

PP4 - City of Poreč-Parenzo

2.2_POREC_brochure promotion UNESCO site

Work Package 2: COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

Activity 2.2.: Media relation and publications

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Unesco Site Experience For All

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3.1 - Make natural and cultural heritage a
leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development

PP4 - City of Poreč-Parenzo

D.2.2.4	brochures for the promotion of each UNESCO site
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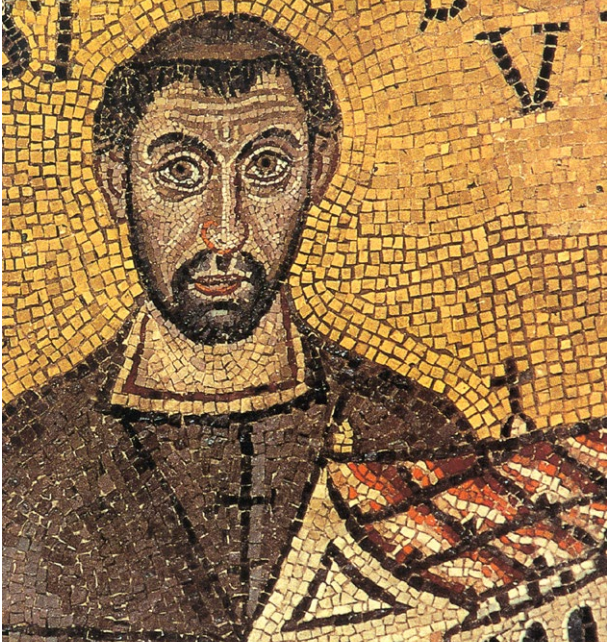
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3.1 - Make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development



The Euphrasian Basilica



The Euphrasian Basilica





The Euphrasian Basilica

The most valuable cultural property in Poreč, the Euphrasian Basilica, was registered on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1997. The early-Christian compound is the only complete landmark in the world preserved from that period.

Built during the time of Bishop Euphrasius in the 6th century it includes the atrium, baptistery, bishop's palace, many glittering mosaics and remains of sacral buildings dating from the 3rd to the 4th century. The mosaics which decorate the inside and facade of the church are considered a valuable bequest of Byzantine art, and thanks to the floor mosaics and preserved writings the periods of its construction and renovation can be read.

In the long history of the City of Poreč, one relatively short period of time was to change its destiny for ever.

The small provincial town on the margins of the moribund Roman Empire went through a remarkable transformation in the 6th century. Attempting at this time to pull the disunited empire together, Emperor Justinian created for a short space the illusion of the one-time whole. But not only a territorial and political whole. He also attempted to bring back the brilliance of the art of the ancient world. During the full flowering of Justinian's Reconquista, Euphrasius, Bishop of Poreč, had a cathedral built on the site of the older city basilica, harmonising it with a series of accompanying buildings that

were together to create one of the great architectural complexes of the time. Here, on the northern edge of a peninsula on which a few centuries earlier the model Roman city of Parentium had been built, the taste, the brilliance and the stylistic richness of the East were to develop into a new whole that would be a genuine mark of the time.

The taste of Bishop Euphrasius, moulded on the luxury of the east, could never have been satisfied with the state of provincial lethargy that marked Poreč, Istria and most of the tottering Roman Empire.



Undertaking his great architectural enterprises, he was only in part to assimilate his ambitious ideas with the ancient base that he found there, and to a major extent was to bring in architectural and artistic innovations the like of which the West was still unfamiliar with. These innovations relate to the organisation of space in the Basilica, especially in the eastern part of it, as well as the iconographic programme that the bishop, with the help of the superb artisans that he brought with him, was to show in the mosaics that cover the walls of the interior. The great bishop of Poreč subordinated the church in its entirety to himself. He had his own initials inscribed in many of the prominent places, and in the mosaics of the apse, he found his way into the space meant exclusively for the saints and the martyrs, and the very Virgin and Christ, showing in a very unambivalent way the place he saw himself in. This gesture conceals a number of messages, including that of the bishop's relationship with the Pope, who had anathematised and excommunicated him.





