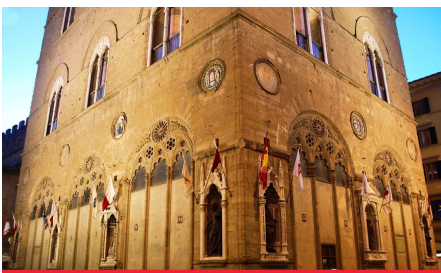




## SAINT ANNE PROTECTRESS OF FLORENTINE LIBERTY 26 July



**SANT'ANNA 26 LUGLIO**



On 26 July 1343 the Florentines expelled from their city the tyrant Gualtieri di Brienne, Duke of Athens. Florence linked this episode to the figure of Saint Anne, whose feast is on 26 July, raising her to the role of Protectress of the city. The Signoria declared 26 July a solemn feast, which was to be celebrated with a procession unwinding from Palazzo Vecchio to the Oratory of Orsanmichele, the site of the celebration proper, where an altar to Saint Anne was erected. On this altar we can admire the marble sculpture of the *Madonna and Child with St. Anne*, executed between 1522 and 1526 by Francesco da Sangallo, which is still the focal point of the celebrations of 26 July which the City Council is reproposing.

The political significance of St. Anne, in connection with the expulsion of the tyrant, was so strong as to stimulate the development in the city of a new iconography of the saint. As a result, within the Guilds, the figure of St. Anne gradually emerged as protectress of the city, starting with the fresco of *St Anne and the expulsion of the Duke of Athens*, painted by a

follower of Orcagna, immediately after the event in the Stinche prison (and now housed in the Palazzo Vecchio museum). This iconography remained rooted up to the sixteenth century, when the ruling family of the Medici chose St. Anne as their protectress, up until the dictates of the Counter-Reformation reduced the role of St. Anne to merely that of the mother of Our Lady. The City Council commemorates the day consecrated to the liberation of the mediaeval Florentines with a Historic Procession of the Florentine Republic which parades from Palazzo Vecchio to the Duomo and on to Orsanmichele, decorated on the outside with the banners of the city guilds. It also sponsors a conference dedicated to the various aspects which such an important date still calls to mind.