



SANTA REPARATA 8 October



The saint to whom the first cathedral was dedicated, the guardian of classical culture. The feast of Santa Reparata on 8 October has its origins in a bloody event, following which Christianity was definitively established in Florence. The Christian religion was introduced primarily by merchants from Asia Minor, who with their faith also brought their own saints, including Reparata. In the summer of 406 AD, Florence suffered its first attack by the Ostrogoths under the command of King Radagaiso. The city's fierce resistance rendered the siege of the Barbarians far from easy, and the latter were eventually annihilated by the Roman army commanded by General Stilicone, which had come to the aid of Florence. The Florentines attributed their liberation, which took place on 23 August 406, to the virgin Reparata, who, according to the legend, had been seen hovering over the city during the battle. As a result Florence decided to recall the episode, not on the date on which the liberation occurred, but on 8 October, the feast of the saint. The fifth-century Florentines also decided to dedicate to the saint the cathedral which they were to build, the

remains of which can still be seen beneath the present-day cathedral begun in 1296 and dedicated to Santa Maria del Fiore. In ancient times the religious and popular celebrations held to mark 8 October took place in the cathedral, gaily decked out with wreaths of myrtle and laurel, and the festivities were closed by two races: one on horseback (from San Gaggio to Porta Romana) and one on foot - known as the *bravio*, or *palio* (from Porta Romana to the Mercato Vecchio, the present-day Piazza della Repubblica). In reviving these celebrations, the City Council has decided to run the *bravio* (starting and ending in Piazza San Giovanni), with twenty participants selected from among the footballers of the four Colours of the city, and with the Historic Procession of the Florentine Republic which parades from the Palagio di Parte Guelfa to the cathedral, where an evocative ceremony is held among the remains of the ancient church.