

# Raphael's Ansidei altarpiece in the National Gallery

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IT IS A PARADOX of scholarship that works of art long in public collections may sometimes be neglected precisely because they are so familiar. Raphael's Ansidei altarpiece (Fig. 1), 'saved for the nation' for an unprecedented sum in 1885, is a case in point.<sup>1</sup> It had been bought directly from the Servite friars of S. Fiorenzo in Perugia in 1764 by Gavin Hamilton, acting for Lord Robert Spencer, who subsequently presented it to his brother, the 4th Duke of Marlborough.<sup>2</sup> As an altarpiece by the 'divine' Raphael, the *Ansidei Madonna* was quite exceptional in a British collection, and became 'the object of a constant pilgrimage to the palace of Blenheim' in Oxfordshire.<sup>3</sup> When in 1883 the picture was offered for sale together with Van Dyck's *Equestrian portrait of Charles I* to cover the 8th Duke's mounting debts on the death of his father, an appeal by Royal Academicians led by their president, Frederic Leighton, moved Gladstone's government to offer a special grant of £87,500 to secure the acquisition of both pictures, of which £70,000 went towards the Raphael.

The altarpiece's passage from S. Fiorenzo, where it had remained for over 250 years, through the Spencer-Churchill family to the National Gallery was remarkably direct: effectively the painting has only changed hands twice, thus avoiding the vicissitudes of the art market and any urgent need to enhance its appearance and impeccable pedigree with campaigns of restoration and historical research.<sup>4</sup> The only serious attempt to elucidate the picture's early history remains Lino Manzoni's 1899 article for a local Umbrian periodical.<sup>5</sup> Manzoni had unearthed crucial material on the altarpiece in the Ansidei family archive but, through a combination of piecemeal transcriptions and his own puzzling deductions, he made several

unfortunate errors regarding the identity of Raphael's patron, the location of the altarpiece in the church, and the original construction of the predella, all subsequently perpetuated in the scholarly literature. Preparations for the National Gallery's current exhibition *Raphael: From Urbino to Rome* provided the impetus to study the Ansidei altarpiece afresh. Parallel campaigns of technical and archival research led to a number of new discoveries regarding the production, original setting and patronage of the main panel and its predella. These were briefly summarised in short entries in the National Gallery exhibition catalogue and Technical Bulletin but are published here fully for the first time.<sup>6</sup>

In his testament of 12th October 1490 (see Appendix 1 below), the prosperous wool merchant Filippo di Ansideo di Simone, called 'de Catrano' (documented 1458–90), bequeathed money for his burial in the parish church of S. Fiorenzo, located some fifty metres from his house on what is now Via Alessi, in the quarter of Porta Sole, Perugia.<sup>7</sup> He also made a bequest of one hundred florins for the endowment of a chapel dedicated to St Nicholas of Bari which he had erected in the church in 1483. Filippo regarded this saint as 'nostro avochato', and an inscription commemorating his original foundation once carved in stone above the chapel read: 'To St Nicholas Bishop of Bari, erected in humility by Filippo Ansidei de Catrano, 1483' (see Appendix 6).<sup>8</sup> Filippo almost certainly died of the illness alluded to in his testament since he ceases to appear in surviving documents after 1490.<sup>9</sup> His chapel must therefore have remained without an altarpiece until Raphael was approached to provide one, probably at some point in 1503 or 1504.

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<sup>1</sup> For the altarpiece, see C. Gould: *National Gallery Catalogues. The Sixteenth-Century Italian Schools*, London 1975, pp.216–18; J. Dunkerton, S. Foister, D. Gordon and N. Penny: *Giotto to Dürer: Early Renaissance painting in the National Gallery*, New Haven and London 1991, pp.204 and 376–77, no.65.

<sup>2</sup> J.D. Passavant: *Kunstreise durch England und Belgien*, Frankfurt am Main 1833, pp.173–74; G.F. Waagen: *Treasures of art in Great Britain*, London 1854, III, pp.127–28; G. Scharf: *Catalogue raisonné; or, a list of the pictures in Blenheim Palace*, London 1862, pp.39–41.

<sup>3</sup> J.A. Crowe and G.B. Cavalcaselle: *Raphael: His Life and Works*, London 1882–85, I, p.224.

<sup>4</sup> Passavant, *op. cit.* (note 2), p.174, attested to the painting's excellent condition at Blenheim: 'Das Gemälde ist von vortrefflicher Erhaltung, und nur an dem einen Fuss des Johannes wurde ein Versuch gemacht, es zu waschen; glücklichlicherweise liefs man sogleich davon ab.'

<sup>5</sup> L. Manzoni: 'La Madonna degli Ansidei', *Bollettino della Regia Deputazione di Storia Patria per l'Umbria* 5 (1899), pp.627–45; for more recent treatments of the Ansidei commission, see F.F. Mancini: *Raffaello in Umbria: Cronologia e committenza, nuovi studi e documenti*, Perugia 1987, pp.57–60; J. Meyer Zur Capellen: *Raphael. A Critical Cat-*

*alogue of his Paintings. Volume I: The beginnings in Umbria and Florence ca.1500–1508*, Landshut 2001, pp.165–71, no.16A.

<sup>6</sup> H. Chapman, T. Henry and C. Plazzotta: exh. cat. *Raphael: From Urbino to Rome*, London (National Gallery) 2004, pp.158–64, nos.45–46; A. Roy, M. Spring and C. Plazzotta: 'Raphael's Early Work in the National Gallery: Paintings before Rome', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* 25 (2004), pp.4–35.

<sup>7</sup> Filippo Ansidei served several times as chamberlain of the Perugian wool guild; see Mancini, *op. cit.* (note 5), p.57. He acquired the house on the site of the present Palazzo Ansidei in 1467; Perugia, Archivio di Stato (hereafter cited as ASP), Famiglie privati: Ansidei, carte miscellanea, no.65 (*Contabilità privata a creditore e debitori di Filippo Tomaso Ansidei*), fol.21r; 'Compra de la casa nostra'. Filippo's political connections are unclear, but he served as a go-between between Guido Baglioni and Simone degli Oddi on the eve of the latter's ejection from Perugia in 1488; see P. Pompeo: *Dell'Historia di Perugia*, Venice 1664, III, p.851.

