

## HOUSE OF BERNARDO DA QUINTAVALLE

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(In Assisi, guided visit on request)

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**"...the venerable Bernardo took off his shoes and followed such great peace..., (Dante, Purg. 11) Bernardo da Quintavalle** or Bernardo d'Ascesi was the first, or probably the second companion of Saint Francis.

He lived not far from the shop of Pietro Bernardone, St. Francis's father, who was a cloth-dealer, so that the two youngmen knew each other.

Bernardo approached Francis two years after his conversion, about 1208, when "...still wearing secular clothes **"...he was considered foolish and people derided him and threw stones at him like at a madman..."** (Fioretti).



Bernardo was a nobleman from Assisi, charmed by the behaviour of Francesco, and for this reason, according to the Fioretti **"...He invited him to dinner and gave him hospitality for the night; and St. Francis accepted, had supper and went to bed..."**

Place where they met and St Francis spent the night was then transformed into Oratory inside the house of the Sbaraglini family.

During the night Bernardo wanted to try if the saintliness of Francis was true and he pretended to be asleep and noticed **Francis had raised himself and had stayed the whole night "... in prayer, raising his eyes and hands to heaven till the morningbell..."**.

The day after Bernardo asked Francis what he had to do **"to renounce the world and follow you and do what you order me..."**, Francis answered he didn't know and they had to ask the Lord. They went to the nearby church of Saint Nicolò (now the Roman Forum) where, according to the ritual of the "Sortes Apostolorum," opened the missal at random for three times obtaining the answer, which was then chosen as the foundation of



the Rule:"...go and sell all that you have and offer it to the poor men... don't take anything with you ... those who come with me will renounce themselves..."

The event marks the beginning of the franciscan friary:

Following Bernardo's example other young people joined Francesco and they were twelve when Innocenzo III approved the First Rule (1209) and then they reached the number of 10.000 when S.Francis died (1226).

Bernardo was one of the most highly esteemed companions; according to the Fioretti, Francis preferred him to Elia as a successor at the head of the Order.

You can see the cave where Blessed Bernardo retired to pray and meditate at the Hermitage of the Carceri.

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The room and the rest of the medieval house where Bernardo and Francis met, was included in the XV century in the mansion where the Sbaraglini family moved from Porta Perlici.

The entrance to the Oratory of Blessed Bernardo da Quintavalle is placed at the end of a short staircase and on the wall above the door there is a memorial tablet in memory of the event described in the Fioretti , which was badly embedded in the XIV century wall;

Originally the Oratory devoted to the memory and cult of the Saint was painted in frescos belonging to the XIV century school.

The altar and the ornaments are late Baroque style.

In front of the staircase there is the ancient **Church of St. Gregorio**, the seat of the brotherhood of Disciplined dating back to 1179, realized with the white and pink stone from the stone quarry of mount Subasio.

Inside the church there was the banner of the same brotherhood with, the most ancient representation of Assisi painted by Nicol` da Foligno called the "Alunno", now in the Museum of Karlsruhe in Germany.

Next to the church, in Via San Gregorio, there is a medieval building with a portal marked by an emblem, which is considered **the warehouse of Pietro Bernardone**, the father of St. Francis.



The surname **Sbaraglini** comes from a game played with two dice named "sbaraglino" that is backgammon.

Since 1300 we have documentary notes of the family settled in Assisi near St. Rufino gate. On the 11 of october 1443. Sbaraglini Antonii Corazza drew up a contract with Cristofanino de Varese (a "maestro comacino" still in Umbria after the XIV century building of the town connected to the cult veneration of St.Francis) for the erection of the fortified house of Piano della Pieve which can be seen from SS444, a group of buildings of which VILLAMENA was

part.

In 1780 the patronate of the St.Gregory Church was vested in the Sbaraglini family.

The same family possesses the tomb with its coat of arms on the floor of the Chapel of St. Martino; inside the Basilica of St.Francis, dating back to 1759 with the inscriptipion: **D.O.M. Sbaraglinorum Patricia Famiglia Vetusto Anaclyptici Operis Aram Adeuntibus Offensioni Lapide A Moto Novum Hunc L.M.P. DCCLVIII.**

