

The Basilica of St. Dominic
and The House of St. Catherine
at SIENA



P. Timoteo M. Centi O. P.

The Catherinian Basilica
of San Domenico and The House
of St. Catherine of Siena

ROMA - SCUOLA TIPOGRAFICA MISSIONARIA DOMENICANA - S. SISTO VECCHIO

I. SAN DOMENICO IN CAMPOREGGIO

Most of St. Catherine's mystic life was spent at her father's house in Fontebranda (Siena) and in the neighbouring Church of San Domenico, the two places which have now become the most sacred to her memory.

THE CHURCH OF SAN DOMENICO in Siena was one of the first to be erected by the Dominicans in the honour of their Holy Founder. It was started together with the adjoining buildings in 1226 when the Malavolti of Siena donated to the friars the little hill called Colle di Camporegio, or Camporeggio, but was completed only in 1259 with the help of the Commune and contributions from the people. At that time the friars were living at the Ospizio della Maddalena, near Siena, (Magdalene's Hospice) where they had settled six years before.

The rectangular Gothic-Cistercian nave of the Abbey and the trussed roof as we see them still date from those early years but *Guido da Siena's* delightful *Madonna* (dated 1221, that is one year before the Abbey was started) was very likely brought to the Abbey by the friars when they left the Ospizio della Maddalena. (1)

The adjoining buildings which date from the same time as the Church are: the Chapel House, the Old Sacristy the Refectory and the Dormitory. They stand around a square space left vacant for the Cloister which was ori-

(1) *The Madonna by Guido of Siena is now in the Palazzo Comunale of Siena.*

Imprimatur:

P. FR. INNOCENZO COLOSIO O. P.
Provinciale della Provincia di S. Marco e Sardegna
29 - Novembre 1964

Imprimatur:

† H. PETRILLI, *Vic. Gen.le dell'Arcivescovo di Siena*
1 - Aprile 1965

ginally used as a Churchyard. Of all the tombstones and monuments found there the best is that of Niccolò Arringhieri, now in the courtyard of the University. The early frescoes on the Cloister walls are now in a very bad state; the few still visible are the work of Lippo Memmi and Lippo Vanni. Along the outside wall of the Church facing the Piazza San Domenico a row of ogival arches marks the place where the tombs of some noble Sienese families were ranged, according to the custom of the time. Later on, for some unknown reason, these arches were blocked up but are still to be seen. The main door of the Church opens sideways on to the Piazza instead of being in the middle of the façade as usual, and this simply for convenience. Just above the row of arches, near the door, there was once the ambo from where the *Blessed Ambrogio Sansedoni* used to preach to the people, and so large were the crowds that flocked in to listen to his word that the Church as it had been planned in the duecento was no longer large enough for the purpose.

As a preacher, Blessed Ambrogio Sansedoni was the precursor of San Bernardino da Siena. Soon after his death in 1286 a sumptuous Chapel was erected in his honour, the remains of which are still to be seen near the bell tower, and the enlargement of the Church was started on the side facing Fontebranda. A very audacious plan had to be conceived to reach the level of the Church from the bottom of the little valley of Fontebranda and the huge foundations took the shape of an enormous pedestal, or basement, so spacious inside that they formed the *Crypt*, otherwise known as «la Chiesa Nuova» (the New Church). The *Crypt* was restored to its primitive beauty in 1934.

From the early years of the trecento the building of the *Chiesa Nuova* went on for a long time. A few Chapels, too, were erected near the Convent and the Church for the laical Companies, but they no longer exist.

The building of the Abbey was already at an advanced stage when Catherine Benincasa started going there. Some of her relatives were buried in the *Crypt*: Jacopo Benincasa her father, Bonaventura her sister and a few nieces and nephews.

Though the *Crypt* was already completed, the massive vaults which were to bear the Chapels in the transept above were still in building so Catherine and all the believers had access only to the nave known as «la Chiesa Vecchia» (the Old Church) which was separated from the new additions in building. Adjacent to the nave is the ORATORIO DELLE MANTELLATE.

The «CAPPELLA DELLE VOLTE» (the vaulted Chapel)

It was in this Chapel, or somewhere near it, that the many miraculous events occurred of which we read in the papers left by the Saint's Confessors. The Chapel draws its name from the barrel shaped vaults crowning it. A few steps lead to it from the nave of the Church the floor of which is a little lower. It seems to have been built towards the middle of the trecento as a meeting place for the devoted Sienese women called «Mantellate» (from the word 'mantello' which means cloak or hood) when Erveo di Nelledlec, the Master General of the Order, commanded that they should be instructed by the Dominican friars.

The Chapel enjoys the view of the whole length of the nave so that the Mantellate could attend all the divine services undisturbed.

The two arches upholding the vaults rest upon one single central pillar against which it is said that St. Catherine used to lean while praying in ecstasy. According to tradition it was here she stood when Andrea Vanni (a disciple of hers who died in 1414) painted her portrait on the wall near the entrance. This portrait is referred to as «il Ritratto della Santa» (the Saint's portrait) and is venerated as her only true image. In 1667 it was detached from the wall where it had been painted and transferred to the wall inside the «Cappella delle Volte». The large picture of *St. Catherine officiating with Jesus Christ* was painted by Crescenzo Gambarelli in 1607 as well as the story of the *Death of St. Catherine*. *Santa Rosa da Lima contemplating St. Catherine in a vision* is instead the work of Burberini. *St. Catherine clothing Jesus Christ* is a 16th. century work.

Such was the veneration of the believers for this Chapel that, through devotion, they soon started carrying away little pieces of the floor tiles till the Dominicans decided to have it covered up. For the same reason in the early years of the 17th. century the pillar against which the Saint used to lean in prayer was covered up, too, but the people went on kissing it just the same as a way of showing their devotion.

After the earthquake of the year 1779 the «Cappella delle Volte» had become unsafe so it was isolated from the rest of the Church by a big wall and the venerated pillar could no longer be approached. Ungainly decorations

replaced the walled up paintings till 1950 when the Chapel was restored to its original state.

St. Catherine of Siena, the humble Mantellata di Fontebranda, was born in 1347 and died in 1380. All through her lifetime the friars at Camporegio worked hard to complete the new Dominican Abbey which was soon to become famous through the Saint's holiness in spite of the fact that she was often misunderstood by her contemporaries.

In the late half of the 14th. century the elegant Gothic Chapels in the transept were erected thanks to the generosity of four Sienese families: Placidi, Venturini, Socini and Borghese. The Chapel at the end of the right arm of the transept was dedicated to Blessed Ambrogio Sansedoni when the original Chapel erected in his honour had to be dismantled to regularize the plant of the Church. The three Chapels on either side of the large central Chapel donated by the Spannocchi of Siena and commonly called il «Cappellone» (the word means big Chapel) are decreasing in size like the vaults on which they stand. This decreasing movement lends the impression of length and spaciousness to the arms of the Cross.

The decisive impulse to the completion and embellishment of the Dominican Abbey came, no doubt, from St. Catherine herself when, after the triumphal celebration of her santification by Pope Pius II in 1461, the most precious Catherinian codes and relics found their place in the Abbey of San Domenico (2).

(2) *The twelve precious codes which form the 'Biblioteca Verginialis', sumptuously bound in one volume in the 18th. century, were*

The greatest of all the sacred relics — the HOLY HEAD — was brought to Siena from Rome by the Blessed Raimondo da Capua in 1383. At first it was treasured in a 15th. century copper reliquary now to be seen in the Town Hall collection of relics. In 1468 it was translated to a silver reliquary where it remained till 1711 when Giovanni Piamontini produced a lamp-shaped urn in which the head was visible. Finally, in 1947 it was again translated to a more precious urn shaped like a Gothic temple donated by the Dominicans and by the people of Siena devoted to St. Catherine.

SAINT CATHERINE'S CHAPEL

This Chapel was built into the front part of the old Sacristy by Niccolò Bensi in 1460 but the Renaissance marble shrine which contains the Head of the Saint was produced by Giovanni di Stefano in 1466. Beneath the marble altar-piece was buried in 1466 the Blessed Caterina Lenzi styled by the people the «second Catherine of Siena».

The delightful frescoes adorning this Chapel were painted by Antonio Bazzi nicknamed *Sodoma*, in the following order: beneath the arch over the entrance door *San Luca* and *San Girolamo*, on either side of the Altar a scene of *St. Catherine in ecstasy* and on the left wall the dramatic scene of the *Martyrdom of Tuldo* as narrated by the Saint herself in her Letters; it is a composition of

at first treasured behind *Sodoma's* picture on the Sacristy Altar. Actually they are in the Communal Library except the '*Processo Casteliano*' which still belongs to the Abbey of San Domenico.

exceptional beauty and feeling. The story on the right wall which had been left void by *Sodoma*, represents *St. Catherine liberating a possessed man* and is the work of Francesco Vanni in 1953; the image of the Saint in this picture is one of the most palpitating and human of the Catherinian iconography.

On the pillars, among remarkable grottesque decorations, are the portraits of the two principal «makers» of the Saint's glorification: the *Blessed Raimondo da Capua* and the *Blessed Tommaso Caffarini*, painted by Francesco Vanni in the act of writing the Saint's lifestory. The scene in the middle of the graffito floor designed by Domenico Beccafumi in the 16th. century represents *Orpheus alluring the wild beasts*. The precious marble altar with the gilded wrought iron grate to protect the Holy Head was built in 1606. It is beneath the steps of this Altar that now rest the bones of the Benincasas translated from the old tombs inside the Abbey.

The message conveyed by this lovely Chapel is indeed a message of peace; it might well be defined as an oasis of peace within a peaceful Abbey, something never to be forgotten which fills the visitor with unmatched admiration.

Now, to go back to the early history of the Abbey of San Domenico, in 1467 the huge partition which, like a screen, separated the old part of the nave from the rest of the church was pulled down thanks to the Sienese architects Ansano Orefice and Andrea Porrina and the large original arch was once more revealed. A new Chantry was produced by Pietro and Lorenzo di Lando in 1367 but we do not find it mentioned in the annals till the 18th.

century and there is no notion of what became of it after that time.

The restoration started in the 14th. century, after almost two centuries' hard work was now completed and the result was — to say it with Padre Carapelli's words — that two old Churches had been turned into one grandiose Basilica in the honour of St. Catherine. As a demonstration that the whole hill of Camporegio had been consecrated to her memory, in 1490 a bronze statue of the Saint was placed by Pietro di Sacco Tancredi on the top of the Church steeple. This steeple was originally second in beauty only to the Mangia tower but it repeatedly suffered damage and, having become unsafe, had to be lowered several times to its actual proportions; it still houses the most harmonious bells in Siena.

We are now at the time of the advent of the Baroque style. Even the austere Basilica of San Domenico suffered damage through the new rich, heavy decorations; the simple original altars were replaced with larger ones overwhelmed with stucco work some of which are still to be seen in the transept.

It must, however, be admitted that even the Baroque age was fruitful in its way and during that period, too, a few good works of art were added to the many already to be admired.

The Basilica suffered damage again in 1778 through earthquake and the whole building was once more to be restored. The Benedictines of Monte Cassino, who succeeded the Dominicans after suppression in 1783 (3), took

(3) *The Benedictines lived there till 1922.*

over the work. A commemorative plaque in St. Catherine's Chapel informs us that the Chapel itself was lowered and provided with the lantern as we see it now. The steeple was again lowered and the huge façade eye-window, as well as some of the larger windows, were blocked up to strengthen the dilapidated walls. The plan of demolishing the whole transept, according to the rules of the neo-classic style, was even taken into consideration and it was only by a miracle that this irreparable slaughter could be avoided. On the whole, we may say that in spite of the many addings and alterations made through the centuries the Abbey as we see it now is very much the same as it was at first and its primitive beauty has remained unimpaired.

The restoration started in 1940 and only recently completed (1962) was necessary to bring all the parts of the Abbey back to their original state, starting from the foundations. All the blocked up arches along the outside wall facing the Piazza where the tombs were once ranged have been re-opened, the Cappella delle Voite has been entirely reconstructed and the massive arcades which mark the same Chapel off from the rest of the Church have been restored to their original dimensions and design, just as they were in the 11th. century. The timber roof has been replaced and reinforced with an iron frame. Some of the Baroque Altars have been dismantled in order to reconstruct the original niches and Altars which stood behind them and a stairway has been built in the undercroft leading from the upper Church down to the Crypt.

Now the Catherinian Abbey of Siena is once more as the Dominicans and the people meant it to be, according

to the 'Constituto' (plans) of the year 1309, but even more beautiful spacious and majestic. *After five centuries and a half* — Cardinal A. Piazza says — *we have at last the Abbey. The Spirit of St. Catherine still lingers there, a true miracle of grace, an everlasting source of light and love like a halo of new glory: the Spirit of St. Catherine, the PATRONESS OF ITALY.*

A VISIT TO THE BASILICA

The long Chapel on the right hand side of the entrance with a few steps in front of it is the 'CAPPELLA DELLE VOI-TE' (see p. 7).

The first Altar on the right side of the nave is dedicated to the Blessed Andrea Gallerani who died in 1251; the 18th. century picture is the work of Stefano Volpi.