<sup>8</sup> Recorded in the early eighteenth century, this vital piece of evidence was destroyed when the church was remodelled in the Baroque style on the designs of Pietro Carattoli in 1768–70: 'Divo Nicolao Epo. Baren. Philippus Ansidei de Katrano humiliter erexit, 1483'; in 1460 Filippo acknowledged receipt of his inheritance from his father Ansideo in the name of God, the Virgin Mary 'e del beato S.o Nicholo nostro avochato', cited by Manzoni, *op. cit.* (note 5), p.645; St Nicholas of Bari was particularly venerated by merchants on account of the legend of his body's translation by merchants from Myra to Bari by sea.

<sup>9</sup> Manzoni, *op. cit.* (note 5), pp.628–31, gave Filippo's year of birth as 1434 without citing his source, but he also accepted the tradition dating Filippo's initial acquisition of the chapel to 1442 (see Appendix 5), when he would only have been eight years old; for further comments on these discrepancies, see note 34 below.



1. *The Madonna and Child with Sts John the Baptist and Nicholas of Bari (The Ansidei Madonna)*, by Raphael. c.1504–05 (dated 1505). Panel, 245 by 157 cm. (National Gallery, London).

When Raphael received the commission, he had been working in Perugia for over two years and had established a reputation there, filling the vacuum created by Pietro Perugino's frequent absences in Florence and elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> As well as producing many small paintings of Madonnas and saints, Raphael had also painted the monumental altarpiece of the *Coronation of the Virgin* for the Degli Oddi chapel in S. Francesco al Prato (see fig.42 on p.743).<sup>11</sup> If one accepts the hypothesis that the *Betrothal of the Virgin* now in the Brera, Milan (dated 1504), was painted in Perugia and transported to Città di Castello, its remarkable sophistication would also have contributed to Raphael's standing in Perugia.<sup>12</sup> By December 1505, when the Clarissan nuns of Monteluce were looking for a suitable candidate to execute a new altarpiece for the high altar of their convent church, Raphael's name emerged as 'the best master, who had been recommended by the most citizens and also our reverend fathers, who had seen his works'.<sup>13</sup> The Ansidei altarpiece, which is dated 1505 in the border of the Virgin's mantle below her left arm (Fig.2), would certainly have contributed to this assessment,<sup>14</sup> together with another Perugian *sacra conversazione*, the so-called Colonna altarpiece, painted contemporaneously for the female tertiaries of S. Antonio.<sup>15</sup>

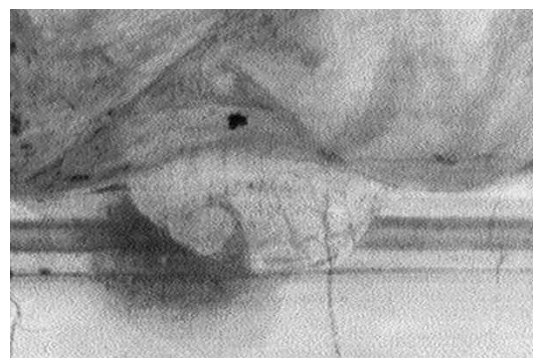
The Ansidei altarpiece pays homage to works in Perugia by the two artists whose styles Raphael most admired, Signorelli and Perugino. All the figures reflect his careful study of Signorelli's Vagnucci altarpiece of 1483–84, painted for the chapel of St Onuphrius in Perugia cathedral (Fig.5). When reversed, the poses of the Ansidei Virgin and Child are almost identical to those in Signorelli's painting. Raphael's Baptist, with his impossibly slender rock-crystal cross, is a creative reinterpretation of the same saint in Signorelli's work, while his contemplative St Nicholas echoes Signorelli's aged bishop, St Herculanus. Furthermore, infra-red reflectography reveals additional correspondences between Raphael's initial underdrawing and motifs from Signorelli's altarpiece: the Virgin was originally barefoot like Signorelli's (Fig.4), while St Nicholas was bare-headed and balding like St Herculanus (Fig.3). For the architectural setting, elevated throne and air of perfect order, Raphael turned instead to Perugino's



3. Infra-red reflectogram mosaic detail of St Nicholas in Fig.1, showing that his mitre was added after painting was well advanced, and that his robe was originally shorter.



2. Detail of Fig.1, showing the date on the hem of the Virgin's mantle.



4. Infra-red reflectogram mosaic of the Virgin's left foot in Fig.1, showing the drawing for her toes.

<sup>10</sup> T. Henry and C. Plazzotta: 'Raphael: From Urbino to Rome', in Chapman, Henry and Plazzotta, *op. cit.* (note 6), pp.31–33.

<sup>11</sup> For the *Coronation of the Virgin*, see D. Cooper: 'Raphael's altar-pieces in S. Francesco al Prato, Perugia: patronage, setting and function', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 143 (2001), pp.554–61; fresh evidence for its dating is presented in D. Cooper: 'New documents for Raphael and his patrons in Perugia' in this issue, pp.742–44 below.

<sup>12</sup> T. Henry: 'Raphael's altar-piece patrons in Città di Castello', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 144 (2002), pp.277–78.

<sup>13</sup> J. Shearman: *Raphael in Early Modern Sources (1483–1602)*, New Haven and London 2003, I, p.93: '... el maestro el migliore li fusse consigliato da più cittadini et ancho da li nostri venerandi patri, li quali havevano vedute le opere suoi'. For the conclusion that Raphael was based in Perugia for much of the period 1502–05, see Henry and Plazzotta, *op. cit.* (note 10), p.33.

