



Images and stories of saints in the regional territory and in its museums

Amelia, Chiesa del Crocifisso

Painter of Roman culture of the mid-18th century

Charity of Saint Homobonus
Oil on canvas; 210 x 159 cm

The canvas was painted for the first altar on the left in the church known as the Chiesa del Crocifisso (erroneously referred to as an oratory). Dedicated to Saint Nicholas until the close of the 17th century, the building, which was certainly already in existence in the 13th century, acquired its new name after an ancient and much venerated wooden crucifix (now in the church of Santa Lucia) was placed on its high altar. On 25 February 1664 Monsignor Vignati, vicar of the bishop Gaudenzio Poli (1643-1679), blessed the church, which, on account of the precarious state into which it was falling, had been restored by the Confraternita della Frusta. The latter was superseded by the Confraternita del Crocifisso, whose members belonged to various artisan sectors. The presence of the Porta di San Nicolò in the vicinity of the church, and presumably standing on a carriage road, must have guaranteed this part of the town centre an importance and liveliness until the end of the 17th century that have now been lost.

The 17th-century restoration was followed by the construction of the wooden altars, in which the same guilds took part. In 1747 the brotherhood of tailors made provision for the realisation of the altar for which the painting of Saint Homobonus, patron of merchants, was intended, who did in fact become particularly popular among tailors.

The saint of Cremona (1150-1197), a craftsman and cloth merchant, distinguished himself for his charitable work with the poor, for whom he set aside his own earnings, and also for his efforts to pacify his town. He was the first non-noble lay saint, canonised by Innocent III in 1199. His mortal remains are preserved

in the crypt of Cremona cathedral, the town of which he was proclaimed patron saint in the 14th century; his cult, however, did not become widespread.

The welfare work undertaken by Homobonus is clearly illustrated by the scene in the painting in which the saint is depicted in the act of giving clothes to the needy who have gathered before him. The altarpiece preserves a vivid recollection of a "professional" group organised into a brotherhood, which in the mid-18th century still had a precise social role to play.

The type of saint represented and the pictorial style closely recall the work of an artist who was highly active in Umbria, Francesco Mancini (Sant'Angelo in Vado/PS 1679 - Rome 1758), whose cultural background, of marked Roman stamp, is filtered through Bolognese classicism.