

Fra Angelico.

The Patron of Catholic Artists.

Fra Angelico's exact date of birth is not known, but 1395 up to about 1400 is the accepted estimate. He was known in Italy as Beato Angelica (the blessed).

In 1418 he became a Dominican Friar at the Carmine under his birth name of Guido di Pietro. He was based at Fiesole a town in the Province of Florence. He was initially trained as an illuminator working with Benedetto, his older brother. He also nurtured a deeply religious love of humanity, and a sense of humility before his God. This devotion to his religion and his art shaped the artists vision of the world and proved to be the driving force throughout Fra Angelico's life.

At the convent in Fiesole he executed several frescoes, many are now sadly lost, including the fine *Virgin and Child with Saints*.



Virgin and Child with Saints. Fiesole, Italy. (w)

San Marco Florence.

In 1436 "Beato" moved to the newly-built monastery of San Marco in Florence. His growing skill and reputation as an artist attracted a powerful and wealth patron, Cosimo de Medici. Cosimo had a large cell reserved for himself at the monastery, a place, no doubt, where he could escape the intrigues of political life. It was Cosimo who commissioned Beato's decoration of the monastery.

The artist painted a sacred scene in each monks cell and at the end of every corridor. These paintings are among his finest and most beautiful works, and are influenced by the work of Masaccio.



San Marco Altarpiece (w)Commissioned by the Medici family in 1440.



*Baptism of Christ.
San Marco.*



*This is one of many versions of The Annunciation from the cells at the convent of San Marco.
(w)*

The San Marco altarpiece is rightly famous for Angelico's use of perspective, the lines of the carpet and the various overlapping saints all add to the sense of depth within the picture space.

The crucifix at the front centre of the painting is intended to look like a separate image and Angelico has mastered the optical illusion to great effect.

The monastery is now a museum and contains the major collection of works by Fra Angelico. In addition other artists represented at the museum include Domenico Ghirlandaio and Fra Bartolomeo.



The Annunciation. (w)

This is one of the most reproduced of all Fra Angelico's works from the Monastery at San Marco. It is just one of his many Annunciations.



The Last Judgement. (w)

A colourful depiction of judgment day, on one side the saved are reunited with their loved ones in heaven, on the other, the damned are destined for hell!

Note the open tombs in the centre of the painting as the dead are resurrected to await judgement.

Fra Angelico in Rome, The Niccoline Chapel.

In 1447 the artist painted the private chapel of Nicholas V in Rome. His theme was the lives of St Lawrence and St Stephen. It is highly likely that some of the work on these frescoes was completed by assistants.



St Lawrence receiving the Treasures of the Church.

Beato died in Rome in 1455 and was buried in the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva.

The artist was beatified (the third of the four steps to canonization) on October 3rd 1982 by Pope John Paul II, and he was declared patron of Catholic artists in 1984.

He also has a hazelnut liqueur "Frangelico" named in his honour, truly a measure of the artist's lasting popularity.