Decemviri altarpiece of 1496–97 in the Palazzo de' Priori in Perugia (Fig. 7), a composition he had studied and characteristically improved upon in a slightly earlier drawing (Fig. 8).<sup>16</sup>

Before addressing the finished altarpiece, it is worth considering this compositional sketch, now in Frankfurt (Fig. 8), in greater detail. It shares many features with the *Ansidei Madonna*, including the overall structure of the Virgin's throne, and details such as the arrangement of the rosary beads and the Christ Child's firm grasp on the material that enfolds him.<sup>17</sup> The vaulted colonnade behind the throne is taken from Perugino's Decemviri altarpiece and the drawing is datable on stylistic grounds to about 1503–04.<sup>18</sup> Several elements suggest a connection with the Ansidei commission: the lighting from the top right matches that in the final painting and the overall proportions are identical, with a height to width ratio of 3:2. The principal reason why the drawing has not generally been accepted as a preparatory study is that the saint to the left of the throne is clearly identifiable, from the sunburst on his breast, as the Augustinian saint Nicholas of Tolentino and not Nicholas of Bari.<sup>19</sup> But no known commission of Raphael's during these years included the former saint, so one may at least entertain the hypothesis that the artist began designing the Ansidei altarpiece with the 'wrong' St Nicholas in mind, perhaps thinking back to the subject of his earlier St Nicholas of Tolentino altarpiece for S. Agostino in Città di Castello.<sup>20</sup> The fact that the Frankfurt drawing does not elaborate the right-hand side of the composition indicates that it was an early proposal, devised before an overall design was settled.<sup>21</sup>

Irrespective of the relationship between the Frankfurt drawing and the completed altarpiece, a great deal of information regarding Raphael's working method can be gleaned from the picture surface of the *Ansidei Madonna*. The configuration and iconography of the altarpiece can appear deceptively straightforward: the Virgin is seated in majesty on a carved wooden throne with the Christ Child on her lap; with poignant solemnity she draws his attention to a passage in an open book, presumably alluding to his predestined sacrifice. The volutes on either side of the throne draw the eye upwards



5. *The Virgin and Child with saints* (The Vagnucci altarpiece), by Luca Signorelli. 1484. Panel, 226 by 193 cm. (Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Perugia).

to a delicate coral chaplet suspended from the canopy above the throne, terminating in jewelled crosses: a transparent prompt, reinforced by the Latin inscription 'Salve Mater Christi', for the recitation of the rosary. All four figures incline their heads gracefully to the right, their eyes raised in premonition of divine providence or lowered in contemplation of scripture. The Baptist gazes up at his crystal cross, simultaneously pointing to Christ in prescience of his crucifixion. St John's gesture also draws attention to the landscape behind him (Fig. 6); its oblique view of a bridge over a river may recall

<sup>14</sup> The gilt Roman numerals MDV are followed by two vertical strokes which some authors have interpreted as additional numerals. Consequently the altarpiece has been dated variously to 1505, 1506 and 1507. However, these have the appearance of random insertions to extend the gilt border around the drapery fold, and the style of the painting, with its eclectic assimilation of Umbrian influences, is incompatible with a date after 1505. Vasari mentioned the Ansidei commission just before the S. Severo fresco, later dated 1505; G. Vasari: *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, ed. R. Bettarini and P. Barocchi, Florence 1966–87, IV, pp.161–62. The comparison with the fresco seems especially pertinent, since the figure of Christ in that work repeats – but for the arms – the Ansidei Virgin's pose in reverse.

<sup>15</sup> For the Colonna altarpiece and its lunette, see F. Zeri and E. Gardner: *Italian Paintings. A Catalogue of the Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art: Siene and Central Italian Schools*, New York 1980, II, pp.72–75; the predella was reunited for the first time since its dispersal in the National Gallery exhibition; see Chapman, Henry and Plazzotta, *op. cit.* (note 6), pp.150–57, nos.40–44. Waagen recorded the date 1505 on the Colonna altarpiece in 1859, although the inscription no longer survives; see Shearman, *op. cit.* (note 13), I, pp.97–98. This date is generally accepted on stylistic grounds although K. Oberhuber: 'The Colonna Altarpiece in the Metropolitan Museum and Problems of the Early Style of Raphael', *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 12 (1977), pp.55–91, made a case for dating it earlier, to 1501–02.

<sup>16</sup> The architecture in Raphael's final painting is closer still to another altarpiece by Perugino, *The family of the Virgin* for S. Maria degli Angeli in Perugia, now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Marseille. The dating of this painting varies between 1502 and 1512, and may represent an instance of Perugino being influenced by his pupil. The system of vaulting is certainly more likely to have been devised for the arched

composition of the *Ansidei Madonna* rather than Perugino's *tavola quadrata*; for the relationship between the two altarpieces, see G. Dalli Regoli: 'Raffaello "Angelica Farfalla": Note sulla struttura e sulle fonti della pala Ansidei', *Paragone* 399 (1983), pp.14–15.

<sup>17</sup> For the Frankfurt drawing, see most recently Chapman, Henry and Plazzotta, *op. cit.* (note 6), pp.130–31, no.31.

<sup>18</sup> Although the altarpiece is dated 1505, the appearance of its underdrawing and many elements of its style (the morphology of the Virgin's facial features and fingers, the simplified hourglass shape of her own and St Nicholas's upper bodies) indicate a protracted genesis and a date of 1504–05 is preferable.

<sup>19</sup> For the relevance of St Nicholas of Tolentino in a Servite context, see D. Ekserdjian's review of J.P. Cuzin's *Raphaël, vie et œuvre*, and K. Oberhuber's *Raffaello*, *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 126 (1984), p.440.

<sup>20</sup> Raphael's ambiguous treatment of St Nicholas of Bari's episcopal regalia in the underdrawing on the altarpiece may not be irrelevant to this argument.

<sup>21</sup> No other preparatory drawings for the main panel have been identified, but a red-chalk drawing closely related to the head of the Christ Child in the painting has recently come to light (sold Sotheby's, London, 8th July 2004, lot 23). Because the head is lit from the opposite direction and the angle of the body is somewhat different, the drawing is unlikely to be a direct study for the *Ansidei Madonna*, but it must have been made at exactly the same moment, and would thus constitute Raphael's earliest surviving work in red chalk. Christ's head in the altarpiece was modified during the course of painting, with his ear and right eye being adjusted to conform much more closely to the drawing. It may be that the Sotheby's sheet was a life study made to correct some of the anatomical idiosyncrasies in Raphael's first design.

the main crossing of the Tiber below Perugia, appropriately known as Ponte S. Giovanni.<sup>22</sup> In contrast to the Baptist's dynamic and rhetorical stance, St Nicholas withdraws slightly behind the throne, absorbed in his book.

