, fols. 173r–176r. The charter of acquisition is still preserved: ASR, Pergamene, Roma, Minori Conventuali SS XII Apostoli, 4 January 1467. For a detailed discussion of this document and of the house itself, see Capizzi 1986 (as in note 108). For more information on Giuliano's sale of real estate for the restoration of the convent of Santi Apostoli, see Lorenzo Finocchi Ghersi, *Ornamenti “all'antica” in alcune fabbriche commissionate dal cardinale Giuliano della Rovere: architetti e problemi di stile*, in: *Quaderni del Dipartimento patrimonio architettonico e urbanistico* 14, 1993, 71–96.
- 170 ASR, Corporazioni, Frati Minori Conventuali SS XII Apostoli, Busta 1, fol. 173r: “[...] Casale [...] vocatum la Cicognola nova donatum pro dote Cappelle bone memorie D. Bessarionis Cardinalis Niceni site in dicta Basilica per dictum Cardinalem Nicenum [...]”
- 171 Ibid., fols. 170v–171r (“pro fabrica dicte ecclesie ac conventus ipsorum”; “pro bonificatione dicte ecclesie”).
- 172 Ibid., fols. 171v–173r.
- 173 Ibid.
- 174 Ibid., fol. 172r.

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