

# S. MARCELLO

The Servites took up abode in the house attached to the parish church of S. Marcello on 26 March 1369. Since then, the priory and church have been called, in official documents, *Venerabilis ecclesia et conventus S. Marcelli de Urbe Fratrum Servorum Beatae Mariae Virginis*. The parish of S. Marcello, suppressed on 10 March 1909, was one of the oldest and most important foundations in Rome. The church of S. Marcello, destroyed by fire on the night of 22-23 May 1519, was very quickly rebuilt in the Renaissance style after a design by Jacopo Sansovino. The priory was also rebuilt from its foundations; work started in 1616 and completed a few



decades later. It belonged to the Roman Province of the Order until 1935, when it passed into the direct jurisdiction of the Prior General. It had always, however, almost uninterruptedly been the residence of the Procurator of the Order; shortly later, the Prior General and the General Curia also took up abode there. In the priory, up to the devastation sustained after the suppression in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a well-known and richly endowed library and an important school of theology, named after Henry of Ghent, the historical spiritual ancestor of St. Alexis Falconieri International

College. Since 1873, the year of the suppression carried out by the Italian government, the major part of the priory premises, with the exception of the rooms specifically designated for the use of the rector of the church, is in the ownership of the Italian State Property Office, and the Order has to pay an a mutually agreed and acceptable rent.

S. Marcello is the residence of the General Curia, the Procurator of the Order, the Secretariat of the Order and the Servite Communications Centre; it also houses the section of the Historical Archive of the Order concerning the more recent past, the Office of the Postulator of Causes of the Servite Saints and Blessed and that of the General Treasurer, besides other departments.



The following publications are issued from this address: the *Acta Ordinis Servorum Beatae Mariae Virginis* and the news magazine *COSMO*, which is published in four languages.

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# ST. ALEXIS FALCONIERI FORMATION COMMUNITY



St. Alexis Falconieri International College was founded on 4 November 1895, as the successor to the “Henry of Ghent International College”, suppressed some years previously and which had been operating in S. Marcello Priory in Rome from 1669 to 1870. From its foundation until 1928, St. Alexis College was housed in premises rented from the Armenian College of St. Nicholas of Tolentino in Rome. Since 1928, it has had its own purpose-built premises in Viale Trenta Aprile 6, on the Janiculum Hill in Rome, inaugurated on 17 April 1929.

The first Rector of the newly founded International College was Fra Alessio M. Lépicier, who remained in office until 1920. Its internal School of Theology was re-opened in 1932/1933; in 1953, this was transformed into a Faculty of Theology, and this in turn received definitive approval in 1955 as the “Marianum” and, in 1971, was recognised as a Pontifical Faculty of Theology. Up until 1974, there was a single community at St. Alexis College, composed of both teachers and Servite students; in that year, the teaching staff were made into a juridically independent community: the Marianum Community of Study. The International College thus houses the two communities and the Marianum Pontifical Faculty with its Library, and also the Historical Section of the Servite General Archives and the Servite Historical Institute. From here are issued the *Marianum* academic journal and the *Studi Storici dell’Ordine dei Servi di Maria*. Here too, is to be found the *Centro Edizioni Marianum*.



St. Alexis Falconieri Formation Community consists of students from every part of the Order who come to Rome to study Philosophy and Theology at the Marianum Faculty and other institutes.

The General Chapter, considering its responsibility towards the new generations of friars and aware of the value of St. Alexis International Formation Community in Rome, with over a century of life behind it and closely connected to the Marianum Faculty since 1950, reaffirmed its pre-eminence and importance for the formation of young friars and the furtherance of their awareness of their Servite identity. Because of its international character and its location in a city particularly rich in educational and religious experiences, friars coming from diverse jurisdictions make contact with their brothers and with institutes of different cultures, and form bonds of friendship that endure over time and prove to be of reciprocal benefit (cf. *2001 Gen. Chap.*, no. 36).  
Collegio Internazionale Sant’Alessio Falconieri.

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# THE "MARIANUM" COMMUNITY OF STUDY



*Notizie/News.*

The Marianum Community of Study was established on 3 May 1974, on the precise instructions of the 1971 General Chapter. The prime characteristic of the Community of Study is to bring together the Servite friars who are at the full-time service of the Faculty as teachers and administrators of the same.