Recent technical analysis has established that the satisfying geometry of Raphael's altarpiece was carefully calculated. Scrutiny reveals that the picture surface was prepared with a grid nine squares high by six squares wide incised into the gesso with a stylus (Fig.9).<sup>23</sup> The composition is therefore based on a simple geometric construction of a square topped by a semicircle of the same diameter resulting in a height to width ratio of 3:2. The overall dimensions of the painted area are roughly equivalent to six by four Perugian feet.<sup>24</sup> Raphael subdivided each half of the picture vertically into three, the individual squares thus measuring 24.5 cm., the equivalent of eight Perugian inches ('*once*'), or two thirds of a foot; the same principal of subdivision is also applied horizontally.<sup>25</sup>

Raphael often squared up his drawings for the purpose of enlargement, but the grid here is probably too open to have served to transfer the design. Instead he appears to have used it as a guide for aligning major elements, such as the sides of the throne, the horizontals of the steps (including the exact centre of the Greek key pattern), the top of the Virgin's head and the level of her knees, and the heads and ankles of the saints (Figs.9 and 10). Infra-red reflectography has confirmed that some of the figures' outlines were pounced (*spolveri* were found in the head and hands of the Virgin and Child), a clear indication that cartoons were used to transfer key features to the panel, and the grid would have helped Raphael position these individual templates.<sup>26</sup> The figure of St Nicholas on the other hand appears to have been drawn freehand with long sweeping lines in a liquid medium and with one altered outline incised, suggesting that the artist used a mixture of techniques when assembling the various elements of his composition. The saint's episcopal regalia seems to have been improvised at a late stage: his mitre was painted over the painted architecture (itself a late addition) and he initially wore a much shorter tunic beneath his surplice, so that his feet and ankles were visible (Fig.3).

Although Raphael frequently prepared his drawings

6. Detail of Fig. 1, showing the landscape behind St John.



7. *The Virgin and Child enthroned with saints* (The Decemviri altarpiece), by Pietro Perugino. 1496. Panel, 193 by 165 cm. (Vatican Museums, Vatican City).

(including Fig.8) and smaller paintings with vertical and horizontal axes, such a comprehensive grid has not been found on any of his other altarpieces; nor did he adopt such a strict proportional system for other compositions in this arched format (the Mond *Crucifixion* and the *Degli Oddi Coronation* are both relatively taller and the *Betrothal of the Virgin* is wider).<sup>27</sup> Given the care with which the altarpiece was prepared, it is surprising to discover that an important aspect of the picture's composition – the pale grey architectural setting – represents a later change of plan.<sup>28</sup> Technical investigation demonstrates that the fictive barrel vault, which infuses

<sup>22</sup> For the bridge, see P. Lattaioli, A. Pinna and G. Riganela: *Ponte San Giovanni dal Tevere alla città*, Perugia 1990, pp.30–54. The quarter of Porta Sole affords a distant view of Ponte S. Giovanni down the Fossa di S. Margherita, although the medieval bridge was almost totally destroyed by retreating German forces in 1944.

<sup>23</sup> A note of 1938 describing the grid together with a diagram is in the National Gallery history dossier on the painting. Some of the incisions are clearly visible in raking light.

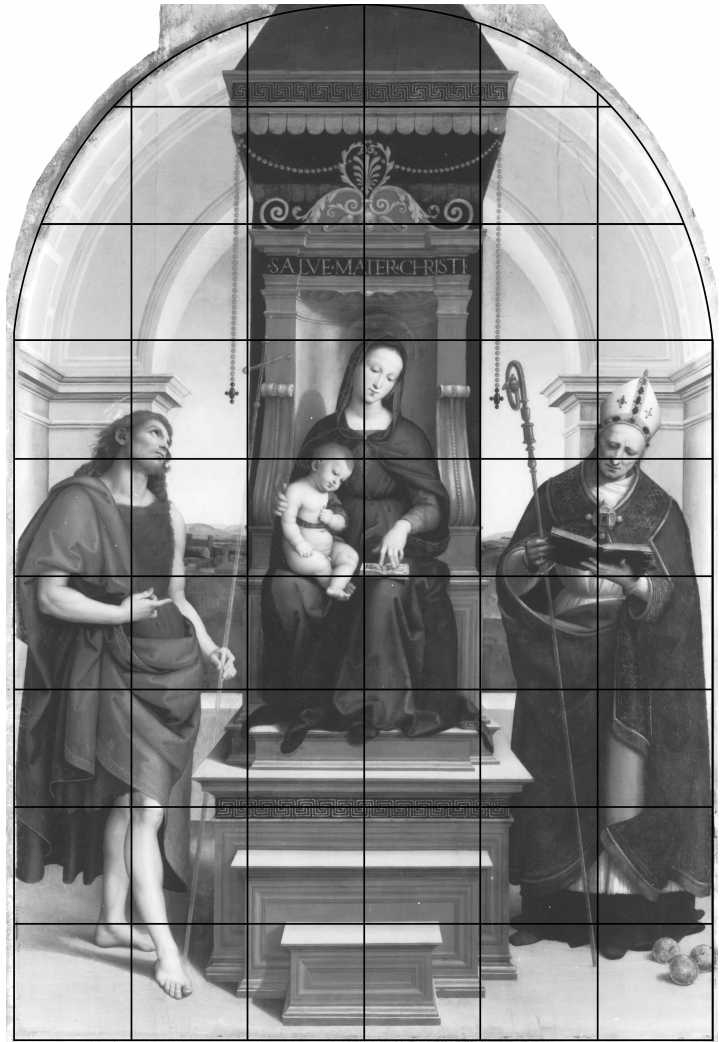
<sup>24</sup> The Perugian *pie*de (foot) was equivalent to 36.4 cm. for woodwork and building purposes ('*da legname e fabbriche*'). It was subdivided into 12 inches ('*once*') of about 3 cm.; see A. Martini: *Manuale di metrologia ossia misure, pesi e monete in uso attualmente e anticamente presso tutti i popoli*, Turin 1883, reprinted Rome 1976, p.518. Slightly different values are given in *Tavole di ragguglio sia le misure e pesi dello stato pontificio*, Rome 1857, pp.651 and 655–56. We are grateful to Jo Kirby of the National Gallery Scientific Department for supplying this information.

<sup>25</sup> A drawing for the Baglioni *Entombment* includes a scale marked with a '2' to indicate a unit of measurement. Since the composition's width is three times its length, it was intended to be six units wide; see P. Joannides: *The drawings of Raphael*, Oxford 1983, no.127 (with the suggestion that the unit used in this case is the Roman *palmo*).

