



St Nicholas News

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December 5

Communications to the Saint Nicholas' Friends

From Fr. Gerardo Cioffari, o.p. director of the
CENTRO STUDI NICOLAIANI
Bari (Italy)

ST NICHOLAS MUSEUM IN BARI OPENS AGAIN

After a month (November) of restructuration the first of December the Museum of St Nicholas opens again, completely renewed. The initiative has been taken by the Director, Fr. Alessio Romano, who with these works intended to reach two results: the first one was to render the walls impermeable to damp and humidity (the building is at 40 yards from the sea); the second was to enrich the exhibition by merging in it the entire treasure hall located in the Basilica (exception made for the reliquaries actually containing relics).

Art, historical and religious pieces are now 170, that is the double of the previous number. The previous Treasure Hall, with the relics in it, shall become a Chapel of the Basilica, in which catholic priests may celebrate in special occasions, as for example when Orthodox pilgrims are too numerous.

St Nicholas Museum exhibits pieces that permit to see through the centuries the history of the City of Bari as well as its European projection.

In the first Hall (The teaching Angel) the visitor can look up to the ancient architectural finds belonging to the palace of the Byzantine governor (Catepan) of Southern Italy. Of particular importance the Greek Inscription of the year 1013, testifying the strengthening of this Catepan residence in Bari after the rebellion of **Melo**. Here are also the most ancient parchment of St Nicholas Archives (year 939), the parchment of the Norman king of Sicily **William the Good** (1182), and the precious parchment with the names of the **62 sailors** who stole the relics of St Nicholas in 1087, together with their decision about the percentage they had to receive from the Church during the Feast of the Translation (9th of May).

The second Hall (King Roger's II) shows still ancient architectural pieces, but slowly shifts from Norman to late Middle Age periods, arriving in some cases to the modern period. Here are the parchments of **Bohemond** (the conqueror of Antioch during the first Crusade), the parchment and iron crown of **Roger II**, the parchment of **Frederic II** (the famous German Emperor lover of Southern Italy), the parchment of **Charles II of Anjou** (the greatest benefactor of the Basilica of S. Nicolas), the parchment of **Stephen Dušan** (the Zar of Serbia who in 1346 destined to the Basilica the tributes he had to receive from the city of Dubrovnik).

From the artistic point of view, among numerous pieces is possible to admire the table of the **Virgin in throne with the Child** (XIII century) and the marvelous reliquary shaped like a little gothic church, gift of **Elisabeth, Queen of Hungary** (1344)

The third Hall (Devil in the Forest) is dedicated to sacred vestments, starting with the XVI century. Besides many other artistic items, here the visitor can see ancient chalices, painted bottles of manna or Myron, Russian lamps and icons left by pilgrims.

Coming soon:

What we know about St Nicholas as historically certain (IV-VI century), what we know from tradition (VIII-IX century) and what are later legends.

Best wishes from Bari for the next feast of St Nicholas (6th of December) to everybody who venerate or love our Saint.