

***Assisi: a guided tour for the participants of the Perugia EMC2024***



*Via Santa Maria delle Rose overlooking Cattedrale di San Rufino di Assisi (Cathedral of San Rufino)*  
(Photo: Harri Kettunen)

## **Assisi tour**

Friday, October 11th, 2024 @ 1pm-6pm

Your tour guides: John Chuchiak & Harri Kettunen

During the EMC in Perugia, we will have an opportunity to visit the nearby Assisi. The tour takes place after the workshops end on Friday, October 11<sup>th</sup>. We depart Perugia for Assisi at 1pm, visit key places related to the life and times of St. Francis, explore the town, and return to Perugia before dinner time.

### **The Importance of the Franciscan Order for the Spiritual Conquest and Conversion of the Mesoamerican Peoples**

The Franciscan Order, founded by Saint Francis of Assisi in the early 13th century, played a pivotal role in the spiritual conquest and conversion of the Mesoamerican peoples in Mexico and Central America during the 16th and 17th centuries. The Franciscans, with their emphasis on humility, simplicity, and direct engagement with local communities, approached their mission initially with a deep respect for indigenous cultures. Arriving in the New World soon after the Spanish conquest, the Franciscans were among the first missionaries to venture into the heart of Mesoamerica.

Franciscan friars established missions across Mexico and Central America, which became centers of religious, cultural, and educational exchange. They built impressive churches and convents, some of which are still standing today as testaments to their architectural and spiritual legacy. Moreover, they developed unique methods for evangelization, including the use of native languages and the creation of catechetical texts that blended indigenous and Christian traditions.

Their impact extended beyond religious conversion. The Franciscans contributed significantly to the preservation and documentation of indigenous cultures, languages, and traditions. Their efforts were instrumental in shaping the cultural and spiritual landscape of the region, leaving a legacy that continues to be studied and appreciated today.

### **Introduction for our Tour of the Sites of the Life of Saint Francis in Assisi, Italy**

Welcome to Assisi, the enchanting town nestled in the rolling hills of Umbria, Italy, where the life of Saint Francis—one of Christianity's most revered figures—unfolded. On this tour, we will explore the rich tapestry of St. Francis's life and mission, which left an indelible mark on spiritual history and mission work around the world.



Saint Francis of Assisi, born *Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone* in 1181 or 1182, renounced a life of wealth and privilege to embrace a path of poverty, humility, and deep connection with the natural world. His radical commitment to living out the teachings of Christ, characterized by a profound love for all creation and a dedication to serving the poor and marginalized, inspired a movement that would change the course of Christian history.

As we tour Assisi, you will visit key sites that tell the story of his extraordinary life and mission. We'll start at the Basilica of Saint Francis, a majestic structure adorned with frescoes that vividly depict his life and spiritual journey. From there, we'll proceed to the Porziuncola, the small chapel where Francis and his early followers gathered, and where he received the divine commission to rebuild the Church.

Join us on this pilgrimage through Assisi, where Saint Francis and the origins of the Franciscan missions of Mesoamerica all began.



*Basilica di San Francesco d'Assisi* (Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi); Photo: Harri Kettunen



We will visit at least the following places:

- Basilica of San Francesco d'Assisi: UNESCO World Heritage Site, completed in 1253, includes a crypt, where the remains of St. Francis are interred. We will see frescoes by artists such as Cimabue and Giotto and other renowned artists depicting the life of Saint Francis.
- Basilica of Santa Chiara: Walk to the Basilica of Saint Clare, a close friend and a follower of Francis of Assisi and founder of the Order of Poor Ladies (known today as the Order of Saint Clare).
- On the way back to Perugia, we'll have a quick visit to Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels (Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli), which houses the Porziuncola, the small chapel where Saint Francis founded the Franciscan Order.
- [POSSIBLE SIDE TRIP, TIME ALLOWING] Rocca Maggiore: Possible visit to the medieval fortress of Rocca Maggiore. Though not directly related to Saint Francis, it offers panoramic views of Assisi and the surrounding countryside, providing context for the area during Francis's time.

Besides these, we'll give you some free time to explore the town on your own.

Looking forward to seeing you in Assisi!