Right opposite the Gallerani Chapel, on the left side of the nave (first Altar), is the picture of *San Giacinto O.P. wading a river* by Francesco Vanni (1563-1610). On the Altar of the next Chapel, same side of the nave, is the scene of *St. Catherine of Alexandria's Nuptials* by Sebastiano Folli, a disciple of Alessandro Casolani's (1552-1606) to whom is also due the panel of the *Nativity of the Madonna* on the opposite Altar (right side of the nave). Near this Altar there is a 14th. century wooden *Crucifix* and a 16th. century terracotta *Pietà*.

Next comes ST. CATHERINE'S CHAPEL which is described at p. 10.

Just after St. Catherine's Chapel in the niche of a dismantled Altar, there is Francesco di Giorgio Martini's *Nativity* (1439-1502); this painter was a disciple of Luca

Signorelli's. The five *Stories from the Life of St. Catherine and other Saints* on the basis of the picture were painted by Bernardino Fungai (1460-1516) and the *Pietà* in the lunette by Matteo di Giovanni (1430?-1495).

On the opposite side of the nave (third Altar) see the picture of *St. Anthony liberating a possessed man* by Rutilio Manetti (1571-1637); next, facing Francesco di Giorgio Martini's *Nativity*, there is a valuable panel by Pietro Lorenzetti, very likely painted in 1310, where we see the *Virgin and Holy Babe seated on a throne in front of a kneeling Crusader and St. John the Baptist*. This masterpiece came to light during the recent restoration of the Abbey.

THE TRANSEPT — First Baroque Altar on the left: The picture on the wall is by Padre Angelico Spinillo O. P. This Altar is dedicated to San Domenico. The wooden *Crucifix* on the left wall of the third Chapel on the left side of the High Altar is an unfinished work ascribed to Lorenzo di Pietro nicknamed «il Vecchietta» (1412-1400).

The second Chapel in the left arm of the transept was frescoed by Giuseppe Nasini (1664-1736). On the right wall is the picture of *Santa Barbara and other Saints* by Matteo di Giovanni (dating from 1478). On the left wall is the *Holy Virgin and Babe with Sants* by Benvenuto di Giovanni nicknamed 'il Guasta' (1436-1518). The *Pietà* in the lunette is by the same master.

The first Chapel on the left of the High Altar has a framed picture of the *Holy Virgin and Babe* on the Altar; it is a masterpiece of Sano di Pietro's (1406-1481).

THE HIGH ALTAR in the central 'Cappellone' (big Chapel) was produced in 1962 but the lovely marble *Ciborium*

and the two candelabra *Angels* on either side of it are Benedetto da Maiano's work in 1475. The picture on the right wall is *San Pietro Martire da Verona O. P.*, a true masterpiece produced by Arcangelo Salimbeni in 1579. On the left is *San Tommaso d'Aquino* by Galgano Perpignani (1694?-1771).

From the little window in the apse, beneath the huge 15th. century stained glass window, the visitor can enjoy one of the most characteristic views of Siena.

Right arm of the Cross: *the Madonna and Holy Babe* on the Altar of the first Chapel after the central 'Cappellone' was painted by Paolo di Giovanni Fei (1369-1411).? The tryptich on the right wall represents the *Madonna crowned with Angels between St. John and St. Jerome* and is the work of Matteo di Giovanni.

The second Chapel is dedicated to the German students who died in Siena in the 16th and 17th. centuries. On the wall are their sepulchral plaques. Remark the marble *Crucifix*.

The third Chapel is dedicated to the Sienese who fell during the last war. On the left wall there is a fragment of a detached fresco probably of the school of Perugino.

At the bottom of this arm of the Cross is the large Baroque Altar dedicated to the Blessed Ambrogio Sansedoni, with his silver reliquary bust, produced by E. Trapassi.

THE SACRISTY contains many precious relics among which *St. Catherine's Finger* and the *Chain* she used to scourge herself. See Pope Gregory XI's bull granting privileges and indulgence.

The visit to the Abbey is now completed and the mo-

numental *Cloister* should be seen, restored in 1941 (see p. 6).

In the Crypt beneath the Abbey (see p. 6), among other most interesting works of art are: Sano di Pietro's huge wooden *Crucifix* and the panel of the *Crucifixion and Saints* by Ventura Salimbeni, Arcangelo's son.

The last restoration being still so recent, not all the works of art have yet found their definite places; we therefore apologize for the discrepancies the visitor may happen to notice.

II. ST. CATHERINE'S HOUSE

Half way down Camporegio hill near the well known fount called Fontebranda, in the very shade of the Basilica of San Domenico stands the humble little house — now a sanctuary — where Jacopo Benincasa the dyer lived with his wife Lapa di Puccio Piagenti; it was there that on March 25th, 1347, St. Catherine of Siena was born. The ground floor was originally the dye-shop and the whole building belonged to the 'Arte della Lana' (Corporation of the wool industry). It is difficult, after so many years and all the alterations which were successively made, to describe the house as it was at first but according to Busiri - the historiographer - it was undoubtedly a high and narrow building like all the other houses of the poor in those days; it was at least three storeys high. Beneath the dye-shop there was the cellar, on the first floor the living rooms among which the Saint's little room, and on the top floor the spacious kitchen (4).

The Saint's life-story is so full of detailed episodes that in the many books on her activity we often find her father's house mentioned: the staircase, the kitchen, the cellar, her little room, etc. It would therefore be most pleasant and even extremely natural to find the building unadorned as it was at first. But tastes and customs in

(4) BUSIRI: *La Casa di S. Caterina in Siena* Siena 1880, page 8.

the past were different to ours and a poor unpretentious building seemed unpopular. Commemorative Altars were gradually set up all over the place: in the dye-shop, in the kitchen, in the Saint's little room and even in the garden. A brief description will be given here of the alterations made in chronologic order on the basis of P. Tonelli's ample monography (5).

THE LOWER ORATORY, ONCE THE DYE-SHOP.

Even in the very earliest times crowds of people came from all over Italy to visit the venerated house in Fontebranda where St. Catherine was born and lived («oltramontani» they were called, a word meaning people from beyond the mountains). After her Canonization in 1461 the pilgrims grew in number and some were so devoted that they would stoop to kiss the front door and the old brick walls. Then the 'Contradaioi' (the people living within the boundaries of the Contrada) conceived the plan of making the place more conspicuous. They applied to the Commune that a decent Chapel might be built into the house in the honour of the Saint. After much arguing the Communal Authority complied with their request and bought the house for 90 gold florins, granting 10 more for the immediate expenses to start the work at once.

The first architect seems to have been Francesco di Duccio del Guasta as we find many receipts in his name on the old books of the Commune for sums paid to him

(5) TONELLI P.D. *La Casa di S. Caterina in Siena*; Roma 1909

by the Camerlengo (the Magistrate who managed all the financial transactions). At first the building made slow progress and could be completed only thanks to contributions from private citizens and foreign visitors added to the subsidies granted by the Commune. By 1437 we find the façade completed and also the pointed arches and ribbed vaults. Among the names of the artists who worked at the building we find Mariano di Tingo, Antonio Federighi, M. Urbano di Pietro da Cortona. In 1474 to Cristoforo di Mone, the glazier, was committed the four eye-windows and to Neroccio, the sculptor, the sweet melancholic painted wooden statue of the Saint still now on the Oratory Altar. High up on the walls were frescoed scenes from St. Catherine's life story; the three most remarkable ones are those on the right wall near the entrance, ranged as follows: *the Dominicans waylaid by brigands and rescued through the Saint's good offices; the body of Sant'Agnese Segni lifting a foot to St. Catherine to kiss; right opposite (left wall near the Altar) the Recovery of M. Cenni, the Rector of the Hospital*. These frescoes were produced by Girolamo del Pacchia in 1477. The last fresco on the left wall near the entrance represents *St. Catherine assaulted by the Florentine rebels*, painted by Ventura Salimbeni in 1605. In the lunette above the Altar is Sodoma's delightful fresco of *St. Catherine's Stigmata* with five most graceful Angels upholding a long draping. Over the entrance door, by Sebastiano Folli in 1607, is the large scene of *St. Catherine's mission in Avignon*. By the same master, on the right side of the door turning one's back to the Altar is the *Reconciliation with the Florentines*, and on the left *St. Catherine on her way back to Florence*.

In 1877 the façade of the Oratory was restored on the side looking on to Via Santa Caterina and decorated by G. Partini and P. Marchetti, architects, and Leopoldo Maccari, the sculptor.

Since the late years of the 16th. century this Oratory has been the seat of the Contrada dell'Oca (of the Goose).

THE UPPER ORATORY: THE KITCHEN

In the little lane called *Vicolo del Tiratoio* branching off from the *Costa di Fontebranda* once stood the Parish Church of Sant'Antonio Abate which was dismantled to make room for the porch called *Portico dei Comuni d'Italia* (Porch of the Communes of Italy).

The visitor will at once notice a travertine door with the inscription: SPONSAE CHRISTI CATHARINAE DOMUS. This was the entrance to the living rooms of St. Catherine's house and to the spacious kitchen on the top floor of the building. When the Lower Oratory just now described was built into the dye-shop down below, some of these rooms had to be dismantled and the entrance door was definitively closed. While this Oratory was in building the Saint's devotees used to assemble in the kitchen for prayers. It was then that they decided to found the charitable Confraternity called *Confraternita di Santa Caterina*, and had the panel of the Saint — now on the Altar — painted for their new meeting place (1496). The panel representing *St. Catherine's Stigmata* surmounted with the scene of *Virgin Mary and the Holy Babe among Angels* is one of Bernardino Fungai's masterpieces.

The constantly increasing number of visitors every year then suggested the enlargement of the old kitchen a new entrance (the actual) and a tribune to be built in the same kitchen Oratory for the Governors of the new Confraternity. Many years elapsed before the work could be started and the alterations were not completed till 1546.

The pretty little Loggia near the entrance, with its blue golden-starred vault is the work of G. B. Pelori to Baldassarre Peruzzi's design. On the landing on the top of the stairs there is a door with DOMUS MEA DOMUS ORATIONIS engraved over it and a little terracotta statue beneath the arch, produced by Filippo Cafaggio. Here, too, we no longer find the original bare old room, but a very neat Oratory ornamented with stucco work and carvings of exquisite beauty. Beneath the simple little Altar, behind a grate, there is still to be seen a fragment of the old sooty kitchen fireplace.

About the year 1570 Bartolomeo Neroni nicknamed Riccio — Sodoma's son-in-law and disciple — enlarged the Altar panel. He painted a figure in each of the empty rectangular spaces and *Stories from St. Catherine's life* on the Altar steps. It was this master who planned to divide the walls into equal spaces with pillars and cornices for a series of frescoes, but he died suddenly and the work had to be entrusted to other less worthy artists.

On the left wall looking towards the Altar we find: the *Conversion of two culprits through the effects of St. Catherine's prayers* by Buonastri di Lucignano in 1587, the *Miracle of St. Catherine's Communion* by Cristoforo Roncaglia di Pomarance and *St. Catherine liberating a possessed woman* by Pietro Sorri in 1589. The first scene on the

opposite wall is that of *St. Catherine inducing the Romans to obey Pope Urban VI* by Alessandro Casolani in 1587. The next scene represents *Pope Gregory XI on his way back from Avignon* and is the work of Roncaglia di Pomarance; the last scene is that of *St. Catherine's Nuptials* started by Riccio and finished off by Arcangelo Salimbeni in 1582. The two pictures near the Altar panel are ascribed to Sodoma.

Opposite the Altar is the tribune for the Governors of the Confraternity which is the most remarkable work in the whole Oratory. The fresco in the niche is Francesco Vanni's *Canonization of St. Catherine*. Among the many personages of this story there is one — the Commander-in-chief of the Guardie Nobili (Noble Guards) — supposed to be Calonio Tolomei who in 1600 had the Oratory ornamented at his own expense. On both sides of this fresco are the portraits of the two most glorious members of the Tolomei family: the Blessed Bernardo Tolomei, the Olivetan Monk and the Blessed Nera Tolomei, the Dominican Nun. Other smaller portraits of Sienese Saints are in the corners near the pillars. The elegant panelled ceiling decorated with carvings and stucco work is an admirable piece of work by Bastiano di Girolamo Formichi to Riccio's design. The exquisitely carved brown and yellow walnut stalls all along the walls are perfect jewels of art, completed in 1518 by Pietro di Giovanni nicknamed Castelnuevo. When the Oratory was prolonged the stalls were continued along the wall and completed in 1555 by Benedetto Amaroni.

The old floor was then the only thing still to be restored and the work was committed to Girolamo di Marco, the potter in Pantaneto, who produced 3061 little coloured

tiles ornamented with arabesques and figures. In the old documents of the Confraternity this restoration is marked down as 'the last work for the completion of the new Oratory'.

THE KITCHEN GARDEN: THE CRUCIFIX CHAPEL

In the year 1565 the brethren of the Confraternity of St. Catherine met in Pisa with the view of informing Cardinal Niccolini, the Archbishop, that the Oratory of St. Catherine in Fontebranda was completed and that the one great desire of the Sienese was to adorn it with the Crucifix from which she had received the Stigmata; that Crucifix was then in the *Church of Santa Cristina in Pisa* (6).

