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The Artistic Patronage of Nicholas IV, the First Franciscan Pope

In four years of his short pontificate (1288-1292), Nicholas IV, the first pope - member of the Franciscan Order, was immersed in an intense political and religious activity, as well as in a continuous and innovative role of patron of art works. The result of this action was the renovation of two of the major basilicas of Rome: San Giovanni in Laterano and Santa Maria Maggiore, as well as the restoration of frescoes in the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi, which had begun in the first year of his pontificate.

The protagonist of this works and, one might say "court painter" of Nicholas IV, was Jacopo Torriti, one of the greatest masters active between Assisi and Rome in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, who knew how to combine, with great balance and fine ability - most probably for the impulse and will of the commissioner - Roman tradition and new elements from the Gothic art of the north, both in terms of form and iconography. The attention of Nicholas IV focuses not only on the major centers of Assisi and Rome but also on the Marche, his homeland, where he gave numerous donations to the Franciscan centers in the area.