The Community of Study is a General house and, as such, its members are directly under the prior General. It brings together the Servite professors who teach at the Marianum Faculty. It also publishes the periodical *Marianum*

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# MONTE SENARIO



**Cradle of the Order of the Servants of Mary**

## **Sacred Convent of Monte Senario**

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### **History**

All started in the city of Florence in the twelfth century that was a period of great religious ferment. An ancient document called "Legenda de Origin ordini" narrates us many important things.

### **They were Seven**

"Our Lady wanted to give origin to her Order with seven men to show to everybody, with absolute clarity, that she wanted to adorn her Order, endowing it with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit" (cf. L.O.15).

"These same seven men founded the community of Monte Senario. After a few centuries, people called these holy men "Our Lady chose to begin with a group of seven. they were: Bonfiglio, Amadio, Buonagiunta, Manetto, Sostegno, Uguccione and Alessio. It was to convince everyone that she wished her Order endowed in a special way with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It was to make clear that down through the ages she would keep it alive, as one generation followed another each with a number of men rich in these seven gifts of the spirit. Some of them decided to observe virginity or chastity for life and so remained unmarried; others were already were already married and the rest were widowers." (cf. L.O. 16).

### **The Seven Holy Fathers at Mount Senario**

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1241, Giuliano from Bivigliano, who belonged to the family of the Ubaldinis, donated the third part of a certain forest situated on the Mount Asinario in order "to save his soul".

### **The name of the Mountain**

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, this mountain was called in various ways. "This mountain was called Sonario. This name comes from the sonorous effect of the wind through some of its caves. At first it was called Monte Sonaio, although the word was soon corrupted by many of the local people into Asinario. It was this mountain that God inspired our fathers to seek" (L.O. 41). Around 1245, the Seven first Fathers went up the mountain in order to get away from the political struggles and other distractions of secular life, under the guidance of Bishop Ardingo († 1247).



## **A delightful level area on the top of the hill surrounded by a grove of trees**

By the grace of God, the Seven holy Fathers found Mount Senario with the help of bishop Ardingo. "This mountain is higher than the others around it and so even from far off they saw it as the mountain intended for them by God. When they went up to inspect it, they found at the top a delightful though small level area, a spring of very fine water off to one side and a surrounding grove of trees so well-arranged that it might have been planted by hand (L.O. 41).

This description points out an ecological sensibility. In fact, the Seven fathers and their successors in the history, had a great love for the nature.

"They went up the mountain and at the top immediately constructed a small house suitable to live in. Abandoning the house they had previously had in Florence, they moved up to the mountain to live there together."(L.O. 41).

## **The mountain of virtues**

Such place was worthwhile to the Seven Fathers:

"It was very appropriate, this Monte Soanio, as God's choice of dwelling place for our first fathers. The place itself matched their spiritual ascent and the name the sound they effected. First, the place was a reflection of their own spiritual ascent. In the beginning they had been in the valley of tears; there they were cleansed through contrition, made clean and fit for the ascent. In this valley they prepared their hearts to move up higher. After their conversion, they came up to the plain of good morals, where the anointing of the Holy Spirit taught them everything they needed to know. They became men of meekness and walked this plain, this house of God, in integrity of heart. They then came to reside in the hills of virtue, where they ate and were refreshed by all kinds of spiritual food. Filled in this way with heavenly gifts, they could say, "Though an army encamp against me, my heart will not fear" [Psalm 26(27).3]. And now, finally, it was fitting that they ascend the mountain to stand watch in contemplation. There they would be enlightened, filled with the spirit of wisdom and understanding and surrounded by the sweet odor of heaven's joy."(L.O. 42).



As nobody had ever lived in the thick forest around the mountain, they faced many difficulties in climbing up the mountain. Climbing up the mountain, even though they were carrying with them the burden of their own weaknesses and the memories of their past life, they trusted in the Lord, remembering the word of God: "Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light" (Mt. 11:28-30). Having abandoned everything, offering themselves to do the will of God, they enjoyed the fruits of God's gifts. And thus Monte Senario was indeed a mountain of virtues.

## **From the mountain in the cities...**

After a certain period, they felt that Monte Senario was not large enough to accept the new comers who wanted to live with them. So they were constrained to acquire other places as residences suitable for their penitential way of life.