Cardinal Niccolini complied with the request of the Sienese, had the Crucifix removed from the Church and concealed in his own house till a favourable moment came to send it to Siena under the protection of an escort. At first it was placed in the Chiesa dei Cappuccini at about two miles from the town from where, on May 13th, 1565, it was translated to the Oratory by the brethren of the Confraternity of St. Catherine followed by an endless train of people.

The building of a Chapel in St. Catherine's kitchen garden was then conceived but this new plan could not be carried out till the year 1611. By the end of 1619 the

new Church was finished but many years went by before it was consecrated (the commemorative plaque near the door informs us that Monsignor Petrucci consecrated it on April 23rd, 1623). The Church, built in the shape of a Latin cross, was once erroneously ascribed to G. B. Pelori who died in 1588.

On May 21st, 1623, the Crucifix was translated to its definite place. A long dispute then arose between the Dominicans and the Franciscans which was at last settled by Pope Urban VIII seven years later in the name of the Church. Then the Crucifix was carried in triumphal procession round the town together with the Sacred Head. For that occasion Rutilio Manetti painted the banner with the scene of St. Catherine's Stigmata which still hangs from the transept wall.

The *High Altar* was made by Tommaso Redi in 1649; about the same year Giuseppe Nasini painted the two pictures on the sides and frescoed the vault with the scene of *St. Catherine in Glory*. The picture of *St. Catherine's Apotheosis* on the Altar in the right arm of the Cross was painted by Rutilio Manetti and that of *St. Catherine before Pope Gregory XI* on the opposite Altar (left arm of the Cross) by Sebastiano Conca. The nave walls, too, were decorated with stories from the life of St. Catherine by Franchini, Calvi di Bologna, Galgano Perpignani and Guerrini. Most remarkable are the four bier-heads on the pilasters, painted by Francesco Vanni.

The elegant Doric porch built in later years to join the *Chiesa del Crocifisso* to the *Upper Oratory* was once ascribed to Baldassarre Peruzzi, but Peruzzi died almost a century before the work was started.

(6) *This Crucifix is by some ascribed to the Byzantine school and by others to Giunta Pisano.*

The Chiesa del Crocifisso does not contain the precious works of art to be seen in the other Oratories but it gives one a most agreeable impression of light and sobriety. It stands where St. Catherine used to pick flowers, as a memorial to her one great love: Jesus Christ.

ST. CATHERINE'S ROOM

The tumultuous age in which St. Catherine lived accentuated her desire of seclusion and meditation; she dearly loved her little room where she could find the very conditions she wanted.

The Blessed Raimondo da Capua, her biographer, tells us that 'she chose that room for herself as it was the quietest place in the house, where she felt most lonely and could pray and scourge herself if she pleased.' At a certain time, having her parents decided to get her married, they tried to turn her out of her retreat but in vain; their unsuccessful attempts only induced St. Catherine to shut herself up ever more in a world of her own where she felt sure nobody could reach her.

The building of the Lower and Upper Oratories menaced more than once St. Catherine's little room but it was never touched; it remained in its original state for many centuries, almost neglected, though it was the part of the house most intimately connected with her life.

Very likely, it was in the Saint's little room that the children of the brethren of the Confraternity stayed while their fathers assembled in the Upper Oratory, and this accounts for the inscription over the door: VIRGINES ENIM SUNT.

A commemorative plaque reminds the visitor that this little room was restored for the first time in 1812 by order of Cardinal Zondadari of Siena. In 1874 an Oratory — the fourth — was built into it but the *cubiculum* was spared. The vault and the 15th-century style stucco Altar was offered by Marchese Bichi Ruspoli; the 16th. century panel with the scene of *St. Catherine's Stigmata* was presented by Marchese Ferdinando Pieri Nelli; the plan was made by Marchetti, the architect; the frescoes were produced by Alessandro Franchi with the help of Gaetano Marinelli. All the other decorations were offered by Gaspare Olmi, the priest.

In the little recess where St. Catherine used to sleep a piece of the original floor is still to be seen and it is traditional that the Saint used to distribute alms through the very small window now closed. In glass cases are treasured the knob of *St. Catherine's walking stick*, the lantern she carried when visiting the sick by night, a little metal vase for smelling salts, a piece of coarse woollen stuff from the garment she used to wear to scourge herself, a piece of her veil and the silk bag in which for 72 years her Head was treasured. The recent marble statue of *St. Catherine in ecstasy* is the work of Pietro Repossi.

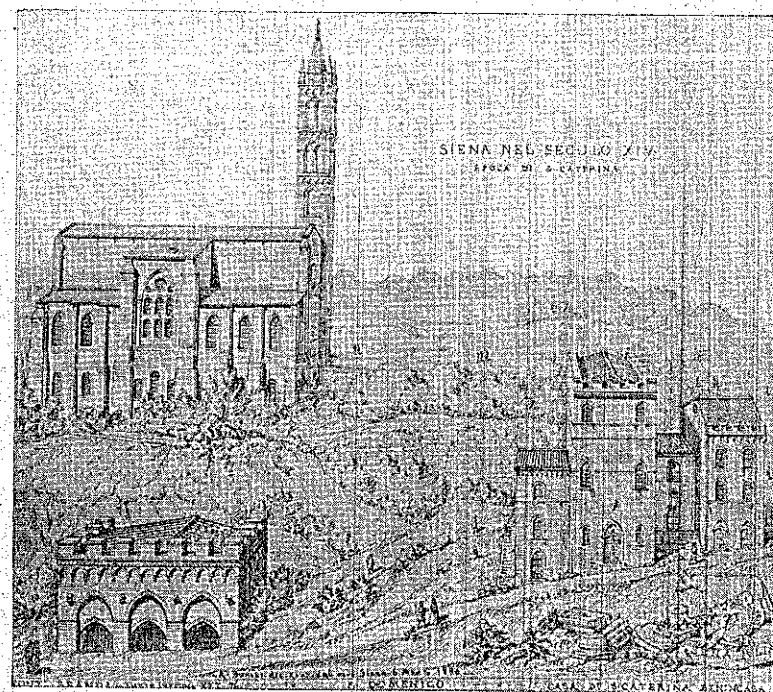
Among the many devotees who have visited this Oratory we read the name of Pope Pius IX who wrote on the register: *Infirma mundi elegit Deus ut fortia confundat. Mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis.*

Near the Catherinian Sanctuary on January 24th, 1941, E. S. Monsignor Tocabelli, the late Archbishop of Siena, housed the Figlie di San Domenico of the Congregation of

San Sisto Vecchio, founded 71 years ago by M. Antonia Lalia, the Sienese gentlewoman who died in 1914 after having been for many years a fervent disciple of St. Catherine's. When in 1939 St. Catherine and St. Francis of Assisi were proclaimed Patron Saints of Italy the desire of having a more dignified entrance to the Sanctuary was keenly felt. The Parish Church of Sant'Antonio which stood in front of the house was then dismantled to make room for the porch now called '*Portico dei Comuni d'Italia*'. This porch creates a harmonic whole with all the buildings to which the massive Abbey of San Domenico in Camporegio is the natural mystic background.

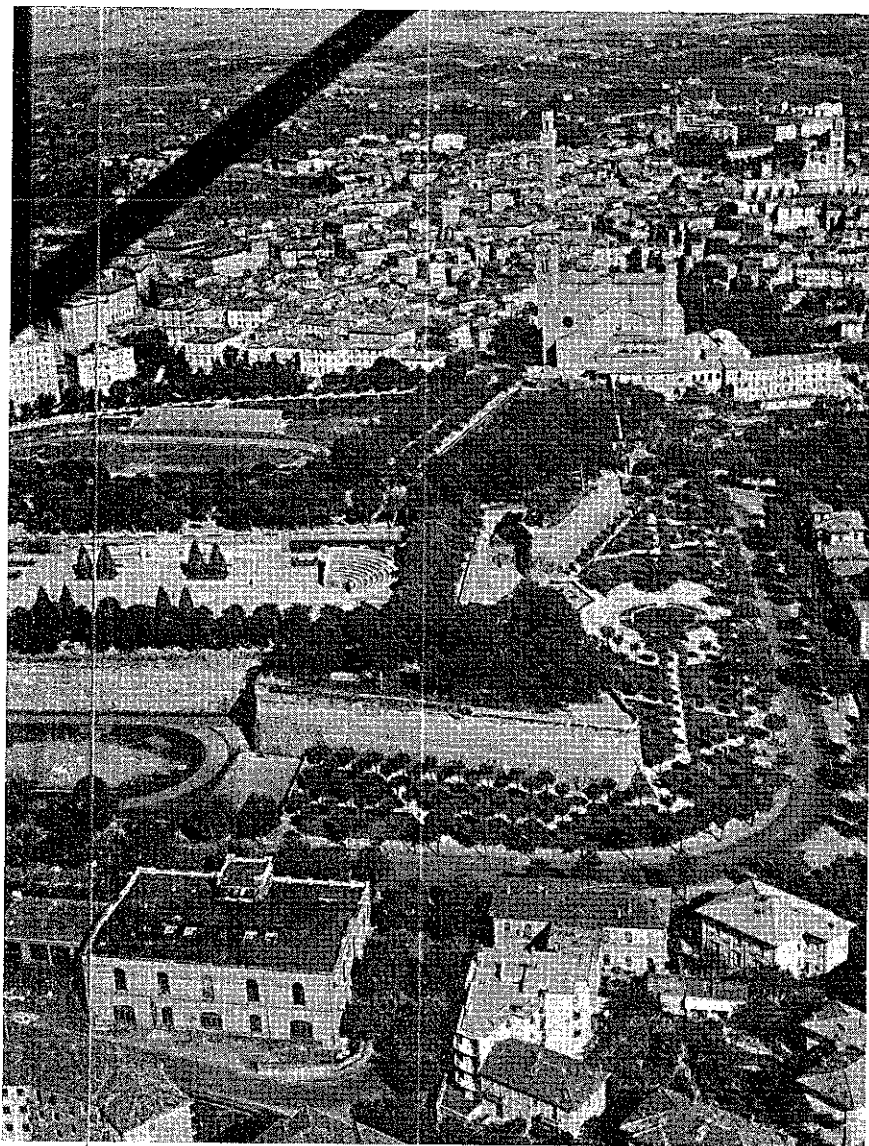
CONTENTS

S. DOMENICO IN CAMPOREGIO	Page 5
The Vaulted Chapel	» 7
St. Catherine's Chapel	» 10
A visit to the Catherinian Abbey	»
ST. CATHERINE'S HOUSE	» 14
The dye-shop: The Lower Oratory	» 19
The Kitchen: The upper Oratory	» 21
The Kitchen Garden: The Crucifix Chapel	» 24
St. Catherine's room	» 26

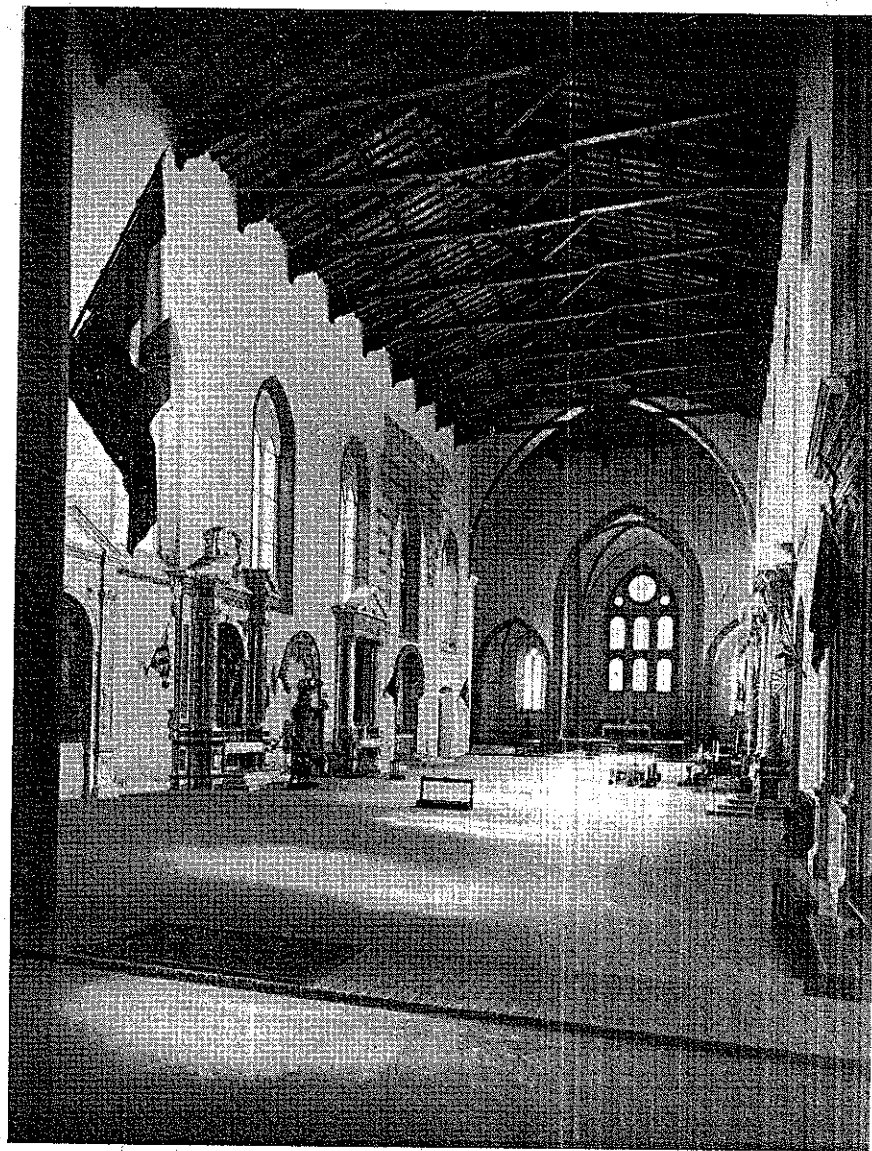


Fontebranda, la Basilica di S. Domenico e la Casa di S. Caterina nel sec. XIV (secondo il Busiri).