- John & Harri

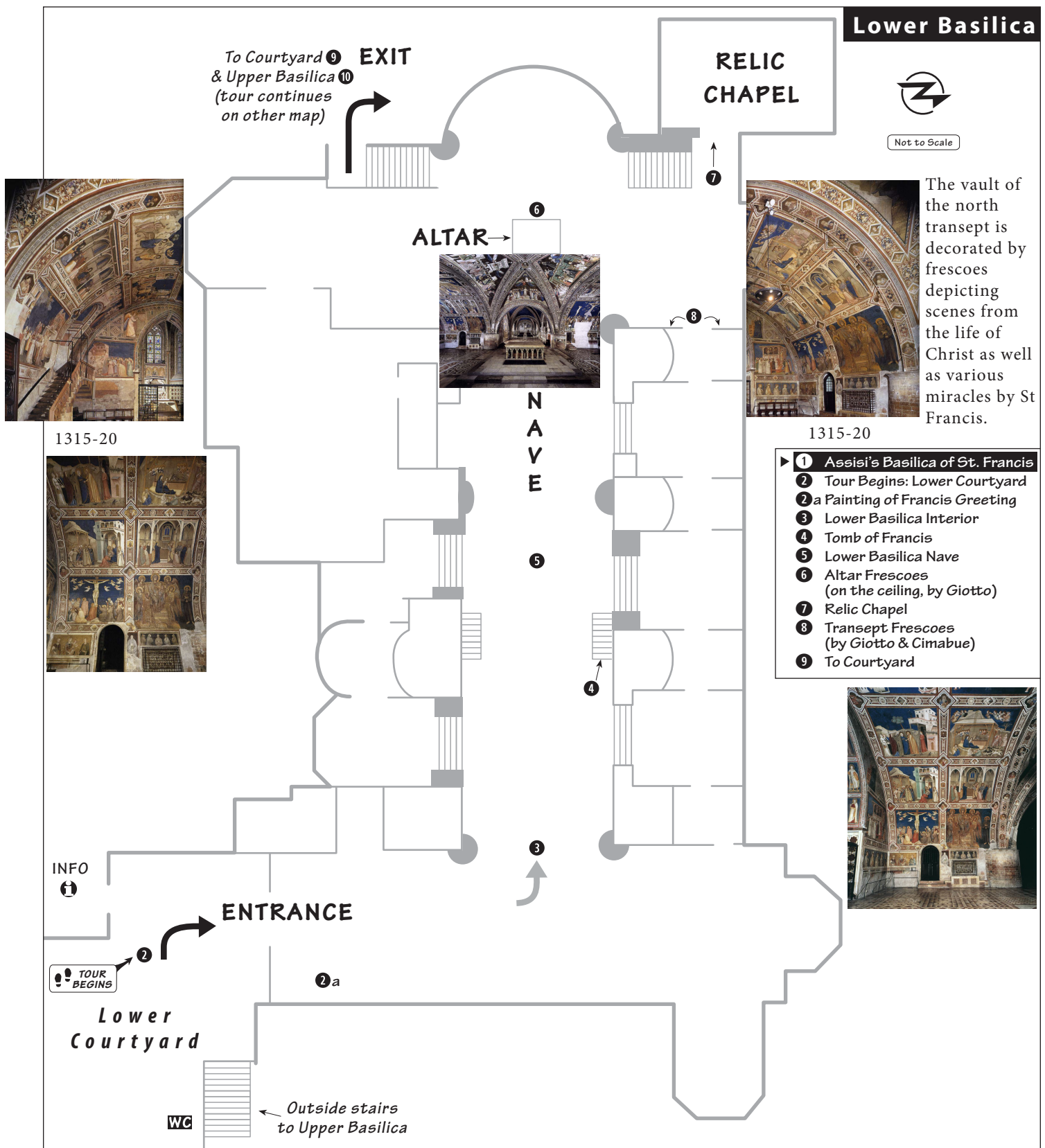


*Via Capobove & Via Santa Croce, Assisi; Photo: Harri Kettunen*

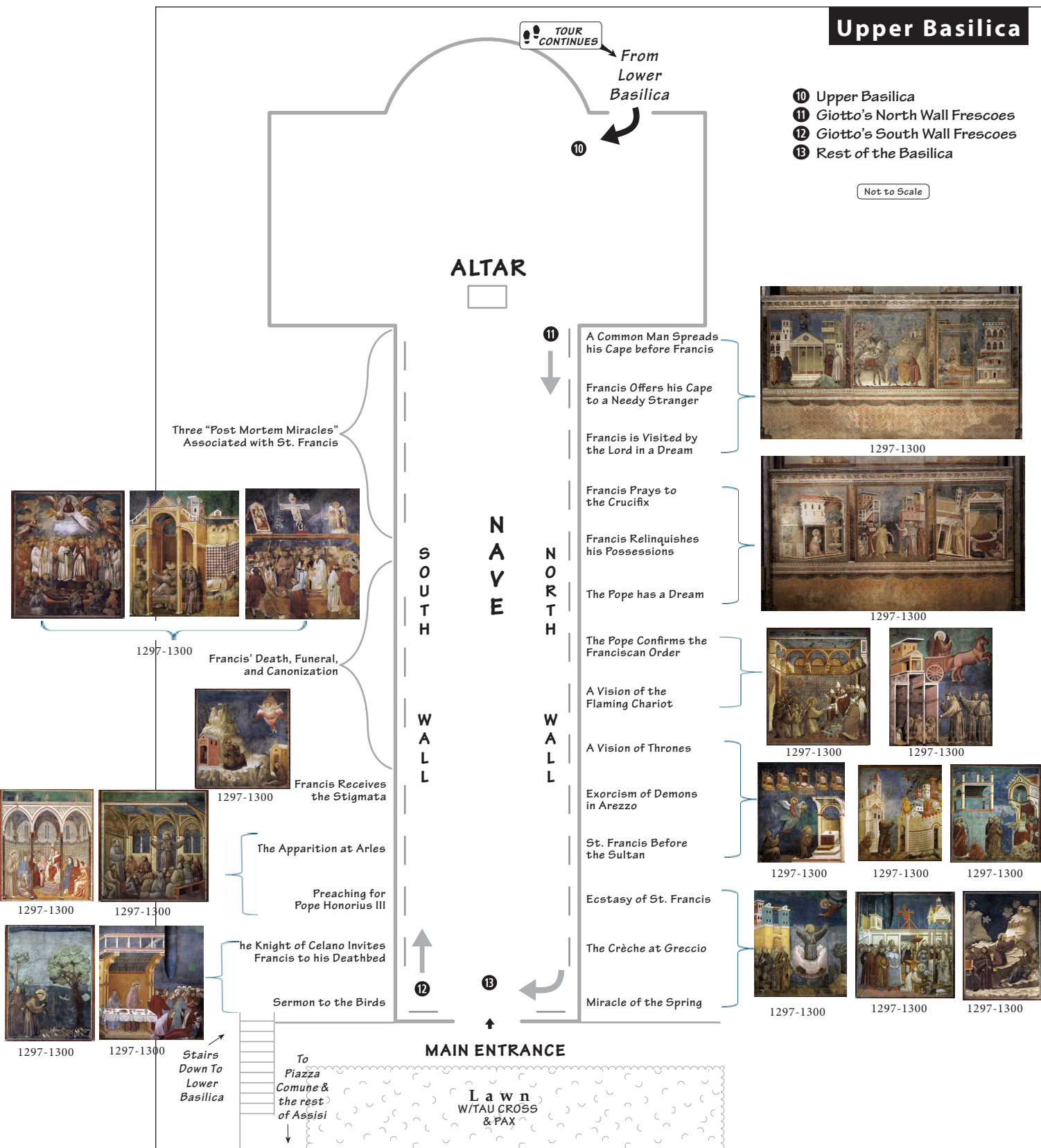


# ITALY: ASSISI

## Basilica of St. Francis



# Basilica of St. Francis





# THE LOWER CHURCH



This panoramic view of the frescoes of the decoration of the Lower Church of San Francesco at Assisi was taken from the apse area looking back toward the nave.

To either side we see two panoramic scenes of the **Crucifixion**: the one on the left by the school of Giotto, the one on the right by Pietro Lorenzetti.

Cimabue's fresco of the *Madonna Enthroned with the Child, St Francis and Four Angels* is seen to the left of the nave.

This was later surrounded by the frescoes of the school of Giotto.

The frescoes in the cross vault over the high altar represent allegories of the Franciscan virtues, and St Francis in Glory; these are by the school (or a follower) of Giotto.



# LOWER CHURCH

## Frescoes in the Crossing Vault of the Lower Church



In the four compartments of the **crossing vault** the three Franciscan virtues — *Poverty, Obedience and Chastity* — are pictured and explained by inscriptions on the arches of the wall. Since the work and the writings of St Bonaventure, Francis has been conceived as the "angel of the sixth seal".

For this reason, these pictures are bound within a framework whose figurative elements allude to the **Apocalypse** and whose central motif is the *apocalyptic Christ* on the keystone of the vault.

The contents of the vault cells are the following: **The Apotheosis of St Francis** (west cell, at the bottom of this reproduction), **Allegory of Poverty** (east cell, top), **Allegory of Obedience** (south cell, at left), **Allegory of Chastity** (north cell, at right).