"Our fathers were undoubtedly of the opinion that, out of reverence for God who had prepared it for them in the first place, Monte Senario should never be abandoned, either by themselves or by the friars who were to come later to our Order. Yet at the same time they could see that the place would never be large enough for themselves and the friars they had already accepted into the community; not to speak of the others they intended to take in later. Thus they were constrained to acquire other places as residences for themselves and the brothers present and future. This also entailed that they had to take up apostolic ministry" (L.O. 49)

In the year 1250, they went down again from Monte Senario to the city of Florence. There they became poor for the sake of Christ and they were not ashamed to stretch out their hands to ask for alms. Jesus said,



"I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns too. Because that is what I was sent to do" (Lk. 4: 43). So, they started to disperse themselves in the province of Tuscany (Siena, Città di Castello, Borgo San Sepolchro, etc.), founding later on new convents all over Italy, preaching the Gospel not only by words but also by their way of life. They announced the Word of God by living out fraternity, service and special devotion to our Lady.

### **The rests of seven holy fathers**

The rests of the seven fathers, collected again on the Monte Senario. In the year 1600 during the renovation of the Church, some documents to support the evidences of the presence of the

seven fathers were found. The rests of the seven fathers were put in an urn of gilded bronze and they are still preserved in Monte Senario.

### **Stories of the Senario**

From time to time, wars, earthquakes and epidemics endangered the life of Monte Senario but the loving providence of God has saved our friars so that they could continue their life in this sacred place. The friars who were already in good number were almost always engaged themselves in prayer and work. Thus the life-style of the friars continued in the following centuries. In the sixteenth century, wars and natural calamities severely struck the life over there. But in the year 1593, with the help of the Physicians, the religious life blossomed again with such vigor that the Senario became once more a symbol of spiritual resumption for the whole Order. The fame of the holiness of the friars spread in various places (as in Austria). And they opened new priories. It is said that the Pope, asked by Granduca in Tuscany, sent St. Giovanni Leonardi († 1609) to Monte Senario as a visitor and after visiting the St. Giovanni Leonardi reported to the Pope that Monte Senario was a place of holiness the friars living there were great example for the whole Church. The church of Mountain Senario damaged by natural disasters underwent many restorations. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of September 1621 the church was dedicated to the Virgin Mary of Assumption; On the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 1717 the Church was consecrated and devoted to Phillip Benizi and to the Virgin Mary of sorrows. By now the Church of Monte Senario had reached the actual dimensions of today. In the period of the Napoleon, the priory was suppressed (1808); Valuable arts and precious books were removed. In the year 1866 the suppression of the religious Orders by the Italian Government again paralyzed the life of the priory. Monte Senario began to recover its normal life in 1870. A few after this rebirth, the seven first fathers were proclaimed saints in 1888. From then on the Priory at Monte Senario began to flourish again with a new life. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of 1918 the Pope Benedict XV announced the church of Monte Senario as a Minor Basilica.

### **A "Spirituality Center" for the Servite Family**

The recent developments of the history, the new road of access opened in 1964, the necessary return to the original Charism of the Order as recommended in the documents of post-conciliar revision of the Constitutions (1965-1987), the various anniversaries, 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Order (1233-1983), and the first centennial of the canonization of the seven first fathers (1888-1988), have increased a special interest towards Monte Senario, not only among the friars, but also among the secular servites, the friends and various members of the servite family present in five continents.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1989, Fr. Pietro M. Papini, then prior provincial of the Province of Tuscany, requested the General Chapter(1989) to make it one among the priories that are under the jurisdiction of Prior General and also to make it international so that its role as a spirituality center may be paid more attention. The general Chapter of 1989 accepted this request and reaffirmed that Monte Senario as the cradle of the Order is a privileged place that enriches the spiritual life of the whole Order.

For the Servants of Mary, Monte Senario remains even today a center of monastic life where the friars strive to witness the evangelical values in their life of fraternity, contemplative prayer and work

"Every friar Servant of Mary considers Monte Senario a holy place and looks on it as the birth place and spiritual home of the Order. The basilica, containing the memory of the origins of the Order and the bodies of the Seven Founders, demonstrates to all Servites what kind of life their should be; austere and penitent, illustrious and prayerful, hospitable and fraternal, hidden in God and solicitous of the needs of others. The basilica of Monte Senario and all the churches dedicated to Saint Mary in the Order, remind Servites, by symbols and images, of a number of things: first of all, that they dedicated to serve the Mother of Christ and that their life and apostolic activity are placed under the patronage of our Lady; that all servite churches should witness to the devotion of the Church and the Order toward the Mother of God; finally, that Servites should make of themselves a holy temple of God just as the Virgin Mary, in accepting the Word of the Lord in her immaculate heart and virginal womb, was made the exalted dwelling place of God." (Liturgy of the Hours OSM, Dedication of the Basilica of Monte Senario, Office of the Readings, second letter).