- *Fontebranda, La basilique Saint-Dominique et la maison de "sainte Catherine au XIVe siècle (s. Busiri).*
- *Fontebranda, the Basilica of St. Dominic, and the House of St. Catherine of the 14. ch. century. (according to the Busiri).*
- *Fontebranda, St. Dominikus-Basilika und das Haus der hl. Katharina im 14. Jh. (nach Busiri).*



La Basilica e il Convento di Camporegio visti dall'aereo.
 — *La Basilique et le couvent de Camporegio, vus d'avion.*
 — *The Basilica and the Convent of Camporegio seen from the aer.*
 — *Die Basilika und der Konvent von Camporegio, Luftbild.*



Interno della Basilica Catheriniana visto dalla Cappella delle Volte.
 — *Intérieur de la Basilique catherinienne, vu de la Chapelle des voûtes.*
 — *Interior of the Basilica Catheriniana, seen from the Chapel of the Volte.*
 — *Innere der Basilica Catheriniana, von der Gewölbe-Kapelle aus gesehen.*



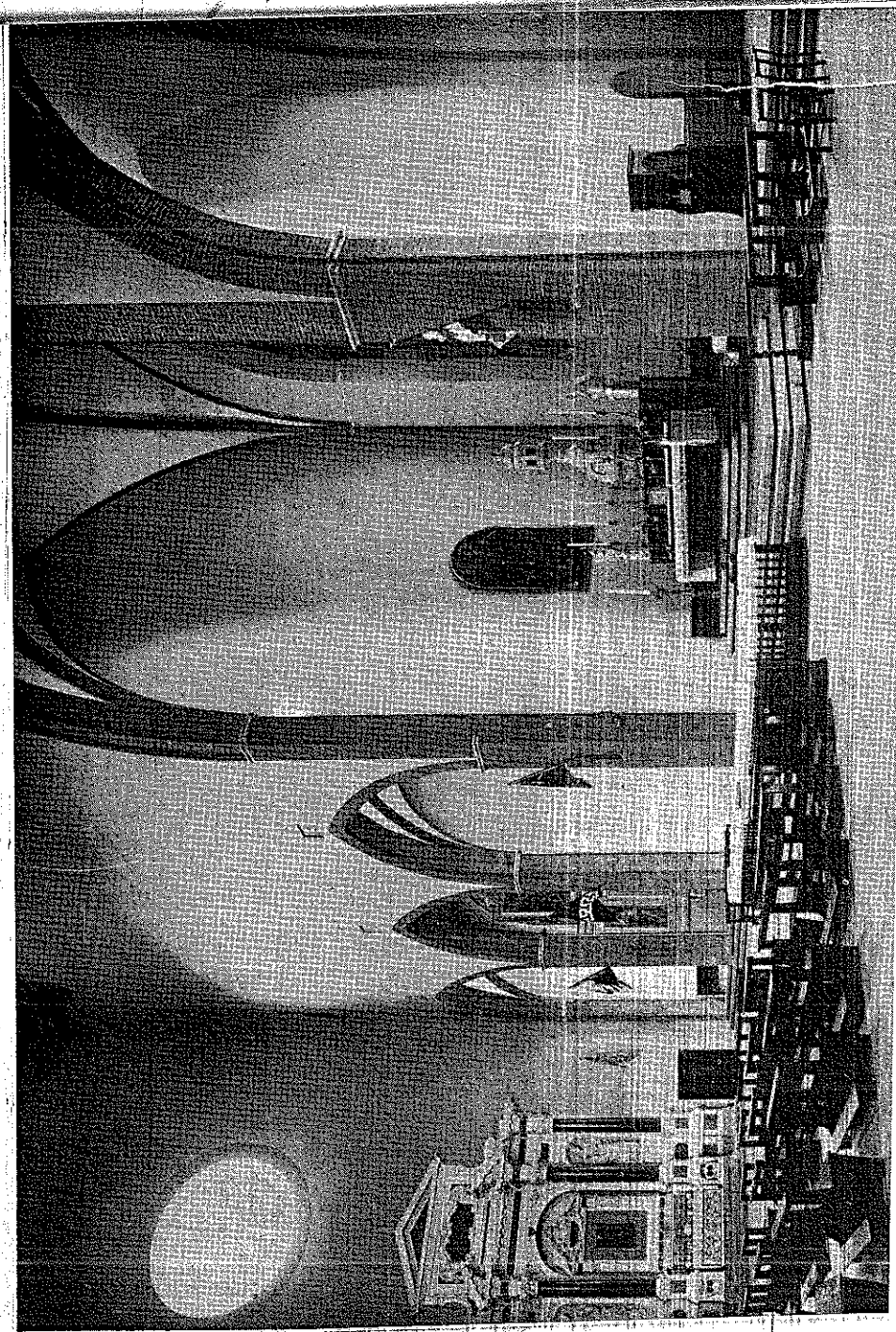
(Foto Grassi)

Basilica Cateriniana vista da Fontebranda.

— *Basilique catherinienne, vue de Fontebranda*

— *Cateriniana Basilica seen from Fontebranda.*

— *Blik auf die Basilica Cateriniana von Fontebranda aus.*



Altare Maggiore e braccio sinistro del transetto della Basilica di S. Domenico.

— *Maitre-autel et transept droit de la basilique Saint-Dominique.*

— *High Altar and the left side of the transept, of the Basilica of St. Dominic.*

— *Hochaltar und linker Flügel des Querschiffes der St. Dominikus-Basilika.*



Chiostro del secl XV.

— *Cloître du XV^e siècle.*

— *Cloister of the 15th century.*

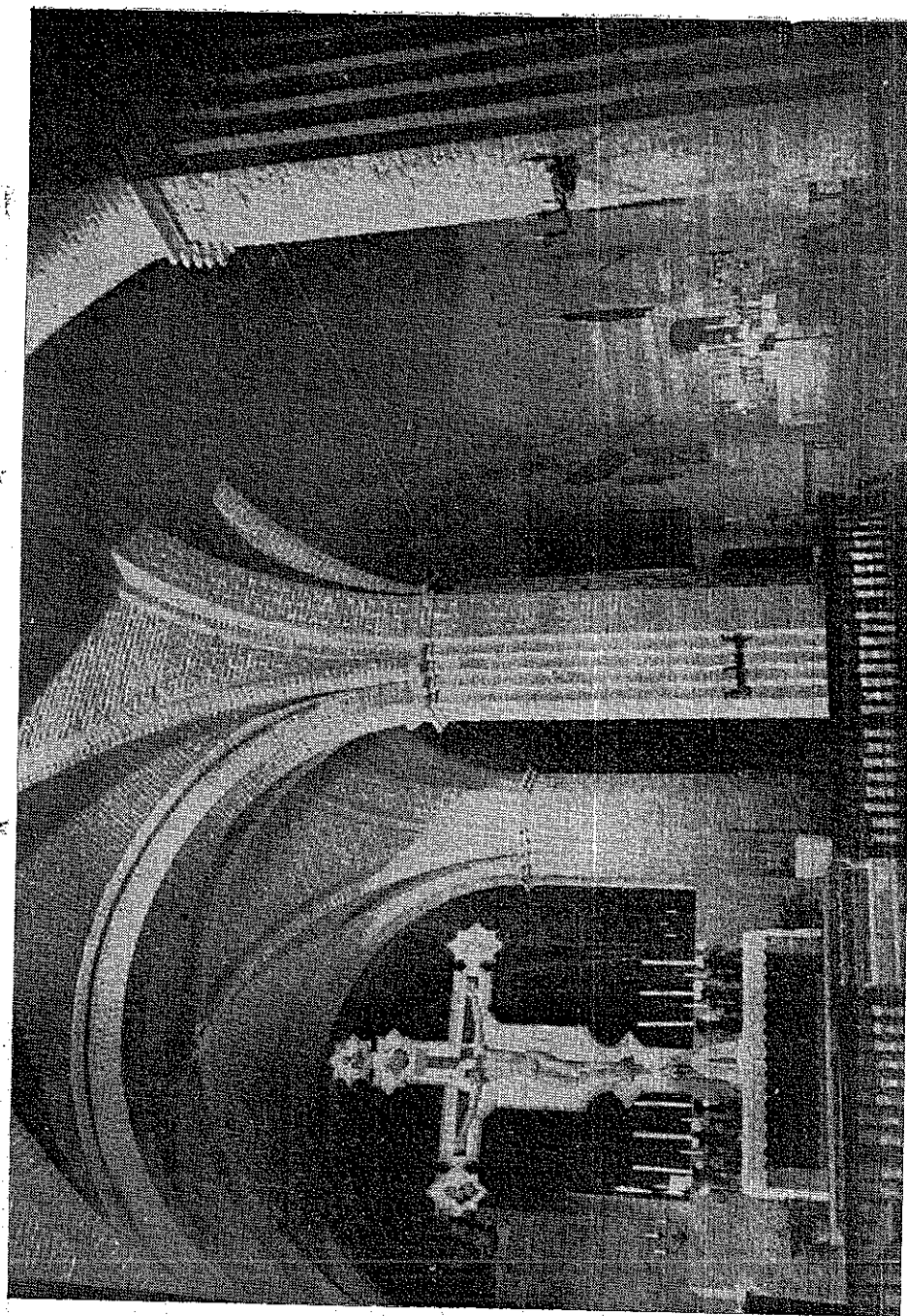
— *Kreuzgang aus dem 15 Jh.*

(Foto Grassi)



GUIDO DA SIENA (1221) — *La Vergine col Figlio*, già venerata nella Chiesa di S. Domenico.

- *Vierge à l'Enfant* jadis vénérée en l'église S. Dominique.
- *The Virgin with the Child*, once venerated in St. Dominic's Church.
- *Die Jungfrau mit dem Kinde*, einst in der Dominikus-Kirche verehrt.



Cripta della Basilica Catheriniana con il Crocifisso di Sano di Pietro.

- *Crypte de la basilique catherinienne, avec le crucifix de Sano di Pietro.*
- *The crypt of the Basilica Catheriniana with the Crucifix of Sano di Pietro.*
- *Krypta der Basilica Catheriniana mit dem Kruzifix des Sano di Pietro.*

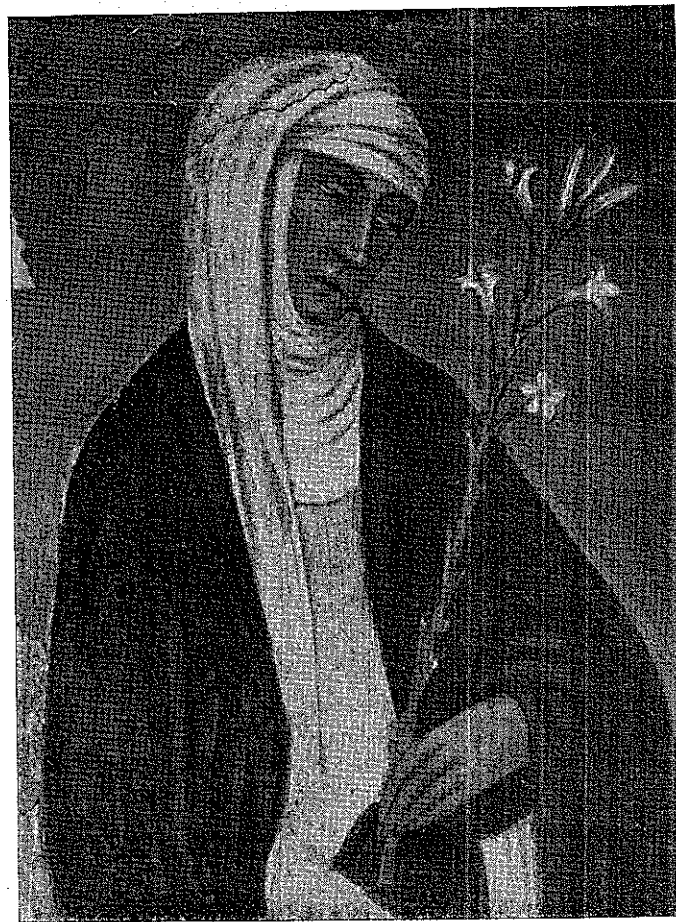


Basilica di San Domenico, (coretto) Lapide sepolcrale di Jacopo Benincasa.

