

Heritage Choir Newsletter #36 – Rome, Italy

It's Wednesday, October 16th, during your 2019 Rome, Italy Performance Tour. Next....We will travel by train to Pisa Italy – visiting the Square of Miracles.....



The *Square of Miracles* has gained international fame thanks to **its** leaning tower and its peculiar inclination, but actually the square is home to other marvelous monuments: the Cathedral, the Baptistery and the cemetery, representing the life cycle, that have a *pure whiteness* in common standing out over the lush green ground.

The Square first started taking shape in 1064 with the creation of the centerpiece of the entire complex: the **Cathedral dedicated to Santa Maria Assunta**. The cathedral symbolizes the maximum expression of Pisan Romanesque architecture influenced at the same time by various stylistic elements. At the time, Pisa was a Maritime Republic (from the 11th through 15th centuries), and sailors travelled around the Arab world and remained smitten by all the beautiful things they saw.

Years later the enlargement of the fortified wall began (the church at the beginning wasn't inside the walls) and **the building of the Baptistery of San Giovanni** began in 1152. The baptistery was located directly in front of the Cathedral with a diameter equal to the facade of the cathedral. It is here that the Sacrament of Baptism is administered, and the Christian embarks upon the path of Faith.

About 20 years later, in 1173, work started on the bell tower which is now known as the famous **Leaning Tower of Pisa**. It was after three of the building's eight stories had been completed that the uneven settling of the tower's foundations became obvious. Construction was then paused as war broke out between the Italian city-states.

When construction resumed, the engineers tried to compensate for the lean by making the higher stories taller on the short side, but this only served to sink the tower further. The tower's heaviest bells were then silenced due to fears they would worsen the lean. In 1990, the building was closed for a major straightening scheme which succeeded in reducing the lean to 4.1 meters. Experts say the tower should now remain stable for at least another 200 years.

In 1277, work started on the **graveyard**, known as the **Camposanto**, which completes the *Square of Miracles*.

Next, we will continue our journey to *Venice*.....**to be continued in next week's Newsletter.**

Rome "Fun Fact" #36 – The vault of the baptistery consists of a double dome – the inner one a truncated cone and the outer one a hemispherical dome. This singular architectural solution gives the Baptistery in Pisa the most exceptional acoustics, making it a monumental musical instrument. This is why, every thirty minutes, the attendant on duty gives visitors a brief demonstration, simply by singing a few notes and letting the fabulous reverberation of the majestic cylinder of the Baptistery do the rest.