FRIENDS of FLORENCE

For immediate release
July 15, 2026

FRIENDS OF FLORENCE COMPLETES RESTORATION OF *MADONNA DELLA PURA* IN THE BASILICA OF SANTA MARIA NOVELLA

Madonna della Pura, 14th century. Basilica of Santa Maria Novella. After restoration.

Florence, Italy... Friends of Florence Foundation has completed the restoration of the early 14th century fresco known as the *Madonna della Pura* now on public view again in the chapel of the same name in the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella. The project was led by Andrea Vigna of Habilis Srl, working in conjunction with Paola Viviani and Stefania Franceschini under the supervision of the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per la città metropolitana di Firenze e le province di Pistoia e Prato, thanks to the generous support of Friends of Florence.

The Medieval work is closely associated with the spread of the veneration of the Virgin Mary promoted by the Dominican order. At the turn of the 14th century, the image depicting Mary, the Christ Child, and St. Catherine of Alexandria alongside the patron who commissioned the work was installed on the back wall of the Della Luna family

tomb in the cemetery adjacent to the Basilica. Popular devotion grew when a reputed miracle occurred when children playing near the tomb said they witnessed an apparition of the Virgin, asking them to dust the image.

A first altar was built in front of the image less than a year after the alleged miracle. Subsequently, the so-called “children of purity” became the object of such intense devotion that the Dominican friars were prompted to allow the Ricasoli family to erect a chapel in 1476 to house the fresco to display it in its best light.

Madonna della Pura, 14th century. Basilica of Santa Maria Novella.
Before restoration.

Madonna della Pura, 14th century. Basilica of Santa Maria Novella. Details after restoration.

The restoration project set out primarily to recover the fresco's legibility and to improve its condition, using restoration and cleaning techniques respectful of its original material and its conservation history. Removal of 20th century repainting restored greater balance to the figures' flesh tones and made it possible once again to appreciate certain painted details and color hues dimmed by surface deposits and previous restoration efforts. The process provided a better understanding of both the image and the unknown artist's technique while enhancing its historical significance and devotional function.

"We are particularly happy to have supported the restoration of the *Madonna della Pura*, an image deeply rooted both in the devotional history of Santa Maria Novella and in the memory of the city of Florence,"said Simonetta Brandolini d'Adda, President of the Friends of Florence. "This restoration has made it possible to rediscover the beauty and legibility of a fresco that has accompanied the spirituality of generations of the faithful and visitors for many centuries. We are grateful to the Soprintendenza for its supervision, to the Dominican friars for their amenability, and to the restorers who have made this important conservation project possible. Our most heartfelt thanks go to the donors, William and Jeanne Bice, for their support and their enthusiastic interest in the art of Florence."

About Friends of Florence

Friends of Florence is a non-profit foundation supported by individuals from around the world who are dedicated to preserving and enhancing the rich cultural heritage of Florence and Tuscany and conserving irreplaceable artistic and cultural treasures. Friends of Florence identifies significant projects spanning centuries in need of restoration, secures funding, and works in collaboration with local authorities to complete projects.

Since its founding in 1998, the Foundation has raised and donated $12 million for conservation projects in the region. Friends of Florence works directly with Florence's famed conservation laboratories to ensure restoration is done at the highest level, has the approval of the City of Florence and the Italian Ministry of Art, and is completed on time and on budget.

Through its work, Friends of Florence creates opportunities for the study and appreciation of paintings, sculptures, architectural elements, places of worship, and collections at the Uffizi Gallery, the Accademia, the Baptistry, the Piazza della Signoria, the Museum of San Marco, and dozens of other museums, churches, and public sites.

A model of high-impact, low-overhead philanthropy, Friends of Florence is the primary source of funding for the city's conservators, a respected partner with museums and cultural authorities in Italy and the U.S., and a publisher/producer of publications, multimedia offerings, seminars, lectures, and cultural travel opportunities. For more information, visit its newly designed website at www.friendsofflorence.org.

* * *

Media contact:

Friends of Florence
ITALY
Elisa Bonini, cell. +39.333.672.9563, elisaboniniitaly@friendsofflorence.org

USA
Lisbeth Mark, Bow Bridge Communications, info@bow-bridge.com

Image Captions (top to bottom, left to right):

Madonna della Pura, 14th century. Basilica of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, Italy. Fresco painting depicting Virgin Mary and the Christ Child with St. Catherine of Alessandria and the Della Luna Family patron. After 2024-26 restoration with support from Friends of Florence. Photo by Ottaviano Caruso

Madonna della Pura, 14th century. Basilica of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, Italy. Fresco painting depicting Virgin Mary and the Christ Child with St. Catherine of Alessandria and the Della Luna Family patron. Before 2024-26 restoration with support from Friends of Florence. Photo by Ottaviano Caruso

Madonna della Pura, 14th century. Basilica of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, Italy. Fresco painting depicting Virgin Mary and the Christ Child with St. Catherine of Alessandria and the Della Luna Family patron. Detail after 2024-26 restoration with support from Friends of Florence. Photo by Ottaviano Caruso

Madonna della Pura, 14th century. Basilica of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, Italy. Fresco painting depicting Virgin Mary and the Christ Child with St. Catherine of Alessandria and the Della Luna Family patron. Detail after 2024-26 restoration with support from Friends of Florence. Photo by Ottaviano Caruso