<sup>26</sup> No *spolveri* were found in the figure of St John, but the underdrawing here is similar to that describing the features of the Virgin, implying cartoon transfer for this figure as well. Pouncing is much more clearly visible beneath the underdrawing of the single surviving predella scene, *St John the Baptist preaching*, and is best illustrated in a detail of the infra-red reflectogram mosaic reproduced in Roy, Spring and Plazzotta, *op. cit.* (note 6), p.6, fig.2. Raphael usually made cartoons for his small-scale



8. Study for the Virgin and Child enthroned with St Nicholas of Tolentino, by Raphael. 1503–04. Pen and brown ink over traces of black chalk and some freehand and ruled stylus incision, 23 by 15.5 cm. (Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main).



9. Reconstruction of incised grid beneath the paint layers in Fig. 1.

the picture with such geometrical lucidity, was not planned by Raphael from the start, but added after painting had begun (it is incised and painted on top of the first layer of blue sky and parts of the landscape background).<sup>29</sup> Raphael used the pre-existing grid to position the parapet (one third of the way up) and the front of the mouldings (approximately two thirds of the way up). This helps to explain why the architecture appears so integral to the composition and why the revision has never been noted before.<sup>30</sup>

works of this period, including predella scenes. An intriguing reference to a drawing – the artist unfortunately unspecified – of similar proportions and subject in a 1771 inventory of the Palazzo Ansidei may suggest that Raphael's cartoon remained in the family's possession (although its whereabouts are unknown today): ASP, Famiglie privati: Ansidei, carte miscellanea no. 81 (*Inventario di beni mobili di Casa Ansidei, 1771*), fol. 104v: 'Sotto al detto un disegno longo piedi 2:1/2 alto piedi 1 rappresentante S. Gio: che predica, con cornice dorato, e uno cristallo.'

<sup>27</sup> One other case of Raphael squaring up a composition in this painstaking way, using the same 3:2 proportions, is his modello for the *Holy Family with a pomegranate*, a design he made for Domenico Alfani to execute; see Joannides, *op. cit.* (note 25), no. 174r.

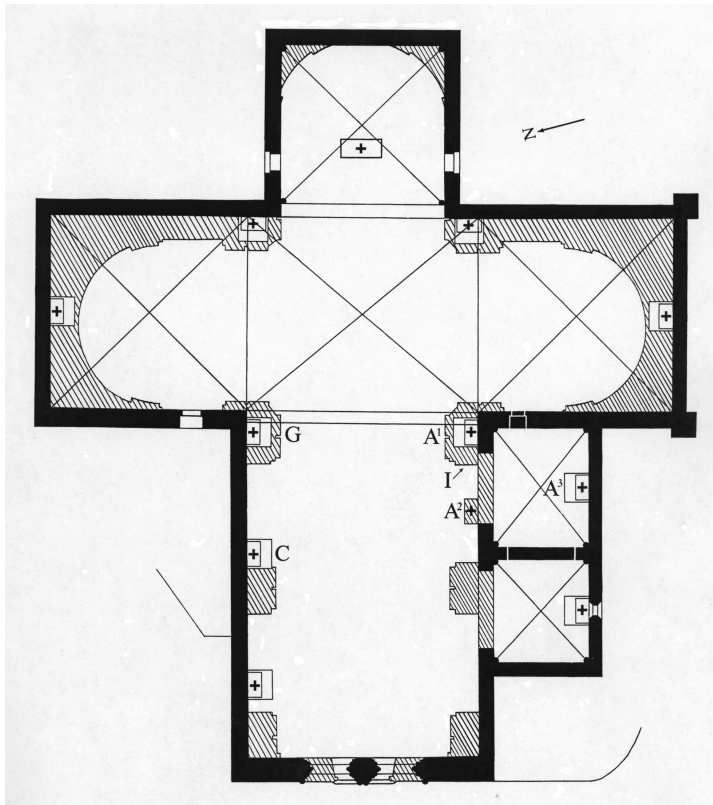
<sup>28</sup> The painting's architectural setting prompted Walter Pater's evocation of 'this cool, pearl-grey, quiet place, where colour tells for double'; W. Pater: *Miscellaneous Studies*, London 1895, p. 60, cited in R. Jones and N. Penny: *Raphael*, New Haven and London 1983, p. 16.

<sup>29</sup> Roy, Spring and Plazzotta, *op. cit.* (note 6), pp. 6 and 20.

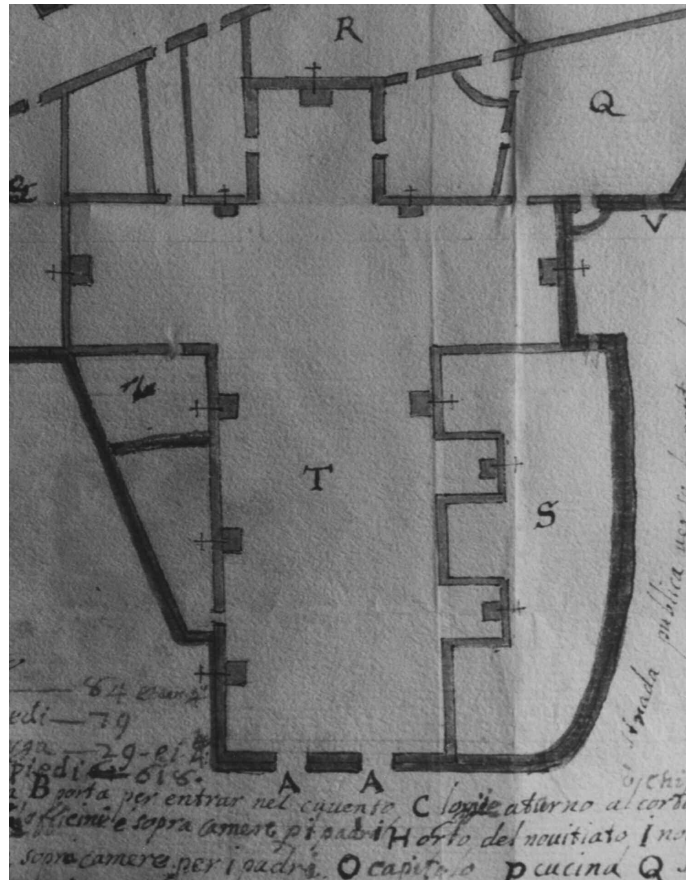
<sup>30</sup> The Colonna altarpiece gives an idea of how the Ansidei altarpiece would have appeared without the architectural backdrop mediating the view of the landscape



10. Infra-red reflectogram mosaic detail of the head of St John in Fig. 1, showing two lines from incised grid (marked with arrows). The other ruled lines are incisions relating to the architecture.