- *Basilique Saint-Dominique pierre sépulcrale de JACOPO BENINCASA.*
- *Basilica of St. Dominic: Tomb-stone of JACOPO BENINCASA.*
- *St. Dominikus-Basilika Grabstein des JACOPO BENINCASA.*



La Cappella delle Volte.
 — *La Chapelle des voûtes.*
 — « *Delle Volte* » Chapel.
 — *Die Gewölbekapelle.*



ANDREA VANNI, Ritratto di S. Caterina nella Cappella delle Volte (particolare).
 — *Portrait de sainte Catherine dans la chapelle des voûtes (détail).*
 — *Picture of St. Catherine in the Chapel « Delle Volte » (in detail).*
 — *Bildnis der hl. Katharina in der Gewölbekapelle (Ausschnitt).*



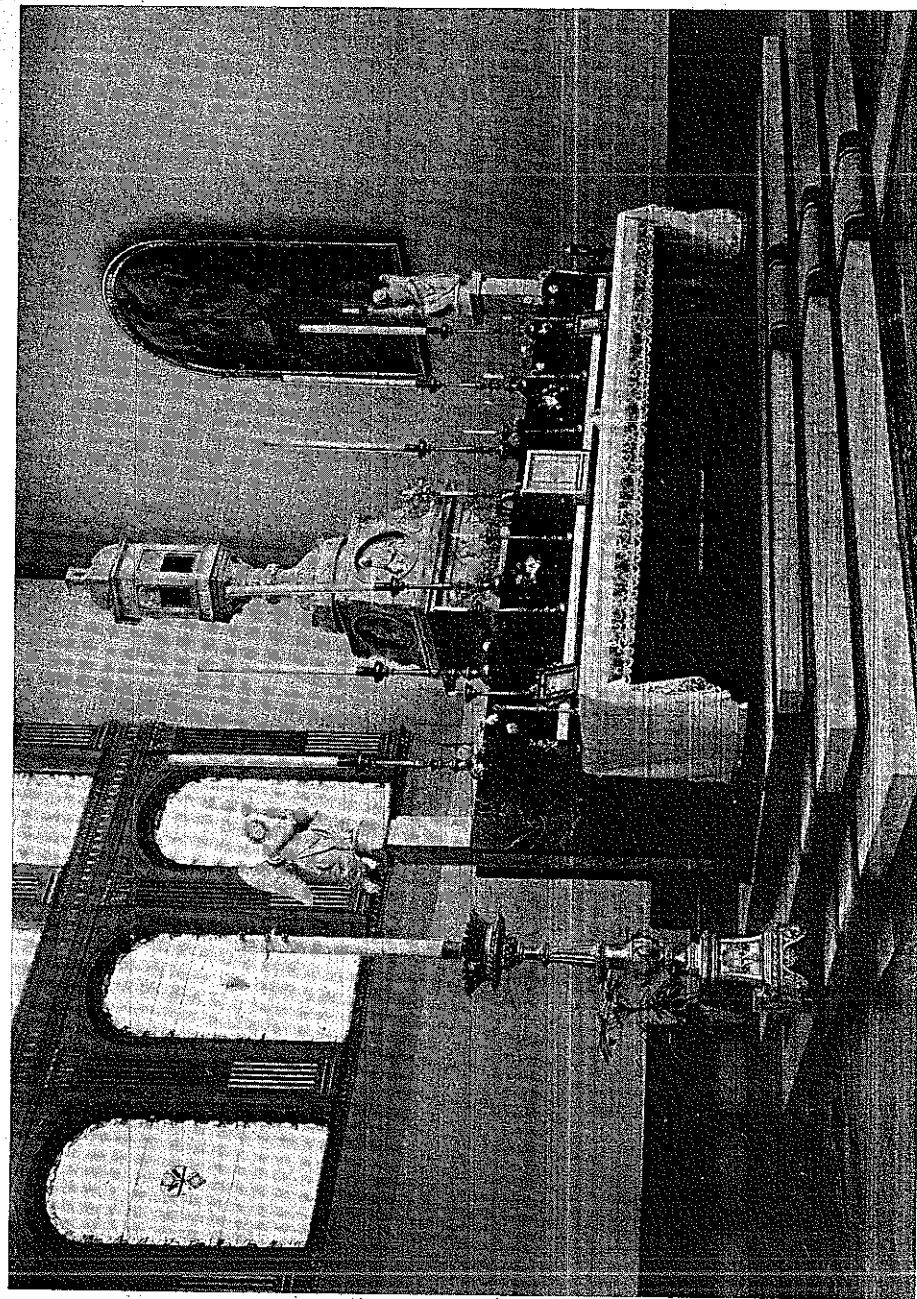
E. GAMBARELLI, *S. Caterina che recita l'Ufficio con Gesù.*
 — *Sainte Catherine récitant l'office avec le Christ.*
 — *St. Catherine reciting the office with Jesus.*
 — *Die hl. Katherina betet das Offizium zusammen mit dem Heiland.*



C. GAMBARELLI, *La morte di S. Caterina.*
 — *La mort de sainte Catherine.*
 — *The death of St. Catherine.*
 — *Der Tod der hl. Katharina.*



MATTIA PRETI, *Canonizzazione di S. Caterina.*
 — *Canonisation de sainte Catherine.*
 — *Canonization of St. Catherine.*
 — *Heiligsprechung Katharinas.*



Basilica di S. Domenico. Altare Maggiore con Tabernacolo e Angeli di Benedetto da Maiano.

- *Basilique Saint-Dominique. Maître-autel, avec tabernacle et anges de Benedetto da Maiano.*
- *Basilica of St. Dominic, high altar with tabernacle and Angels of Benedetto da Maiano.*
- *St. Dominikus-Basilika: Hauptaltar mit dem Tabernakel und den Engeln de; Benedetto da Maiano.*



(Foto Alinari)

BENEDETTO DA MAIANO, Angelo che sorregge il candelabro.

- *Ange portant un chandelier.*
- *Angel supporting the candlestick.*
- *Kandelabertragender Engel.*



(Foto Grassi)

SANO DI PIETRO, *Madonna col Bambino* (su tela).

- *Vierge à l'Enfant.*
- *The Virgin with the Child.*
- *Madonna mit dem Kinde.*



MATTEO DI GIOVANNI, *S. Barbara con S. Caterina d'Alessandria e S. Maria Maddalena.*

- *Sainte Barbe, avec sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie et sainte Marie-Madeleine.*
- *St. Barbara with St. Catherine of Alexandria and S. Mary Magdalene.*
- *Hl. Barbara mit der hl. Katharina von Alexandrien und der hl. Magdalena.*

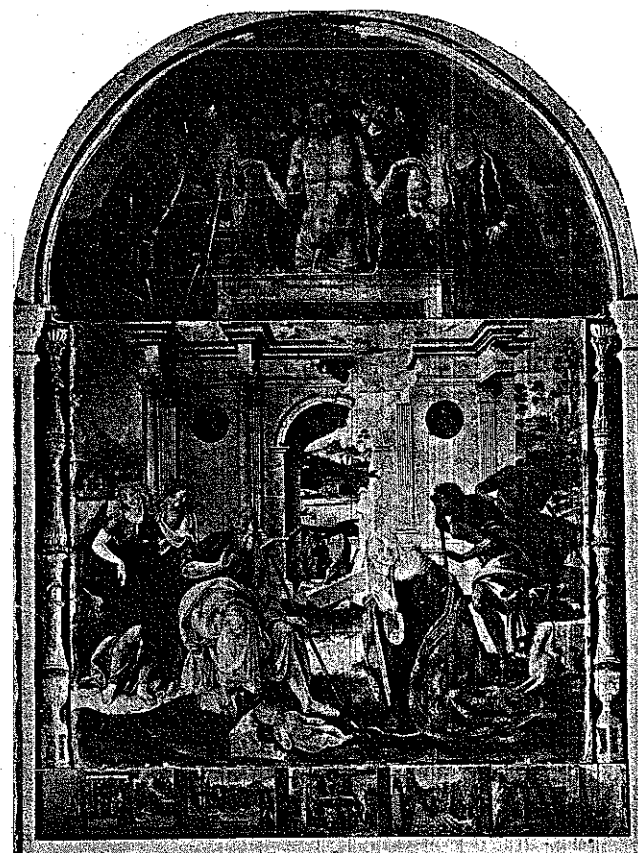


MATTEO DI GIOVANNI, *S. Barbara* (*particolare*).

— *Sainte Barbe* (*détail*).

— *St. Barbara* (*in detail*).

— *Hl. Barbara* (*Ausschnitt*).



FRANCESCO DI GIORGIO MARTINI, *Natività*.

— *Nativité*.

— « *Nativity* ».

— *Geburt Christi*.



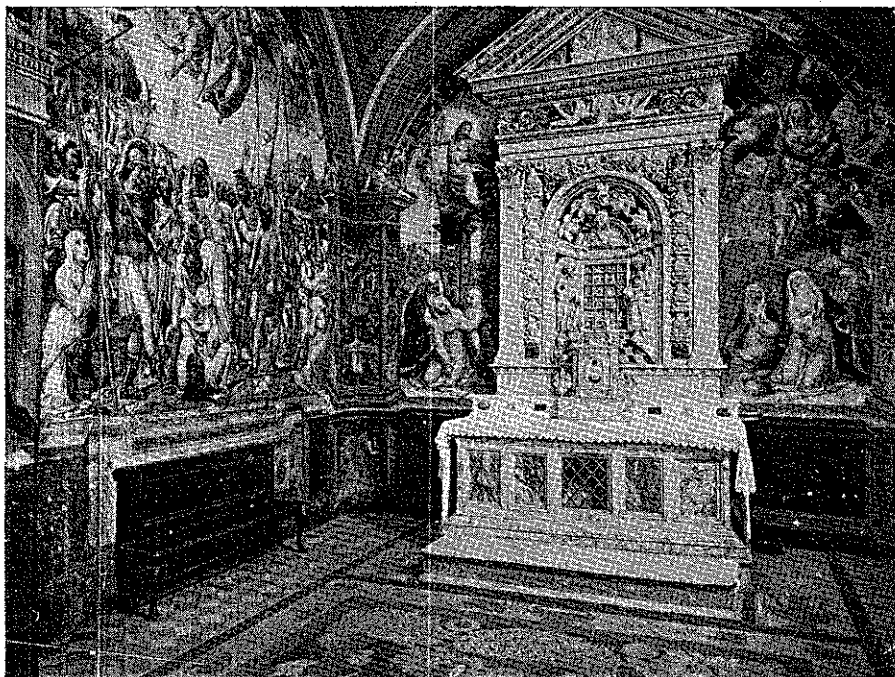
MATTEO DI GIOVANNI, *La Vergine incoronata dagli Angeli.*

- *La Vierge couronnée par les anges.*
- *The Virgin crowned by the angels.*
- *Die Hl. Jungfrau von Engeln gekrönt.*



BENVENUTO DI GIOVANNI, *La Vergine col Figlio e Santi.*

- *Vierge à l'Enfant avec des saints.*
- *The Virgin with her Son and Saints.*
- *Die Jungfrau mit dem Kinde und Heiligen.*



BASILICA DI S. DOMENICO —

- *La Cappella di S. Caterina con gli affreschi del Sodoma.*
- *Chapelle Sainte-Catherine, avec les fresques de Sodoma.*
- *The Chapel of St. Catherine with frescoes of Sodoma.*
- *Katharinen-Kapelle mit den Fresken des Sodoma.*



La S. Testa di S. Caterina

- *Le chef de sainte Catherine.*
- *The head of St. Catherine.*
- *Das Haupt der hl. Katharina.*



SODOMA, *S. Caterina assiste al supplizio di Tuldo* (particolare).

- *Sainte Catherine assiste au supplice de Tuldo.*
- *St. Catherine attending the execution of Tuldo.*
- *St. Katharina bei der Hinrichtung des Tuldo.*



SODOMA, *S. Caterina in estasi* (particolare).

- *Sainte Catherine en extase* (détail).
- *St. Catherine in ecstasy* (in detail).
- *Die Verrückung der hl. Katharina* (Ausschnitt).



