

## cenacolo crawl: florence's last supper scenes



A. [Andrea Castagno | Sant'Apollonia](#) | Monday – Sunday 8:15-1:50; closed 2nd, 4th Mondays and 1st, 3rd, 5th Sundays, Via 27 Aprile, 1

We'll start at Sant'Apollonia, an old Benedictine convent just off of Via San Gallo, and two blocks over from San Marco, ideally around 8:30 a.m. on Saturday.

Castagno's fresco is one of Florence's true hidden gems - no one beyond the nuns that originally gathered here even knew it existed until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the grounds were taken over by the military. The colors of the fresco are remarkably well preserved, and you can get up close and personal to study all the details.

Considering the time period, Castagno did a great job creating an illusionistic space for the saints to sit in. Plus, their u-shaped seating arrangement mirrors how the nuns themselves would have sat along the walls of the refectory while eating. He gives each man defining characteristics as they react to Jesus' shocking news, but also includes their names at their feet to help you identify them.

When you've soaked in all the details, head south on Via Santa Reparata, past Mercato Centrale, and then turn right on Via Faenza.

B. [Pietro Perugino | Blessed Angelina of Foligno](#) | Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday 9-12, Via Faenza

About 50 years later, Perugino painted the Last Supper for a wealthy Franciscan tertiary in the refectory of their convent, known as Foligno. Perugino's setting is much more idyllic than Castagno's and demonstrates the progression of spatial illusionism from early to high Renaissance.

By now you can easily spot Judas, but you might be wondering why St. John the Evangelist is always passed out at Jesus' side. While it might have been the wine, it's more likely he's overcome with grief at the news of Jesus' imminent betrayal. The Gospel of John says that Jesus identifies his betrayer to St. John while he's lying against his breast, which is most likely what we see here.

Two down, two to go. Head down to the Arno between the Carraia and Vespucci bridges for our next visual feast.

C. [Domenico Ghirlandaio | Ognissanti](#) | Monday, Wednesday, Saturday 9-12, Piazza Ognissanti (along the Lungarno)

Ghirlandaio's Ognissanti cenacolo would have been painted, chronologically, between the two we've visited previously on this trip. And while you may think you've seen all there is of a Last Supper scene, this one will make you think twice. Ghirlandaio frescoed the wall full of symbols that, if you know what to look for, add layers of depth to the work.

In the foreground, items on the table (cherries) allude to the sacrifice Jesus is going to make for mankind by spilling his own blood. In the background, the orange and lemon trees symbolize a paradise that is just outside the refectory walls (or physical life), where a variety of birds (pheasants, a quail, and a wealth of others) allude to Christ's resurrection. Finally, perched in the fictive window on the right, a peacock appears to exit the scene, a common Renaissance symbol for immortality of the soul, which Jesus' sacrifice will guarantee for all mankind.

Now that you can read Renaissance art like a pro, cross the Arno and look for Santa Maria del Carmine.

D. [Alessandro Allori | Santa Maria del Carmine](#) | Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 9-12; Tuesday and Saturday 10-12, Piazza del Carmine (in the Oltrarno)

You might've heard of Santa Maria del Carmine, best known for the frescoed masterpieces in the Brancacci Chapel. But don't be deterred by the ticket window; while you do need to pay for entry to the chapel, you can freely explore the rest of the church.

When you reach Allori's Cenacolo in the space's old refectory, it's clear that it's not business as usual. The figures are more naturally animated, and Judas is no longer isolated on the other side of the table. For that, you'll have to thank the most famous of cenacolo painters – Leonardo da Vinci. He took the Florentine tradition of frescoing refectory walls with the Last Supper with him to Milan, where he created the [most famous and revolutionary example of them all](#). It is clear in Santa Maria del Carmine that Da Vinci's fresco heavily influenced Allori's representation of the scene, painted about one-hundred years later than Ghirlandaio's.