11. Authors' reconstruction of the ground plan of S. Fiorenzo, with its altars and chapels (hatched areas denote Pietro Carattoli's rebuilding of 1768–70): A<sup>1</sup>: Original position of St Nicholas altar and Raphael's *Ansidei Madonna*; A<sup>2</sup>: Present position of Ansidei altar with Nicola Monti's copy of Raphael's altarpiece; A<sup>3</sup>: Suggested position for St Nicholas altar (Moretti); I: 1777 inscription recording the original location of the St Nicholas altar; G: Altar of S. Giuseppe; C: Altar of Bernardino and Antonio de Catrano.



12. Plan of S. Fiorenzo. c.1650 (Padre Marco Miserocchi, *Origine della chiesa e convento di S. Fiorenzo nella città di Perugia, dell'Ordine dei Servi di M. Vergine*, Archivio Generale dei Serviti, Pontificia Facoltà teologica Marianum, Rome, MS Q<sup>3</sup> III.6).

The late addition of the barrel vault was probably determined by the altarpiece's intended setting in S. Fiorenzo, which can now be reconstructed with some confidence from Perugian archival sources.<sup>31</sup> The earliest witness for Raphael's altarpiece is Vasari, who in 1568 observed the painting 'in the church of the Servite friars in the chapel of the Ansidei'.<sup>32</sup> Cesare Crispolti the elder, writing at the end of the sixteenth century, praised 'the panel placed in the chapel of the Ansidei painted by Raphael of Urbino',<sup>33</sup> while Ottavio Lancellotti (d.1670) recorded the altarpiece in the St Nicholas chapel in S. Fiorenzo founded by 'Filippo di Ansidei di Catrano'.<sup>34</sup> These early sources do not specify the location of the St Nicholas chapel within the church, nor does Filippo Ansidei's final testament (see Appendix 1). A commemorative plaque of

1777 in S. Fiorenzo claims to record the location of Filippo Ansidei's altar, but this post-dates the comprehensive rebuilding of 1768–70 (Fig. 11, I).<sup>35</sup>

A small cache of *memorie*, copied in the early eighteenth century from much older records then in the convent's archive, provides the most important documentation for the Ansidei chapel (see Appendix 2–6).<sup>36</sup> The Servites of S. Fiorenzo had been asked by Cardinal Marco Antonio Ansidei, bishop of Perugia from 1726 until his death in 1730, to compile what information they could find in their archive on his family's chapel in order to support the cardinal's desire to move 'so noble a picture to a better chapel and to construct there an appropriate frame and ornament' (see Appendix 2).<sup>37</sup> The resulting transcriptions formed the basis of Lino

beyond, and it may be noted that this was the more influential of the two paintings in Umbria; see S. Ferino Pagden: 'The Early Raphael and His Umbrian Contemporaries', in J. Beck, ed.: *Raphael before Rome. Studies in the History of Art* 17 (1986), pp.98–99.

<sup>31</sup> For the history of this church and its Servite Observant community, see M. Moretti: *La chiesa di San Fiorenzo Martire in Perugia*, Perugia 1991.

<sup>32</sup> Vasari, *op. cit.* (note 14), IV, pp.161–62: 'nella chiesa de'frati de'Servi . . . alla cappella degli Ansidei.'

<sup>33</sup> C. Crispolti: *Memorie e illustrazione di cose notabili di Perugia e suo contado*, Perugia, Biblioteca Augusta (hereafter cited as BAP), MS 1256, fol.28r: 'Avanza di gran lunga ogn'altra Tavola di dicta chiesa di bellezza, e vaghezza di colorito, come di ogn'altra parte la Tavola posta nella cappella degl'Ansidei dipinta da Raffaello d'Urbino: ancorché fosse fatta in quei primi suoi tempi, come quella di Madonna Atalanta in S. Francesco'; reproduced in Shearman, *op. cit.* (note 13), II, p.1419.

<sup>34</sup> O. Lancellotti: *Scorta Sagra*, BAP, MS 60–61, fol.476r: 'Alla Cappella di S. Nicolò in S. Fiorenzo, che superba, et altiera, se ne va, se non per gli ornamenti, almeno per la tavola, opera singolare di Raffaello d'Urbino, chi non riverirà con cristiana pietà il Santo? (Vasari) Fil-

*ippo di Ansidei di Catrano ne fù il fondatore nel 1481.*' Lancellotti almost certainly took his reference to Filippo from the inscription above the chapel, transcribed in Appendix 6 below, although it is unclear why he gives the date as 1481, rather than 1483. Another tradition has Filippo Ansidei acquiring the chapel as early as 1442 (see Appendix 5), an explanation accepted by Manzoni, *op. cit.* (note 5), p.628–29. At the end of the seventeenth century, Padre Marco Miserocchi recorded that in 1444, for seventy-five florins, the friars had sold the right to use an olive press ('un Molino d'Olio') below the convent's chapterhouse on Via S. Simone to 'un tal Filippo Ansidei' who 'aveva grande quantità d'Oliivi': *Origine della chiesa e convento di S. Fiorenzo nella città di Perugia, dell'Ordine dei Servi di M. Vergine*, Rome, Marianum, Archivio Generale dei Serviti, MS Q<sup>3</sup>.III.6, fol.44r.

<sup>35</sup> The present inscription to the left of Nicola Monti's copy of Raphael's altarpiece reads 'D.O.M. in eius altaris locum quod Nicolai Episcopi Murenensis Sancto numini a Philippo Ansideo de Katarano saeculo XV labente fuerat sic exornatum parentis aemulus pietate in familiae patronum Tiberius Ansideus templi restorationis ad occasionem hocce reposuit A.D.MDCCCLXXVII.'