FRANCESCO VANNI, *S. Caterina libera un'indemoniata.*
 — *Sainte Catherine libère une démoniaque.*
 — *St. Catherine sets free a demoniac.*
 — *St. Katharina befreit eine Besessene.*



FR. VANNI, *Il B. Raimondo da Capua.*
 — *Le Bx Raymond de Capoue.*
 — *Bl. Raymond of Capua.*
 — *Der sel. Raimund von Capua.*



GIOVANNI DI STEFANO, *Tempietto di S. Caterina (particolare).*

— *Petit temple de Ste-Catherine (détail).*

— *Small temple of St. Catherine (in detail).*

— *Tempelchen der hl. Katharina (Teilsansicht).*



FR. VANNI, *S. Giacinto O. P.*

— *Saint Hyacinth.*

— *St. Hyacinth.*

— *Der hl. Hyazinth.*



LORENZETTI, *La Madonna con S. Giov. Battista e un Crociato.*

— *La Vierge, saint Jean-Baptiste, un croisé.*

— *The Virgin, St. John the Baptist, and a Crusader.*

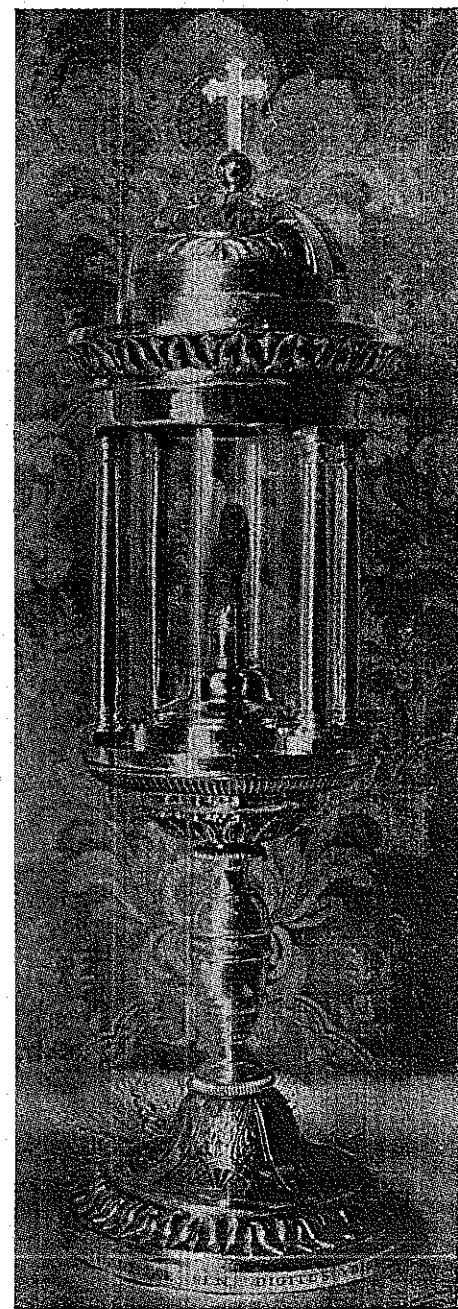
— *Die Jungfrau mit dem Kinde, St. Johannes der Täufer und ein Kreuzfahrer.*

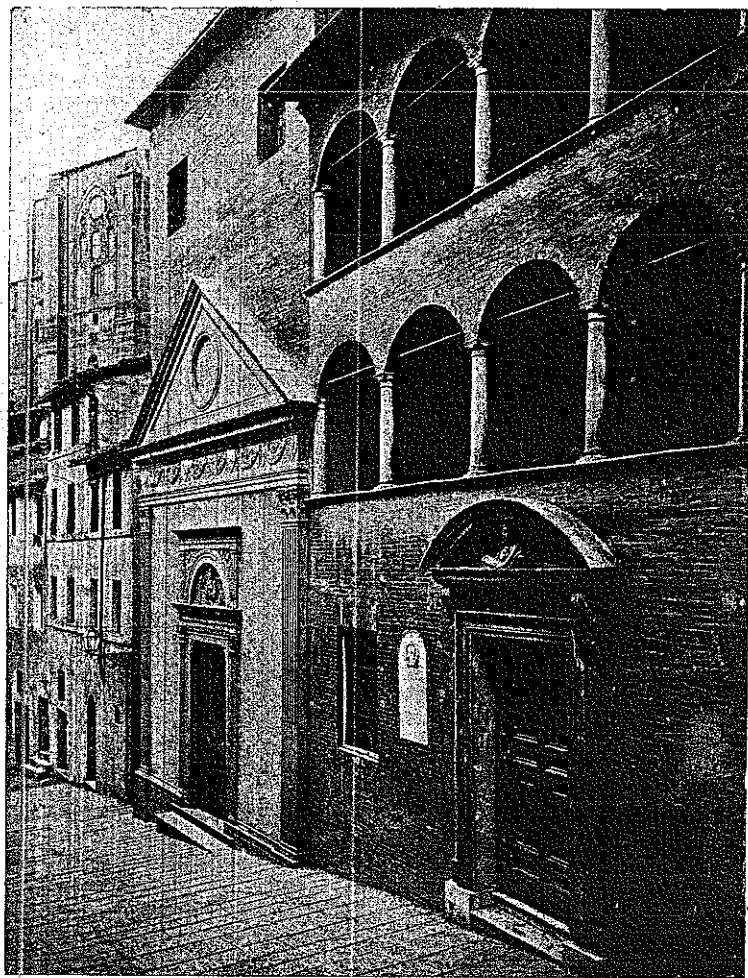
Il Dito di S. Caterina.

— *Le doigt de sainte Catherine.*

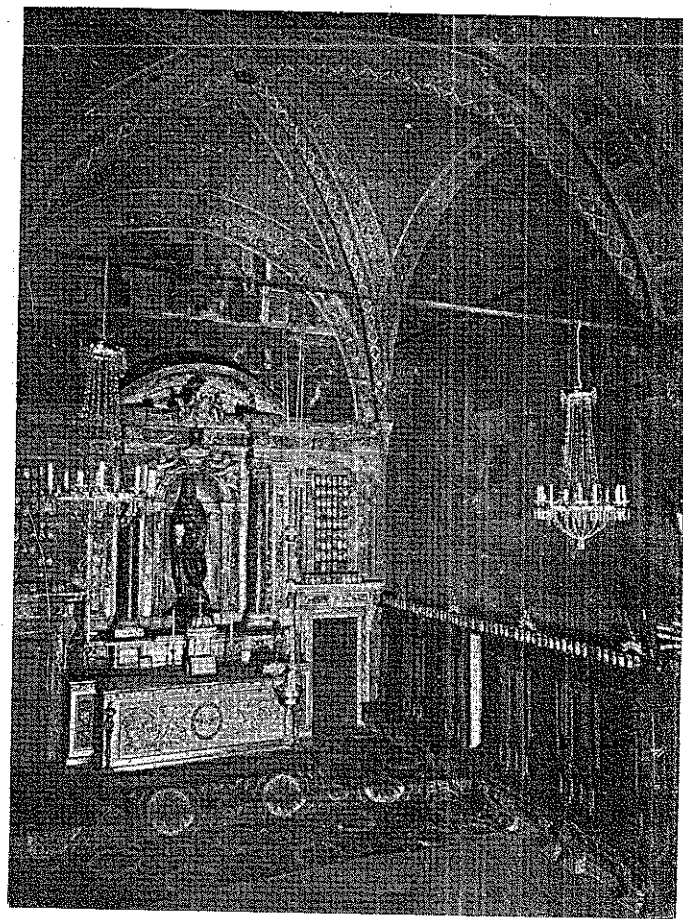
— *The finger of St. Catherine.*

— *Der Finger der hl. Katharina.*





Ingresso alla Casa della Santa da Via S. Caterina.
 — *Entrée de la Maison, sur le via s. Caterina.*
 — *Entrance to the house, from via St. Catherine.*
 — *Eingang zum Haus der Heiligen in der Via s. Caterina.*



Interno dell'Oratorio Inferiore (la Tintoria).
 — *Intérieur de l'oratoire inférieur (la teinturerie).*
 — *Interior of the lower oratory (la Tintoria).*
 — *Inneres des unteren Oratoriums (Die Färberei).*



G. DEL PACCHIA, *S. Caterina libera i Domenicani dai briganti.*

- *Sainte Catherine délivre les Dominicains des brigands.*
- *St. Catherine sets free the Dominicans from the robbers.*
- *St. Katharina befreit die Dominikaner von Räubern.*



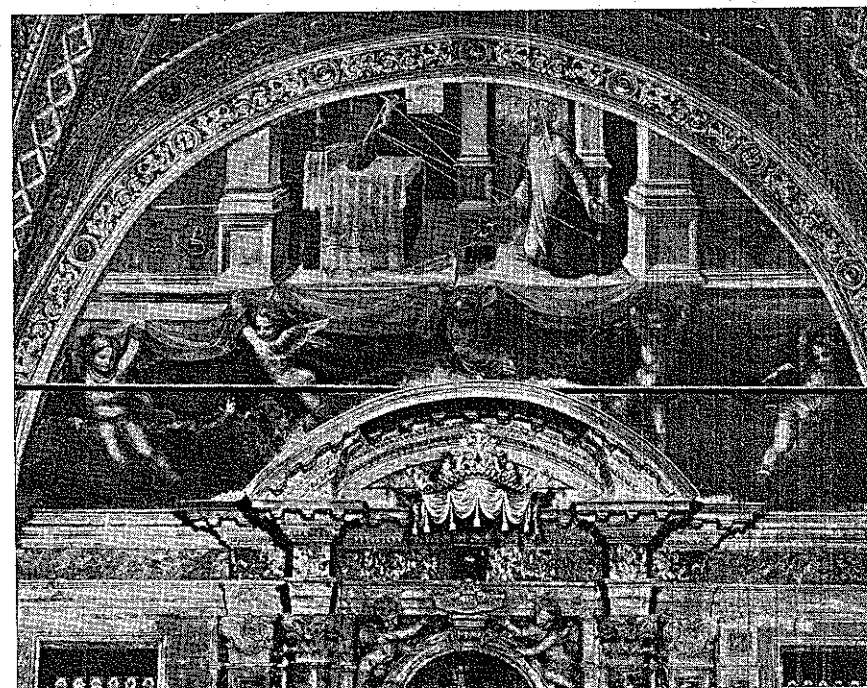
G. DEL PACCHIA, *S. Agnese da Montepulciano, defunta, solleva il piede a S. Caterina.*

- *Sainte Agnès de Montepulciano, défunte, soulève son pied vers sainte Catherine.*
- *St. Agnes of Montepulciano dead, raising her foot to St. Catherine.*
- *Die tote hl. Agnes von Montepulciano streckt der hl. Katharina ihren Fuss entgegen.*



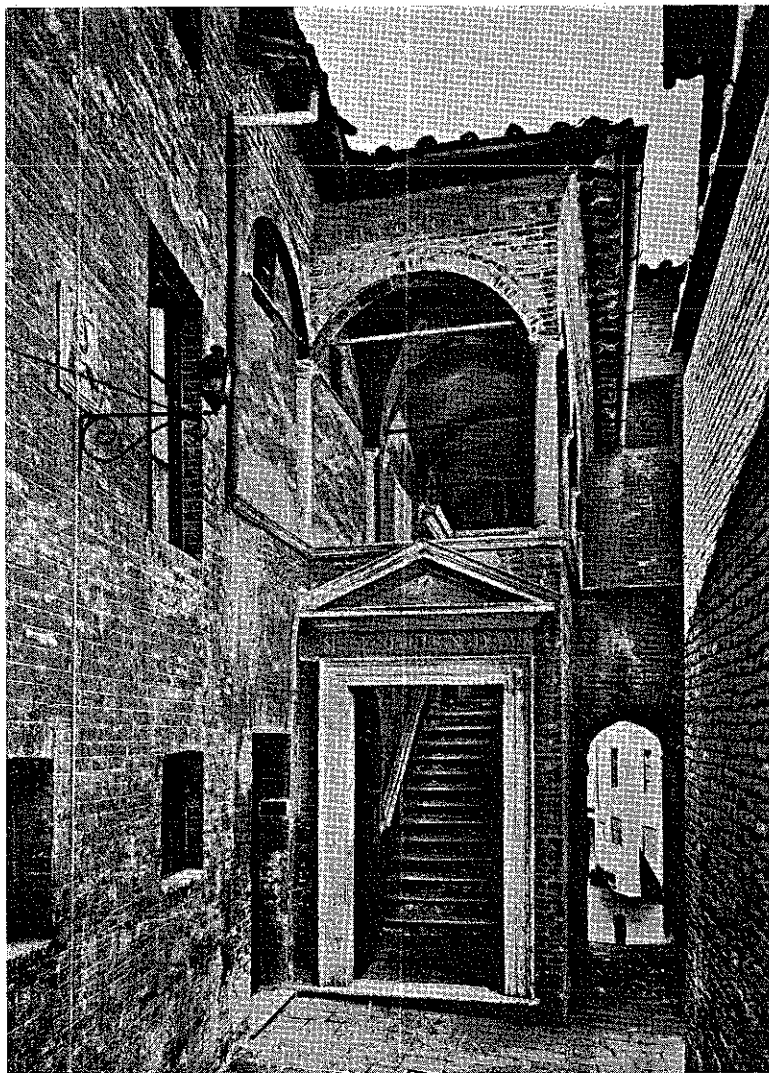
G. DEL PACCHIA. *Guarigione miracolosa di Matteo Cenni.*

- *Guérison miraculeuse de Matteo Cenni.*
- *Miraculous recovery of Matteo Cenni.*
- *Wunderbare Heilung des Matteo Cenni.*



