

PRIORI CHAPEL

PERUGIA

Considering the dramatic loss of the documented decorative cycles of the first half of the 15th century in Perugia, the Priori Chapel frescoes are a rare and significant example of Umbrian Art in Early Renaissance.

In the chapel, the most representative room of the Town Hall, the Priori set an iconographic program aimed to celebrate the economic, cultural, religious and moral values of 15th century Perugian society.

Between 1454 and 1480 the painter Benedetto Bonfigli realized the cycle with the *Lives of St. Herculanus and St. Louis of Toulouse* dedicated to two of the Patron Saints of Perugia.

The decoration starts from the right corner of the western wall with the *Stories of St. Louis*, and follows a clockwise order: the scenes depicted are the *Profession of the Franciscan Rule and the Dressing before Pope Boniface VIII*; the *Miracle of the Merchant Who Finds his Purse Lost in a Wreckage*; the *Miracle of the Healing of John, Son of Philip VI of France*; *Saint Louis Funeral Ceremony*.

The *Life of Saint Herculanus* episodes start with his martyrdom, on the right side of the eastern wall—*Saint Herculanus Betrayed by a Cleric*, and *Totila's Siege of Perugia*—where, at the same time, also the *Miracle of the Recovery of the Saint's Uncorrupted Body* is narrated.

On the western wall, is the *First Translation of Saint Herculanus's Body to St Peter's Church* and, on the southern wall, is the most damaged scene of the fresco cycle, the *Second Translation of Saint Herculanus's Body to the Cathedral of St. Laurence*.

Even if Herculanus' stories were set in the 6th century, here a topographically exact portrait of 15th century Perugia is depicted with a celebrative aim. These frescoes in fact represent an extraordinary occasion to glorify not only the moral and civic values associated with the Saint, but also the architectural richness of the town and the magnificent works of art commissioned by the Communal Government.

Exhibition display panel "Il ritorno della Pala dei Decemviri di Pietro Perugino"