*Franciscan Allegories c. 1320*  
*Lower Church, San Francesco, Assisi*



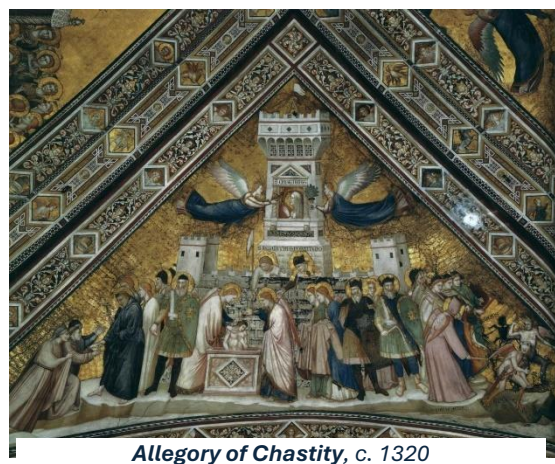
*The Apotheosis of St Francis, c. 1320*



*Allegory of Poverty, c. 1320*



*Allegory of Obedience, c. 1320*



*Allegory of Chastity, c. 1320*





***Allegory of Poverty, c. 1320***



**Poverty**, the bride of St Francis, stands dressed in rags amongst withered thorns.

This, however, is only how she appears in the eyes of the world, for behind her, in the heavenly regions, the most beautiful roses blossom from the undergrowth.

**Christ** leads Poverty, who appears here beside him as his own companion, towards the saint to be wed.

Before Giotto's invention, this kind of representation, which unites numerous symbolic details with a lively narrative to create an allegory was only known in literary works.

The **rich man** does not wish to know of the angels' demands that they follow St Francis.

They cling to their sacks of money, and the elegant falconer mocks the heavenly messenger with an obscene gesture.

Such narrative liveliness in art is new with respect to allegorical representations.







***Allegory of Obedience, c. 1320***



Two young men, a monk of the order and a layman, will follow in the footsteps of the saint.

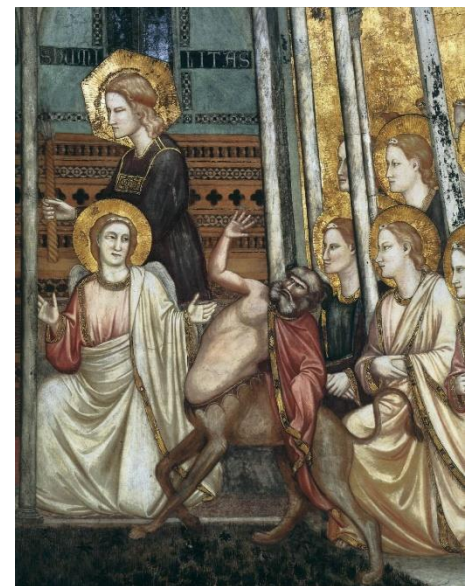
An angel has already taken one of them by hand.

Interestingly, however, it seems to be **Prudence** who presides over the image: with her dual face she sees both past and future.

She holds out a mirror, as a symbol of knowledge, towards the kneeling monk, whom the young men are following.

Her astrolabe stands for her ability to navigate all in the world.

The embodiment of **Presumptuousness**, the horned centaur, is denied entrance onto the scene







***Allegory of Chastity, c. 1320***



The scene of the action for the representation of the third Franciscan virtue is a convent environment.

The tower in which **Chastity** lives is at the center.

Extremely vivid and bizarre figures of demons are being cast into the abyss.

They are **Unchasteness** (*Immunditia*) with the boar's head, **Burning Desire** (*Ardor*) with the flaming head, and **Love** (*Amor*) with the clawed feet and the hearts tied around him.

The round is completed by the spider-legged, devilish **Death** (*Mors*).





The four fields in the crossing vault of the lower church are framed by broad, heavily ornamented borders with diamond-shaped, small format picture fields, all filled with motifs from the **Apocalypse**.

The focus of this subsidiary pictorial program, which was probably inspired by Bonaventura's interpretation of St Francis as the **angel of the sixth seal**, is the Apocalyptic Christ in the capstone of the crossing vault, from whose mouth two swords emerge.

His head, with sweeping white hair, bears a crown. In his right hand he holds the **book of divine wisdom** with seven seals and in his right hand he is raising a double-bit key.

Above Christ, the **Lamb of God** (at left), and the **Arc of the Covenant** (at right) are depicted.



## **Apocalyptic Christ**

The four fields in the crossing vault of the lower church are framed by broad, heavily ornamented borders with diamond-shaped, small format picture fields, all filled with motifs from the **Apocalypse**, including the **four horsemen of the Apocalypse**.





# MAP OF ASSISI

