



LE
FRACCHIE



LE
FRACCHIE
di San Marco in Lamis

• ASSOCIAZIONE •

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VENERDÌ SANTO
SAN MARCO IN LAMIS



THE FRACCHIE

The cult of Our Lady of Sorrow in S.Marco in Lamis started, probably, in the seventeenth century, but it is only at the dawn of the eighteenth century that it will find full affirmation, thanks to the work of Don Costantino Iannacone; the latter owes the initiative to dedicate the ancient lazaretto of the Saints Vitus and Rocco with the connected chapel of Saint Felicissimo to Our Lady of Sorrow (1717). The new church, born at the foot of Monte di Mezzo, following the “visions” that Don Costantino had about the Virgin, it will become the fulcrum of religious and civil life of the entire Sammarinese community. At the dawn of the nineteenth century the increased Marian cult had reached all the social classes, therefore, the eighteenth-century chapel had become cramped to accommodate the faithful who flocked to the sacred functions and on 15 September 1833 a second aisle similar to the existing one was built.

Into the heart of the Gargano National Park in Foggia's province it arises San Marco in Lamis, a small town situated on the Statale 272 along the route named “Via Sacra Longobardorum” that, passing from S. Severo arrives in Monte Sant'Angelo. The town is nestled in a valley between two important convents. S. Maria di Stignano and S. Matteo, relevant from the historical, artistic and architectural point of view. Also, near the city we find the Difesa forest, the Dolina Pozzatina and the massive dinosaurs park, an area, therefore, of strong cultural-touristic-religious appeal, just a few kilometers from San Giovanni Rotondo.



Linked to the cult of the Sorrowful are the Rites of the Holy Week in particular the procession with the “fracchie” that usually happens on Good Friday. The fracchie were initially small torches that served to illuminate the path of Our Lady of Sorrows that “extra moenia” (outside the walls of the city) it reached the city center to be housed in the Collegiata church. The origin of the fracchie is very ancient and the first use in the processions of the Addolorata could be traced back to the end of the eighteenth century, while, historically, in 1824 the Bishop of Manfredonia granted to officiate Holy Thursday and then to make the procession.

Subsequently, in 1873, the Bishop of Foggia recognized only to the Arciconfraternita dei Sette Dolori the possibility of carrying out the procession of Our Lady of Sorrows with the fracchie. The most plausible hypothesis of the birth of the procession of the Madonna accompanied by fracchie is that according

to which, as the church of Our Lady of Sorrows was outside the city walls and was not illuminated, lighting was needed so that the evening procession of Holy Week could take place. The fracchie, in that period, had a practical utility in moving in the darkness of the night, being an object that is practically instrumental to enlightenment. The construction of the fracchie therefore started from the need of the people of San Marco to illuminate the night, using and adapting plants that they had available. The fracchia was used until the beginning of the twentieth century when the first public street lamps were installed in the village.

A fundamental date is 1925, when a wealthy owner of San Marco, donna Michelina Gravina, had a majestic fracchia built as a sign of great devotion by her boys, which by its size could not be carried by hand and was then mounted on wagon wheels. There were protests from the brotherhoods, but the municipal authority authorized to carry the fracchia during the procession. From that year fracchie on wheels began to be built. The procession of Our Lady of Sorrows with the fracchie was postponed, to avoid an overlapping of events, on Good Friday evening, when the Mass recalling the Last Supper was moved to the late afternoon of Holy Thursday in 1954. From the early 60s the fracchie began to assume gigantic dimensions, resulting in competitions of pride and skills. The biggest fracchie were usually those of the wood, coal and lime entrepreneurs, which reached a diameter of about 250 cm. In 1961 the pro loco regulated the construction of the fracchie, because they had become too big and dangerous. Sometimes fracchie weighed up to 100 quintals, and with their tongues of fire they created damage and disorder, eliminating the devotional aspect that had characterized the origin of this procession from the beginning. So from the 80s of the last century onwards, to guarantee safety, the dimensions of the fracchie began to be regulated with very strict limits.



ITALIAN WONDER

The great flaming torches of the Good Friday Procession, candidate for UNESCO's intangible heritage, have been recognized as an Italian Wonder.

THE FRACCHIE IMMATERIAL MASTERPIECE IN PHILATELY

In occasion of the Good Friday Procession of Our Lady of Sorrow accompanied by the "Fracchie", the 31st of March a stamp has been issued by Poste Italiane of the thematic series "Il folklore italiano". The picture was taken by Antonio Ciaburro, and depicts the "Fracchia", a huge torch shaped like a cone, transported on a specific cart during the homonymous procession. On the top right there's a copy of the statue of Our Lady of Sorrow, while in the background you can see the bell tower of the Collegiata church. A special obliteration took place on Good Friday, the 6th of April 2012.

