



L'Aquila 2009 - L'Aquila 2019 Speciale Decennale Terremoto

BASILICA OF SANTA MARIA DI COLLEMAGGIO

The basilica of Collemaggio stands on a hilly area of the city of L'Aquila, in the center between Porta Bazzano and the Tratturo Magno and was built in 1288 at the behest of Pietro da Morrone, who will then be crowned Pope with the name of **Celestine V** in the basilica itself.

Characteristic elements of the basilica

Its facade is the highest expression of Abruzzo architecture, is covered with **local white and pink stone** set in a game of crosses and diamonds, in harmony with the background of the mountains. The main portal is characterized by concentric round arches set on two pillars and tabernacles, while the lunette has a fresco of the Virgin with Child. The portal was renovated in Gothic style in the fourteenth century, while the side ones are in neo-Romanesque style.

On the left wall of the basilica there is the **Holy Door**, linked to the celebrations of the **Celestine Pardon**, during which the faithful who cross it get the plenary indulgence only if truly repented.

The characteristic element of the floor of Collemaggio is the labyrinth, a set of six concentric circles placed in the center of the basilica. Currently, in the apse on the right are placed the remains of Pope Celestine V, arrived at L'Aquila in 1327.

The **mausoleum** that houses the tomb was built in 1517, shortly after the construction of that of San Bernardino in the basilica of the same name.

The basilica and the earthquakes

After the **earthquake of 1315** there was the completion of the church, with funding from the noble Camponeschi. With the **earthquake of 1349**, in addition to rebuilding all the damaged structures, there were the extension of the greater apse towards the escarpment of the hill, the creation of the dichrome floor and the insertion of single lancet and trilobate.

In **1703** the **Great Earthquake** devastated the presbytery, but the monks immediately began the reconstruction with the help of highly specialized workers.

Due to the **earthquake of 6 April 2009**, the basilica had to undergo the renovation and consolidation of the walls, vaulted surfaces and colonnade. This long process, which allowed the reopening of the basilica to the public in 2017, also involved the Politecnico of Milano, the Sapienza of Roma, the University of L'Aquila and the Superintendence of L'Aquila.



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The Celestine Pardon

The Basilica of Collemaggio is the absolute protagonist of the Celestine Pardon, established on **29 August 1294** by Celestine V, the day on which he was crowned Pope, with the emanation of the Papal Bull *Inter sanctorum solemnia*, with which he granted a plenary indulgence to all those who, confessed and communicated, had entered the basilica from the vespers of 28 August to those of 29 August.

The first celebration of Forgiveness occurred in 1295 despite the contrasts with the new Pope Boniface VIII who had issued a new bull to cancel that of Celestine V. In fact, the citizens decided to respect the dictate of the **Bull of Forgiveness**, which they had kept and which therefore no longer belonged to the Church. Thus the Bull was carried in procession from the town hall to the basilica to be shown to the faithful. From that moment on 28 August this ceremony accompanied the religious solemn rite and became an important event for pilgrims and merchants.

The pardon acquired greater importance in 1327, when the remains of Celestine V were brought to the basilica of Collemaggio. However, for centuries only the religious service was celebrated and the ceremony of the procession fell into disuse, until 1983 when the mayor of the city of L'Aquila restored the **historical procession** to bring the document of Celestine V from the **Civic Tower of Palazzo Margherita** to the Basilica of Santa Maria di Collemaggio.

Currently the festivities take place throughout the week preceding the opening of the Holy Door and on 12 December 2019 the Celestine Pardon was officially registered in the "**Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**".