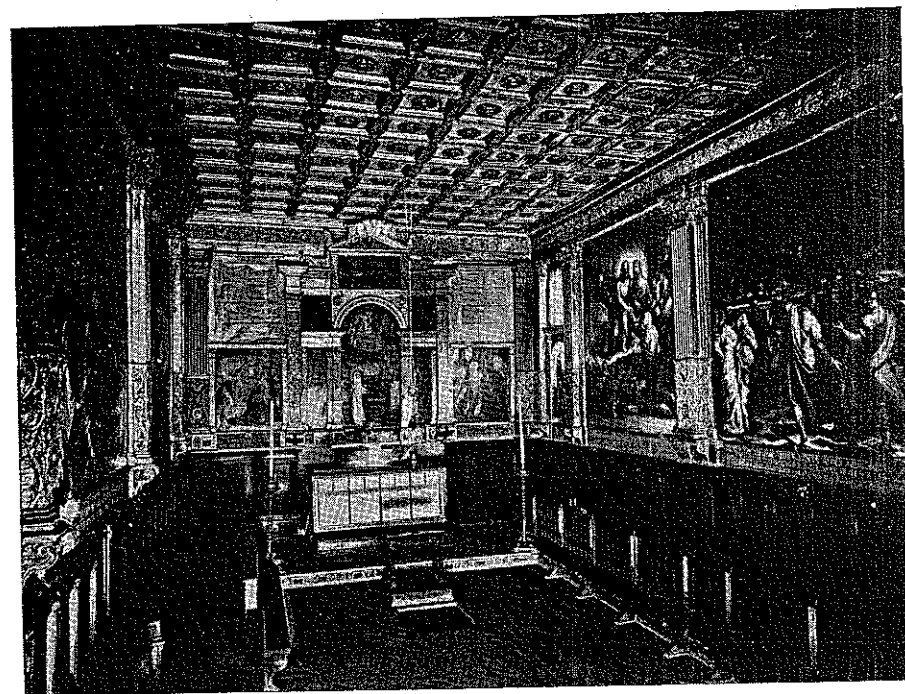
SODOMA *Stigmatizzazione di S. Caterina.*

- *Saint Catherine reçoit les stigmates.*
- *Stigmatism of St. Catherine.*
- *St. Katharina empfängt die Wundmale.*



Ingresso alla Casa di S. Caterina da Via del Tiratoio.

- *Entrée de la Maison de sainte Catherine de la Via del Tiratoio.*
- *Entrance to St. Catherine's house from Via del Tiratoio*
- *Eingang zum Haus der hl. Katharina in der Via del Tiratoio.*



Interno dell'Oratorio Superiore (la Cucina).

- *Intérieur de l'oratoire supérieur (la cuisine).*
- *Interior of the upper Oratory (The kitchen).*
- *Inneres des oberen Oratoriums (Die Küche).*



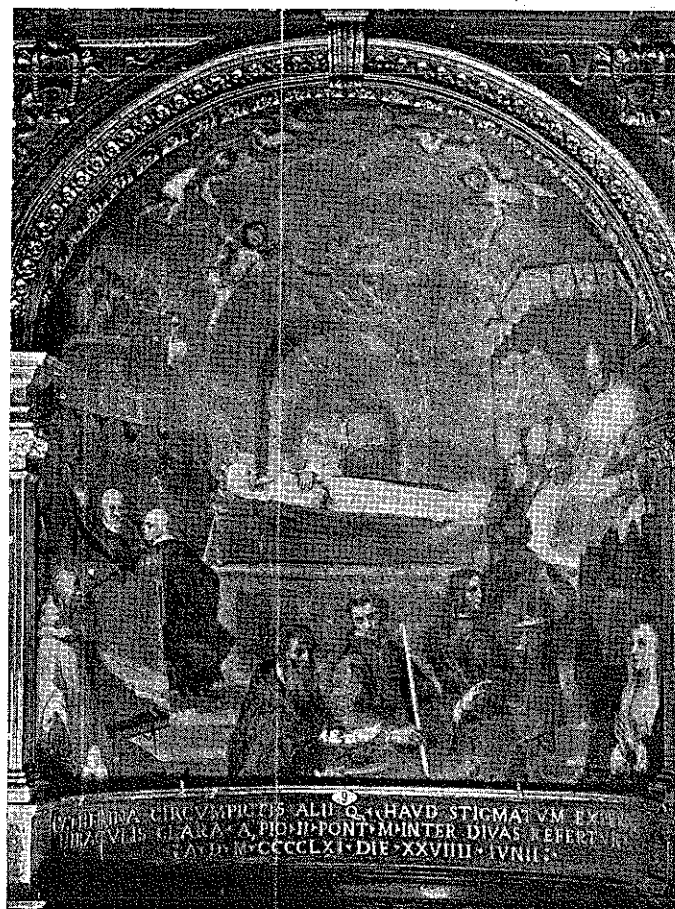
RONCAGLIA, *La comunione miracolosa della Santa.*

- *La communion miraculeuse de la Sainte.*
- *The miraculous Communion of the Saint.*
- *Die wunderbare Kommunion der Heiligen.*

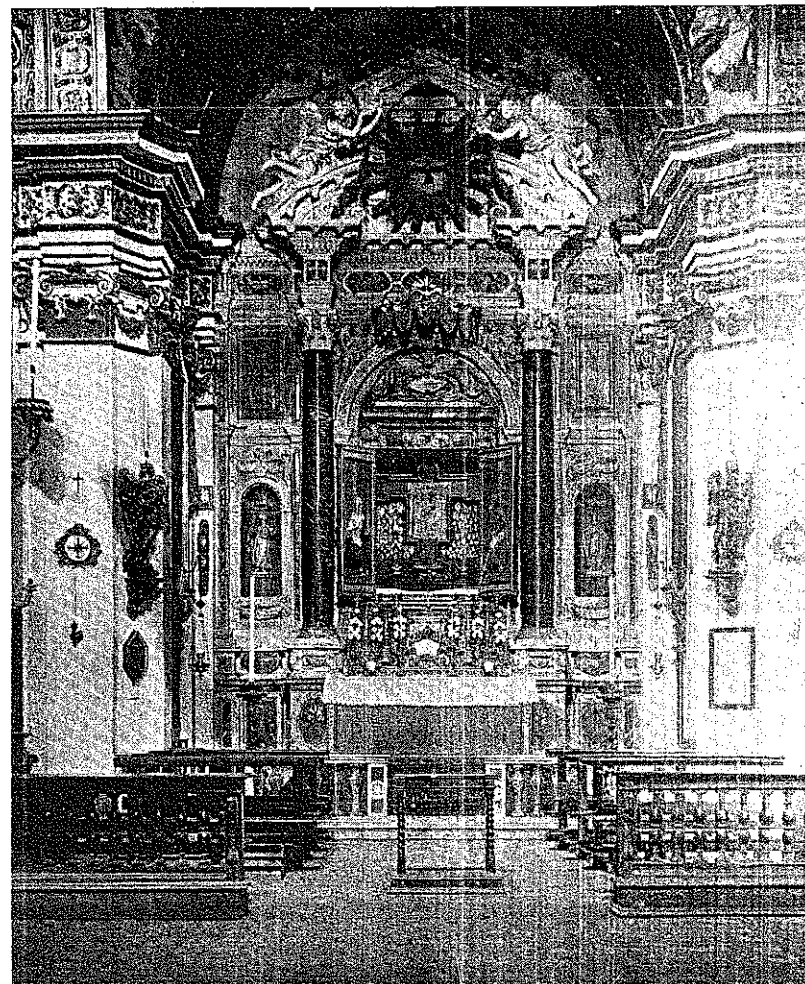


CASOLANI, *La Santa persuade il popolo romano all'ubbidienza al papa Urbano VI.*

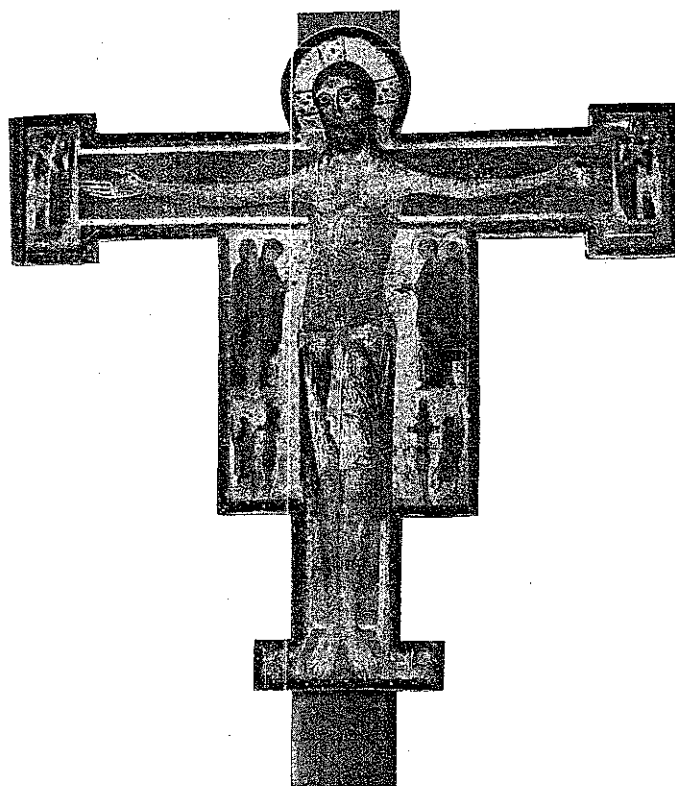
- *La Sainte persuade le peuple romain d'obéir au pape Urbain VI.*
- *The Saint persuades the Roman people to obey Pope Urban VI.*
- *Die Heilige redet dem römischen Volk zu, Papst Urban VI. Gehorsam zu leisten.*



F. VANNI, *Canonizzazione della Santa.*
 — *Canonisation de la Sainte.*
 — *Canonization of the Saint.*
 — *St. Katharina wird heiliggesprochen.*



Interno della Chiesa del Crocifisso delle Stimate.
 — *Intérieur de l'église du crucifix des stigmates.*
 — *Interior of the Church the Crucifix ad of the stigmata.*
 — *Innere der Kirche des Kruzifixus von den Wundmalen.*



GIUNTA PISANO (?). *Il SS.mo Crocifisso delle Stimmate.*

- *Le crucifix des stigmates.*
- *The oly Crucifix of the stigmata.*
- *Der Gekeuzigte von den Wundmalen.*



R. MANETTI. *Apotheosi della Santa.*

- *Apothéose de la Sainte.*
- *Apotheosis of the Saint.*
- *Verklärung der Heiligen.*



BASSORILIEVO DEL SEC. XVI, S. Caterina dona le vesti a Gesù
in sembianze di povero.

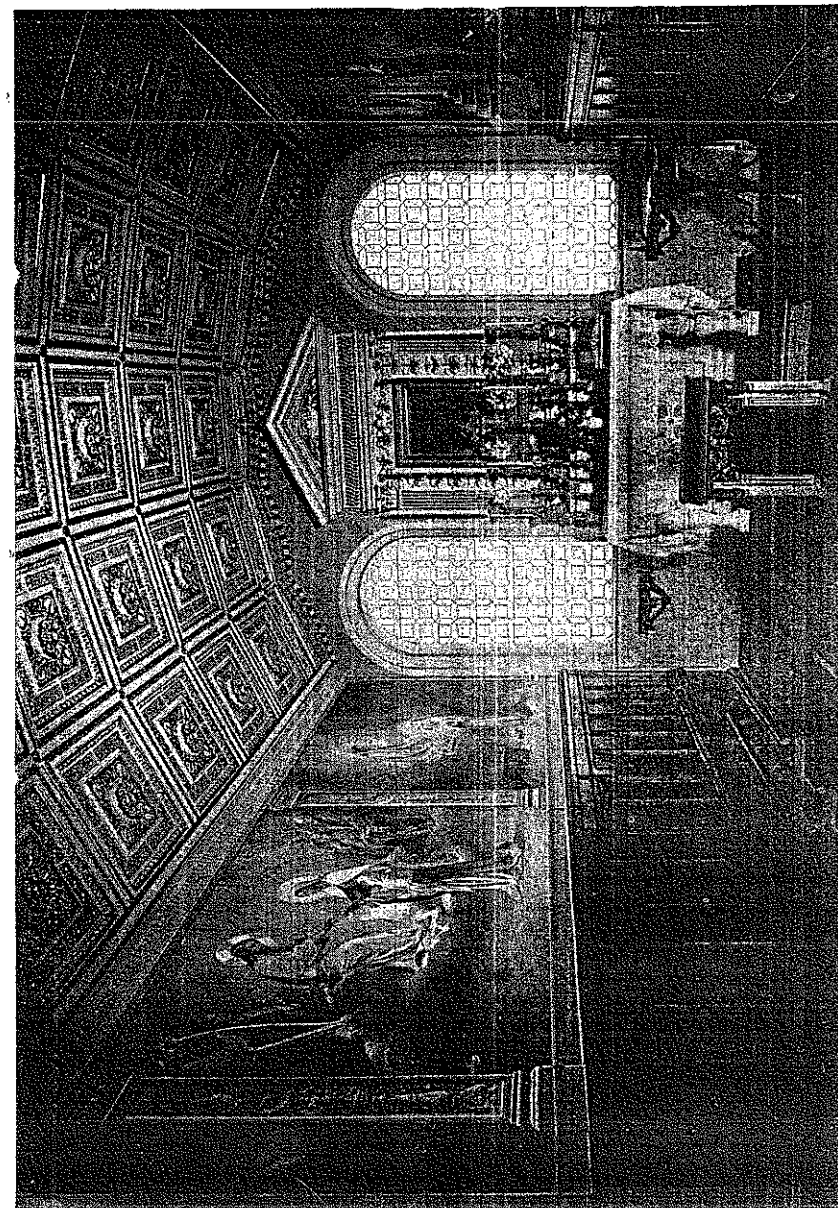
- Sainte Catherine vêt Jésus sous l'aspect d'un pauvre.
- St. Catherine dressing Jesus in aspect of a poor man.
- St. Katharina bekleidet Jesus in Gestalt eines Armen.