Arriving in Poreč in the middle of the 6th century, Euphrasius found here a city with a long past. The visible layer corresponds completely in its characteristics to the typical provincial town of the later classical period, eroded by the distresses of time, literally meaning the hordes of barbarians, which had recently put an end to a rich tradition. It is true that the distance factor would, as far as Poreč, Istria and other peripheral zones were concerned, soften the blow of the barbarian incursions as felt in the mother country. Here, Rome died with a temporal lapse. Taking over the see of Poreč, Euphrasius arrived at the head of a well-organised Christian community that in its long tradition had given the church several martyred saints, among whom was Saint Eleutherius, and, particularly, the important Saint Maurus, a bishop who at the time of the great persecutions was executed in Poreč together with his clergy and numbers of the laity.



However, the gap between the last persecutions of the Christians at the beginning of the 4th century and the mid-6th century when Poreč and Bishop Euphrasius came into full flower was filled with a constant augmentation of the power of the church. This status of the church is corroborated by the numerous sacred buildings that sprang up all round Istria, the basilica of Poreč being particularly important. The second half of the 5th century was marked by the barbarian attacks on Rome itself and other key points of the Empire. Alaric, the Huns under Attila, Odacer, who became king of Italy in 476, replaced in 493 by Theodoric, all to some extent left Istria out of it in the violent transformations from without. At the end of the 5th century, Istria was part of Theodoric's Ostrogothic state, but in the age of Justinian, in 539, it became part of the Byzantine or Eastern part of the Roman Empire.

When, in the 6th century, Bishop Euphrasius started on his great undertaking, he was not starting from nothing. In the area from which his majestic basilica was to arise, and a series of other buildings alongside it, there were already earlier sacred buildings in existence, dating from the 4th century, probably from immediately after 313. When Christianity was

still not recognised, the first communities adapted some existing buildings for their services. Floor mosaics in which there are motifs of tendrils, meanders and pictures of fish that point clearly to their symbolic significance belong to the first oratory, the remains of which are to be found alongside the Basilica of Euphrasius itself.

When a new large basilica was built in the 5th century, it developed into the existing sacred buildings. It is a three naved basilica with a rectangular ground plan without an apse; in the eastern part, it has a semicircular wall for the priests' stalls,

and like other churches in Istria of the 5th century, it developed under the influence of the architecture of the eastern coast of the Adriatic and of the Near East. The local builders combined these influences with the inheritance from the Early Christian age and from Roman profane architecture. The walls were built of naturally broken stones roughly dressed, which needed thick applications of stucco and were reinforced with lesenes.

Euphrasius's basilica was only the central part of a larger complex formed by a number of buildings constructed mostly at the same time.





The building of the bishop's palace is a larger edifice and has only in parts retained its original appearance. The entrance into the basilica itself is constituted by the narthex, which was constructed on the site of an earlier street, and the space before the narthex belongs to a fine open atrium with a square basis. Opposite the

entrance to the basilica, the baptistery is located. This octagonal building derives from the pre-Euphrasian time, and is dependent on the architecture of the late classical tradition. The structure of the walls and the wooden roof construction are the work of local builders.





Thanks to the participation in the USE-FALL project, the City of Poreč-Parenzo has been able to perform a less invasive pilot infrastructural solution in the area of the nearby promenade that surrounds the Euphrasian basilica today. The objective of this pilot solution was to provide the general public and persons with disabilities better access to the UNESCO

site. Construction works implied “scratch-ing” the cobbled street in the old town of Poreč in order to make it less slippery and safer particularly for disabled people. The project allowed for the renovation of the existing pavement for the safety of pedestrian traffic, the replacement of damaged ramps for persons with disabilities and the stabilization of the ground. From a



technical point of view, the works consisted of removing the existing damaged or cracked stone partition and setting up a new treated, rough anti-slip stone lining. The City of Poreč-Parenzo has completed this less invasive pilot infrastructural solution in September 2019. The project USEFALL was carried out by a cross-border partnership composed of the follow-

ing Italian and Croatian project partners:

- Municipality of Ravenna (Lead Partner)
- Aquileia Foundation
- Venitian Cluster
- City of Split
- City of Poreč-Parenzo





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