

# Places of the Heart

For the past six years, Italians have been voting for the places they love. In a project entitled *I Luoghi del Cuore*, each year the Fondo Ambiente Italiano (Italian Environmental Foundation) and Banca Intesa San Paolo have allocated funding for the three most loved Italian sites. Over 1,600,000 people voted this past year. For 2014 the winners were: the Capucchine Brothers Convent at Monterosso al Mare (Liguria) with 110,341 votes, Certosa di Calci (Pisa) with 92,259 votes, and Castello di Calatubo ad Alcamo (Trapani) with 71,967 votes.

In 2010, Santa Caterina, that lovely baroque church facing Lucca's former Manifattura Tabacchi, arrived in third place with almost 30,000 votes. As a result the city was given 800,000 euros to help finance its restoration.

On a more modest level, only 1000 votes are needed to make a specific request for direct intervention. In other words, even those not at the top of the list can receive support if they have a precise plan of action, and indeed 16 were selected last year.

Already Brancoli's Pieve di San Giorgio (where monthly mass is still held) has over 800 signatures, so there is hope that they will receive some support. As we mentioned last month, this beautiful church, consecrated in 1062 by Pope Alexander II, contains a remarkable amount of extremely valuable art. Just to name some of the artists, over a 400 year period:

- Biduino (12th century Pisan sculptor known for his work on the Pisa Duomo and the baptismal font in Lucca's San Frediano)
- Guidetto (well-known sculptor; pulpit supported by carved lions dated 1194)
- Berlinghieri (his 13th century painted crucifix hangs over the central nave)
- Giuliano di Simone (painter of the fresco of the Annunciation from the 1400's)
- Andrea Della Robbia (author of the glazed terra-cotta of St. George and the Dragon, from the late 1400's).

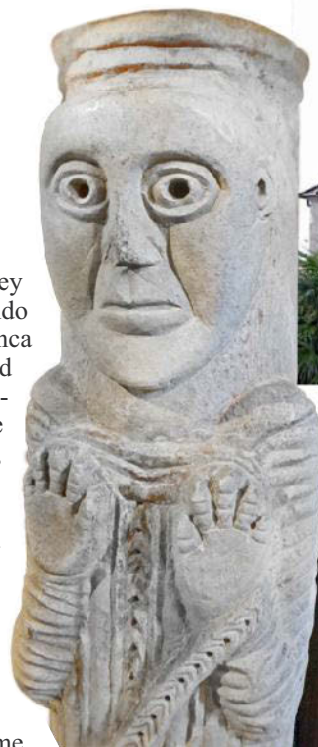
Surely even more archaic is the central pedestal supporting the altar (photo above), and the strange "Brancolino man" carved over the church's side door, an ithyphallic apotropaic figure suggestive of Egyptian mythology.

Aside from roof repairs and everyday maintenance, climate control and a security system, the church could benefit from museum status, as San Cassiano di Controne and Benabbio have done in recent years to protect their valuable wooden statues carved by Jacopo della Quercia and his father Pietro d'Agnolo.

In 2000 Pieve di S. Giorgio's precious 11th century holy water font (photo left), signed **twice** by the author Raitus or Raito, was stolen. FAI attention might help in recovering this lost treasure.

— by Norma Jean Bishop

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source: [www.medioevo.org/artemedievale/Pages/Toscana/Brancoli.html](http://www.medioevo.org/artemedievale/Pages/Toscana/Brancoli.html)



posted on the church door

To sign the FAI petition, consult the website [www.pievedibrancoli.com](http://www.pievedibrancoli.com) or phone Alessandro Carli at 328 5331903.

Or contact Grapevine; we also have a copy of the petition.



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This restaurant can accommodate individuals on gluten free diets

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