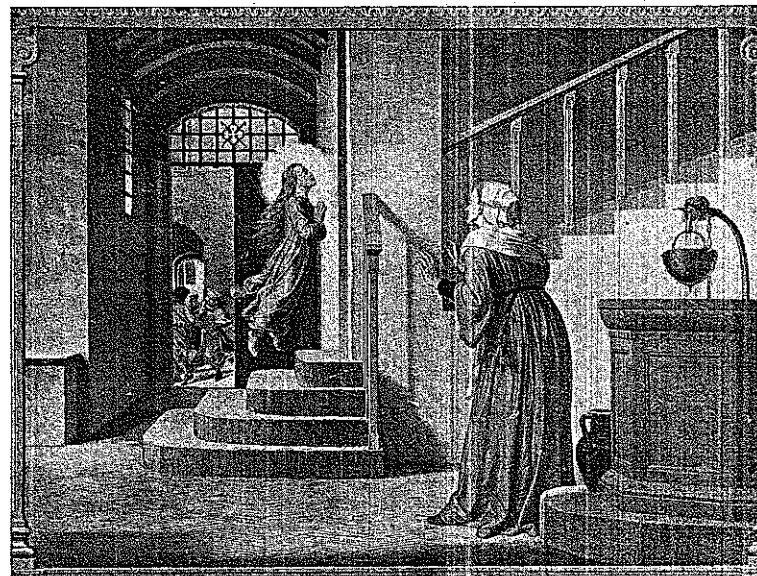


- G. RENI (?) *La Santa coronata di spine* (Oratorio Inferiore - sacrestia).
 — *La Sainte couronnée d'épines* (Oratoire inférieur, sacristie).
 — *St. Catherine crowned with thorns* (Sower oratory - Sacristy).
 — *Die Heilige mit Dornen gekrönt* (Sakristei des unteren Oratoriums).



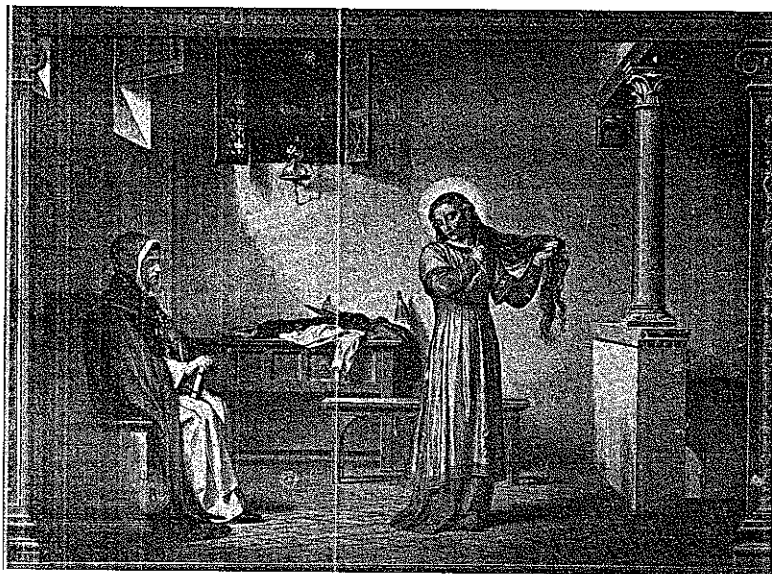
Portico e ingresso alla Chiesa del Crocifisso.
 — *Portique et entrée de l'église du crucifix.*
 — *Portico and entrance to the Church of the Crucifix.*
 — *Säulenhalle und Eingang zur Kirche des Gekreuzigten.*





A. FRANCHI. *La Santa sale miracolosamente le scale.*
 — *La Sainte monte miraculeusement l'escalier.*
 — *The Saint going upstairs miraculousey.*
 — *Die Heilige steigt wunderbarer Weise die Treppe hinauf.*

Camera di S. Caterina.
 — *Chambre de sainte Catherine.*
 — *Room of St. Catherine.*
 — *Kammer der hl. Katharina.*

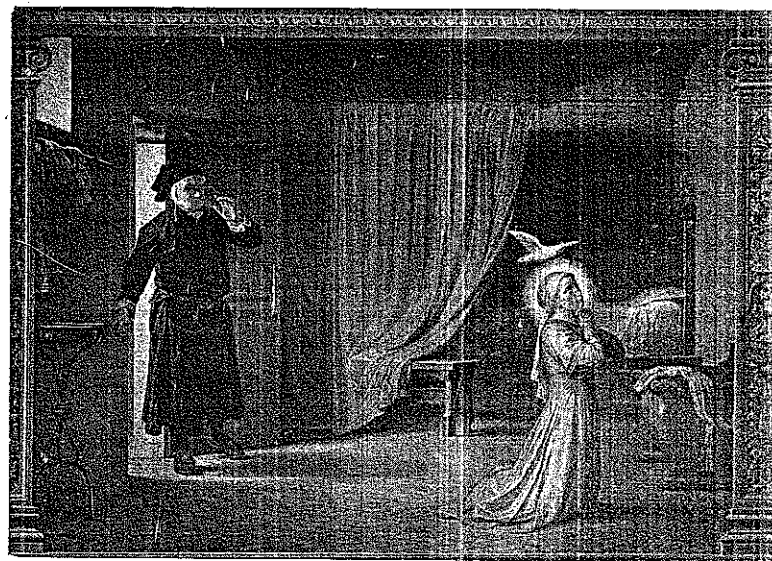


A. FRANCHI, *La Santa si recide le chiome.*

— *La Sainte se coupe la chevelure.*

— *The Saint cutting off her hair.*

— *Die Heilige schneidet sich ihre Haare ab.*

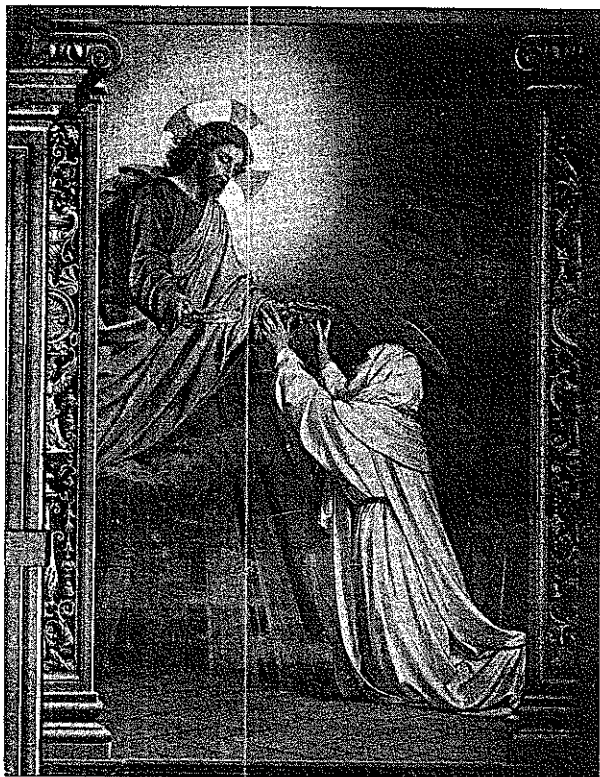


A. FRANCHI, *La Santa è sorpresa dal padre mentre prega.*

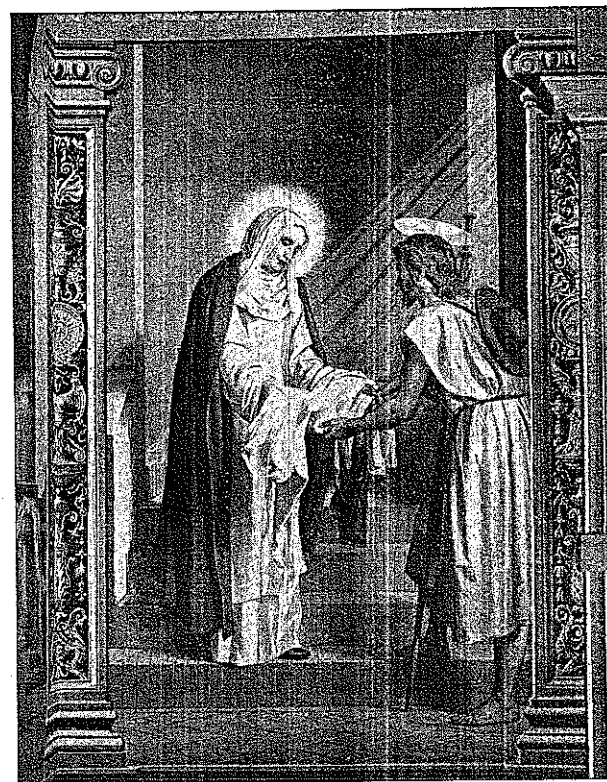
— *La Sainte est surprise en prières par son père.*

— *The Saint taking by surprise by her father while she prays.*

— *Die Heilige im Gebete von ihrem Vater überrascht.*



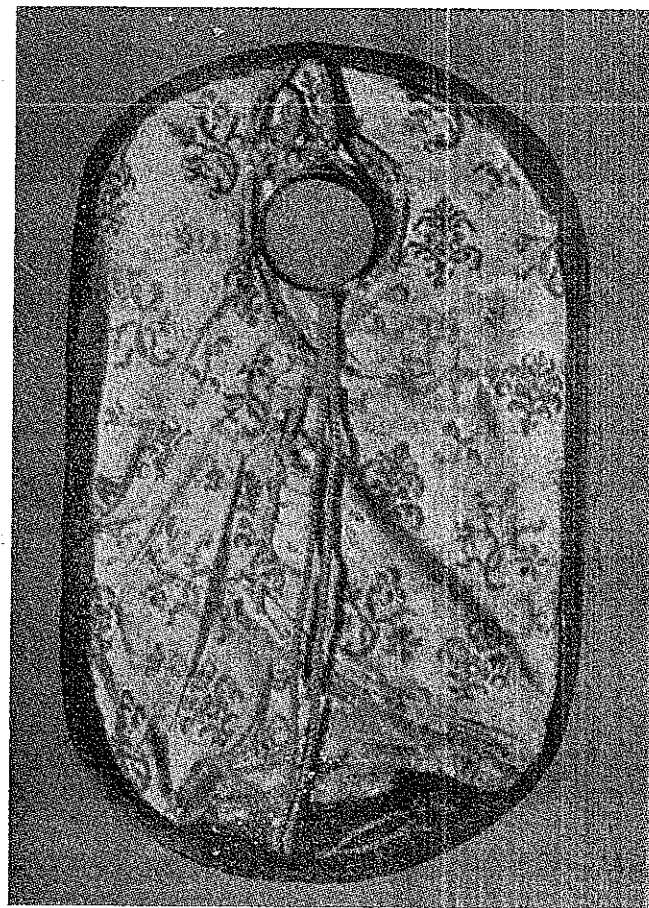
A. FRANCHI. *La Santa sceglie la Corona di spine.*
 — *La Sainte choisit la couronne d'épines.*
 — *The Saint chooses the crown of thorns.*
 — *Die Heilige wählt die Dornenkrone.*



A. FRANCHI. *La Santa offre le vesti a Gesù, in sembianze di pellegrino.*
 — *La Sainte offre des habits à Jésus, sous l'aspect d'un pèlerin.*
 — *The Saint offering the cloths to Jesus in the appearance of a pilgrim.*
 — *Die Heilige bietet dem Heiland in Pilgergestalt Kleider dar.*



A. FRANCHI. *Lo sposalizio della Santa con Gesù.*
 — *Les épousailles de la Sainte avec Jésus.*
 — *The wedding of the Saint wit Jesus.*
 — *Die Vermählung der Heiligen mit Jesus.*



Borsa di seta che servì per portare la S. Testa della Santa da Roma a Siena.
 — *Bourse de soie qui servit pour le transport du chef de la Sainte de Rome à Sienne.*
 — *Silk pense which served to bring the Holy Head of the Saint from Roma to Siena.*
 — *Seidene Tasche, die zur Uebertragung des Hauptes der Heiligen von Rom nach Siena diene.*