Manzoni's 1899 article, but his reading was deeply flawed, for some of the passages do not refer to Filippo Ansidei's chapel at all, but to another Ansidei foundation within the church.

Much of the confusion stems from two closely related texts copied for Cardinal Ansidei (see Appendix 3 and 4). In both versions the Ansidei chapel is described on the left side of the church from the entrance 'con ornamento di legno dorato', accompanied by family *stemmi*, a merchant's emblem (Fig. 17), and an inscription recording the dedication of the altar in 1515 by 'Antonius, et Haeredes Bernardini de Catrano'. Manzoni identified this 'Bernardino de Catrano' with one of Filippo's younger sons of that name, who was frequently documented in Perugia at the beginning of the sixteenth century. He argued that this Bernardino di Filippo had commissioned the chapel's altarpiece from Raphael, an assertion of patronage that continues to be routinely repeated in the literature.<sup>38</sup> The inscription also mentioned a certain 'Antonius', whom Manzoni identified as Bernardino's grandson of that name (by his eldest son, Cesare). But several aspects of the passage are puzzling. The chapel described was dedicated to the 'Madonna delle Grazie' rather than St Nicholas, while the 1777 inscription commemorating the location of Raphael's altarpiece is today on the right-hand side of the nave, not the left-hand side (Fig. 11, I). The date of the inscription of 1515 is also too late to be connected with either the foundation of the chapel (1483) or the completion of the altarpiece (1505).

In fact, both Manzoni's identifications are demonstrably incorrect. The reference to 'Haeredes Bernardini' requires Bernardino di Filippo to have died by 1515, and Manzoni assumed this to be the case, but both the Ansidei papers and the Perugian *notarile* document his presence long after this date.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, Bernardino's grandson Antonio di Cesare had not even been born by 1515.<sup>40</sup> Alternative candidates for the 1515 inscription are suggested by the Perugian *catasto* accounts for this period. In the early years of the sixteenth century the brothers Antonio and Bernardino di Piergiovanni de Catrano were assessed for the quarter of Porta Sole, having earlier subdivided their property with a third brother, Federigo.<sup>41</sup> The same symbol from the chapel in S. Fiorenzo is prominently emblazoned beside their names, leaving little doubt that these brothers from the Benincasa branch of the family, second cousins to Filippo, were those commemorated in the 1515 inscription (Fig. 18).<sup>42</sup> In his *Scorta Sagra*, Ottavio Lancellotti cited the 1515 dedication, not in his description of the St Nicholas chapel in S. Fiorenzo, but in a



13. *Virgin and Child enthroned with Sts John the Baptist, Joseph, Fiorenzo and the Blessed Filippo Benizzi*, by Simbaldo Ibi. 1515. Panel, 170 by 210.5 cm. (Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, Perugia).

separate entry for the chapel of Beato Filippo Benizzi in the same church: 'The [chapel's] panel is not deemed an average work. It formerly belonged to the Catrani family, having been founded in 1515 by Antonio and the heirs of Bernardino Catrani, today it belongs to the Timotei.'<sup>43</sup> This information must derive from the same inscription recorded by Manzoni's source, but the chapel was evidently not Filippo Ansidei's foundation, which Lancellotti recorded elsewhere in his compendium.

Lancellotti's text establishes beyond doubt that there were two Ansidei chapels in S. Fiorenzo in the sixteenth century:

legio del Cambio in ASP, Famiglie privati: Ansidei, carte miscellanea, no. 15 (*Ricordi di atti giudiziari antichi dal 1500 a tutto il 1600 nel registro vecchio concernante Ansidei*), fol. iv.

<sup>36</sup> ASP, Scritture disposte per alfabeto, no. 25 (*La Madonna degli Ansidei a S. Fiorenzo*).

<sup>37</sup> Manzoni, *op. cit.* (note 5), p. 630, believed the copies to date from the years of Cardinal Ansidei's episcopate. The cardinal, together with Fulvio Antonio and Aldegonda Ansidei, wanted to clarify which branch of the family now held the patronage of the chapel, and for this reason 'desiderano pertanto tutte le notizie che abbino i PP. di S. Fiorenzo circa la detta cappella, come sta descritta nei loro libri'. None of the passages can be traced in the surviving documents from the archive of S. Fiorenzo, much of which was lost during the Napoleonic suppression.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Meyer Zur Capellen, *op. cit.* (note 5), p. 165.

<sup>39</sup> Manzoni, *op. cit.* (note 5), p. 632, claimed both Bernardino and his son Cesare were dead by 1515. For Bernardino, see P. Ansidei: *Degli Antichi Signori e Conti di Catrano nobili perugini*, Rocca S. Casciano 1884, p. 31, recording Bernardino's birth in 1479, together with a *notarile* reference to him from 1523, when he divided his estate with his elder brother Niccolò to establish his own household, and his death in 1537. E. Agostini: *Famiglie perugine*, Perugia, Archivio Storico di S. Pietro, MS CM 201, fol. 364r, cites a *notarile* record concerning Bernardino di Filippo di Ansideo from 1533. 'Bernardino di Filippo Ansidei' is documented in February 1519 before the Col-

<sup>40</sup> Ansidei, *op. cit.* (note 39), p. 37.

<sup>41</sup> ASP, Catasti, serie II, reg. 7, fol. 207r, assessed for 324 *libre* on 31st December 1505, having arrived at a 'divisione cum federigo eorum frater camali'. The three brothers had been assessed together in an earlier tax entry on fol. 212r. For further information on the various Ansidei *catasto* entries, see A. Grohmann: *Città e territorio tra medioevo ed età moderna (Perugia sec. XIII-XVI). Tomo I: La città*, Perugia 1981, pp. 418-21. Ansidei, *op. cit.* (note 39), p. 21, recorded Antonio and Bernardino di Piergiovanni de Catrano in the parish of S. Fiorenzo in 1484.

<sup>42</sup> The same symbol is also drawn beside the earlier tax assessment of Bernardino, Antonio and Federigo; see the document cited at note 41 above, fol. 212r.

<sup>43</sup> Lancellotti, MS cited at note 34 above, fol. 325r: 'L'istesso [devotion] può farsi alla Cappella del medesimo Beato in S. Fiorenzo. La Tavola non è stimata opera ordinaria. Era già de' Signori Catrani, havendola nel 1515 fondata Antonio, e gli eredi di Bernardino Catrani, hoggi è de' Signori Timotei'.

