



Parish Church of Saint Mary

The construction of the Parish Church of Saint Mary (*Pieve di Santa Maria*) began in 1257. It was built in the Gothic style, with one nave and facing the Great Forum. The bell tower was erected later. After restoration works in the 20th century, the church recovered its original appearance, which had been modified during the centuries. Inside the church on the left you can see a wooden panel attributed to Giovanni Andrea De Magistris representing the **Madonna with Child, Angels, Saint Rocco and Saint Romulus** (1539). It's particularly interesting because Saint Romulus is offering the Virgin Mary a model of Figline surrounded by its walls. Next we can admire the 19th century chapel of the Holy Sacrament and a gilded cuspidate panel portraying a **Maestà** (the Madonna enthroned in majesty) attributed to the so-called Maestro of Figline. The painting, dated 1320-1325, highlights the throne on which the Madonna with Child is seated and which rises above the saints Louis and Elisabeth, both belonging to the Franciscan order. Their presence would imply that the painting was originally in the Church of Saint Francis and that it was moved here in 1493 when the parish of St. Mary's was raised to the status of Collegiate Church. Not much is known about the artist, except that he was active in Umbria and Tuscany in the 14th century and that he painted the Crucifix in the Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence. On the left-hand wall we can see the **Death of**

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known as the **Grande Forum** (the Great Meeting and Market Place), this beautiful square was already the economic centre of the entire area in the year 1000 A.D. There were few buildings and a small church, as well as the merchant stalls. The marketplace, with a well dedicated to Saint **Romolino** which was dismantled in 1804, was crossed by the road from Florence to Arezzo. The importance of the market grew, many houses were built and the Great Forum slowly began to look as it is today. In the 15th century loggias were built; the Loggia Lunghe of via Regia, the **Loggia del Grano** (corn arcade) next to the Collegiate Church, where cereals were heaped up and sold, and the loggias of the **Spedale dell'Annunziata**. The heringbone brick paving dates from 1496, later the main streets were flagged and the secondary ones paved with cobblestones, while the space in front of the **Collegiata** was paved with **pietra serena**¹. In the 19th century the square looked much the same as now. On the south side of the Piazza, at the beginning of via Oberdan, you can still see façades of the interesting 13th century stone buildings, the **tower houses**, which in the Middle Ages used to soar above crossroads or main roads to defend them. They were often used by the local lords as residences, around which there were outhouses or even hamlets, and maybe that is the case of the impressive façade still standing in Figline.

¹ *Pietra serena* is a very hard grey-blue sandstone quarried and used a lot in Tuscany for paving, door-frames, stairways, etc.

Handwritten notes in blue ink:

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