



## The Holy Mount of San Vivaldo

San Vivaldo has always been a place to take a stroll. You go there on Sundays, usually after lunch in an osteria or before the afternoon snack; you go there for some shade and the fine air, for the silence and peace everyone is careful to respect.

Because **San Vivaldo** is primarily a place of **faith and pilgrimage**. Its origins date back to 1300, when **Beato Vivaldo**, a Franciscan tertiary, withdrew to life as a hermit in its forest. According to an ancient text from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, he lived for twenty years in a tiny cell dug in the hollow of a chestnut tree. Twenty years of sacrifice, fasting and hardship. Upon his death, his Franciscan brothers built a chapel in his name, and in 1355, where he died, erected the church we can see today.

In 1500, following the settlement of the Franciscan Order of Friars Minor, work began on a system of reduced-scale chapels, arranged according to the layout of Jerusalem at that time.

Inside every little shrine you may find bas-reliefs in glazed polychrome terracotta, depicting the scenes of the **Passion of Christ**. The creation of a tangible path where the stages of Jesus's suffering could be relived, interpreted the Franciscan reading of the mystery of the cross.

However, thanks to a papal bull from Leone X, which granted indulgence to those who visited it, the Holy Mount of San Vivaldo, also known as the **Jerusalem of Tuscany**, became a substitute pilgrimage destination for all those who could not reach the Holy Land.

The choice of the bas-relief in polychrome terracotta corresponded to the



info@gambassiexperience.com



apostolic mission of the Franciscans who, like the other mendicant orders, were preaching friars.

The need to make people understand the word of God pushed them toward a language spoken by all, including the illiterate. The scenes, faces and details of this Bible of the poor are realistic, clear and understandable; for example, the *Last Supper* is laden like a Renaissance banquet. The expressions are emphatic, the characters recognisable; in the scene of the *foot washing*, Judas the traitor, the last on the left, is scowling and stingily grasps the coins of his betrayal.

The message is concrete, with a strong emotional impact.