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[Why Is ‘Blessed Angelico’ The Patron Saint of Artists?](#)

Posted on [June 24, 2021](#) by [mjohsonewtn](#)



“The Transfiguration,” a painting by Blessed Angelico, can be found at Museum of St. Mark in Florence, Italy.

He was one of the most important artists of his time. In fact, his work was so influential that Pope John Paul II beatified this Dominican priest on Oct. 3, 1982, and less than two years later declared him the patron saint of artists. His name is Fra Angelico, now Blessed Angelico, and viewers are invited to get to know him in a brand new documentary by Elisabetta Valgiusti, which was produced by EWTN in collaboration with Save the Monasteries. “Blessed Angelico” premieres at 10 p.m. ET, Sunday, June 27, with an encore at 5 a.m. ET, Friday, July 2, on EWTN.



This image of St. Dominic is part of a large painting “The Crucifixion,” which Blessed Angelico painted on the wall of a monk’s cell. Actor Ciro Toto portrays Blessed Angelico in this scene.

Fra Angelico was a simple and holy man, but the times he lived in were neither simple nor holy. It was the time of the Western Schism, which saw the rise of three rival Popes, each with their own following. At the same time, St. Catherine of Siena, who lived before Fra Angelico, sought to reform the Dominican order after most of friars stopped following the original rule of St. Dominic.



“The Annunciation” one of the frescoes by Blessed Angelico in Museum of St. Mark in Florence.

“Although he came after St. Catherine, Fra Angelico was very influenced by her teachings,” said Writer and Filmmaker Elisabetta Valgiusti. “It is interesting that he is buried next to her in St. Maria Sopra Minerva Dominican Basilica in Rome.”

So how did Blessed Angelico help revive the fervor of his order? Instead of preaching or writing or any of the usual methods, Fra Angelico did something unexpected. He painted.



Blessed Angelico, “St. Dominic adoring Christ Crucified , Museum of St. Mark in Florence.

“Angelico preaches by painting,” Valgiusti says. “The main point of my documentary is to show people that his works are icons; their purpose is to allow faithful enter and contemplate the divine mysteries, to make people pray. He wants to bring people closer to Christ and to Our Lady, to help people know them.” Incredibly, the docufilm takes us to the large dormitory at St. Mark’s Convent, in Florence, Italy. Here Fra Angelico painted the cells of the friars. Today the convent is a museum.

“Fra Angelico’s works are much more famous than he is,” Valgiusti says. “That’s why I wanted to make him better known. Most of the angels you see all over the world – on posters, cups, , book bags, whatever – are his! But you don’t know it’s his work. He has really been exploited in a commercial sense.”

In addition to Florence, viewers will travel with Valgiusti to other places of Florence like the St. Maria del Fiore Basilica and the Charterhouse and to different cities in Tuscany, that is the area where Fra Angelico was born and where he lived in the Dominican Convent of Fiesole, as well as to Rome, to Cortona and to St. Giovanni Valdarno, where two of his great paintings of the Annunciation are housed.

Important museums in Europe, United States, Russia, have some of Fra Angelico’s works in their collections.



Blessed Angelico's painting "The Annunciation", Diocesan Museum of St. Giovanni Valdarno.



The Community of St. Leolino, a Catholic Order, hosts celebrations and religious activities in the Middle Age Charterhouse of Florence as well as important artistic and cultural events.

As a Catholic filmmaker, Valgiusti interviewed theologians, scholars, and contemporary Christian artists who know and love Fra Angelico, not only for the beauty of his art, but for his spiritual significance as a painter as well as the patron saint of artists.

A brother of Fra Angelico at St. Mark Convent once said that Fra Angelico “does not paint, he prays.” Theologian Hans Van Balthasar said Fra Angelico’s art perfectly represents the motto of the Dominican Order: “Communicating to others the contemplated mysteries.”



“Noli me tangere,” fresco by Blessed Angelico at the Museum of St. Mark in Florence.

Fra Angelico never worked on anything other than religious subjects saying, “who does Christ’s work must stay with Christ always.” In today’s difficult environment, both in and out of the Church, this priest/artist’s work is particularly relevant and needed.

You won’t want to miss Valgiusti’s beautiful documentary on the life and works of one of the most famous Catholic artists in history. If you don’t know Blessed Angelico, please allow Valgiusti to introduce you. If you do know him, you will want to revel in the beauty of his artistry and hear more about the messages this man of God tried so hard to communicate through his art.

Note: For more details about the “Blessed Angelico” program, please go to <https://www.savethemonasteries.org/>