Filippo Ansidei's 1483 chapel dedicated to St Nicholas, and another founded by the Benincasa branch of the family in 1515. Furthermore, Lancellotti glossed his judgment of the Benizzi altarpiece with a marginal note: 'It being a work by the Perugian Sinibaldo Ibi, disciple of Raphael Santi of Urbino.'<sup>44</sup> This painting is identifiable as Sinibaldo Ibi's *Virgin and Child enthroned with Sts John the Baptist, Joseph, Fiorenzo and the Blessed Filippo Benizzi* in the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria in Perugia (Fig. 13), which was first linked by Giuseppe Vermiglioli in 1837 to a 1515 commission by Antonio and Bernardino Catrani for their chapel in S. Fiorenzo, on the basis of a *ricordanza* then in the convent's archive.<sup>45</sup> The iconography of Ibi's altarpiece, with Filippo Benizzi kneeling before an enthroned Virgin and Child, reflects both the altar's official Marian dedication, and its role as a devotional focus for the Servite Benizzi, who was never canonised.

Having discounted the references to the 1515 foundation, the remaining passages in the 1720s *fondo* that actually concern Filippo Ansidei's chapel can be reassessed (see Appendix 5 and 6). The most important of these described the St Nicholas chapel 'in the body of the church, opposite St Joseph, by the pilaster' (see Appendix 5). This information, combined with the memorial to the altarpiece in the church today, allows us to establish the location of the Ansidei chapel within the interior of S. Fiorenzo. The 1777 inscription '*in eius altaris locum*' is immured to the left of the rebuilt Ansidei chapel, which incorporates a copy after the main panel of Raphael's altarpiece by Nicola Monti (now the second altar on the right-hand side of the nave; Fig. 11, I and A2). Moretti believed that the St Nicholas chapel was originally situated directly behind this altar, in the more eastern of the two gothic side chapels that were closed off from the nave in Pietro Carattoli's rebuilding of the church (Fig. 11, A3).<sup>46</sup> However, a recessed chapel of this kind would hardly correspond to the description of the altar in the 1720s, '*nel corpo della chiesa . . . nel pilastro*' (see Appendix 5).<sup>47</sup> The discrepancy can be resolved by a ground plan of the church and its altars drawn by the friars around 1650, the only source of its kind that predates Carattoli's radical alterations (Fig. 12).<sup>48</sup> The church is drawn in schematic fashion, but the major architectural features – the double portal, Latin cross and rectilinear *cappella maggiore* – are all recorded accurately. The two side chapels on the right side of the church are included as autonomous struc-

tures, but another altar is shown at the head of the nave (Fig. 11, A1), to the left of the entrance to the chapel which Moretti identified as that of the Ansidei.<sup>49</sup> The isolated location of this altar would explain the description of the St Nicholas chapel on a pilaster in the main body of the church (see Appendix 5).<sup>50</sup> It can also be reconciled with the location specified by the present commemorative inscription (Fig. 11, I).

Once this reconstruction is accepted, several otherwise puzzling aspects of the Ansidei altarpiece fall into place. The late addition of the fictive barrel vault and arch would have rendered the free-standing St Nicholas chapel more imposing in relation to the other two altars on the right side of the nave, both of which were placed within separate groin-vaulted chapels. The steeply raked lighting of the altarpiece from the upper right reflects the principal light source for the nave, the window high on the west façade.<sup>51</sup> The exposed yet restricted location of the St Nicholas chapel between the transept and the entrance arch to the middle chapel on the south side of the nave may explain several ambiguous comments in the sources concerning the superstructure and ornament of the altar. Lancellotti praised the chapel 'at least for the panel if not for the ornament'<sup>52</sup> while Cardinal Ansidei's sources were unsure whether it should be termed '*un altare o cappella*' (see Appendix 5). The cardinal's own desire to move Raphael's altarpiece to a better ('*migliore*') chapel within S. Fiorenzo and to construct a new frame may likewise reflect the restricted nature of the chapel's original setting and its lack of ornament (see Appendix 2). The brilliance of Raphael's solution was to create the illusion of a vaulted, chapel-like space where none may have existed.

The recognition that the Ansidei family patronised two chapels in S. Fiorenzo in the early sixteenth century also helps to resolve the problem of the reconstruction of the altarpiece's predella. Overlooked by Vasari, it was first described with 'many beautiful little scenes, worthy of such a man' by Cesare Crispolti the Elder in his 1597 account of outstanding works of art in Perugia.<sup>53</sup> Today, only one scene from the predella survives, the National Gallery's *St John the Baptist preaching* (Fig. 14), which was bought from S. Fiorenzo with the altarpiece by Gavin Hamilton for Lord Robert Spencer.<sup>54</sup>

The extracts copied for Cardinal Ansidei (see Appendix 5 and 6) indicate that the predella took the form of a *gradino* (literally 'step'), a box-shaped construction that was standard

<sup>44</sup> Lancellotti, MS cited at note 34 above, fol. 325r: '*essendo lavoro di Sinibaldo Ibi perugino, e discepolo di Raffaello Santij da Urbino*'. For Sinibaldo Ibi (c.1475–c.1550), see S. Kieffhaber: 'Ibi, Sinibaldo', in J. Turner, ed.: *The Dictionary of Art*, London 1996, XV, pp. 60–61. Sinibaldo's career began in Perugino's workshop, but in 1496 he took a year's lease on a workshop near the Porta Eburnea together with several other local painters, including Raphael's later collaborator Berto di Giovanni.

<sup>45</sup> G. Vermiglioli: *Memorie di Bernardino Pinturicchio, pittore perugino*, Perugia 1837, pp. 244–45, note 212, citing '*un libro di ricordanze spettanti alla medesima chiesa di S. Fiorenzo fol. 41. ter. 42. e nell'archivio del medesimo convento da noi visto, ed esaminato nel 1810, ne oggi sappiamo se più vi esista*'. See also F. Santi: *Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria: Dipinti, sculture e oggetti dei secoli XV–XVI*, Rome 1985, pp. 156–57, although curiously this evidence has never been related to Manzoni's interpretation of the Ansidei documents. The note appended to the eighteenth-century *memoria* reproduced here as Appendix 3 indicates that Sinibaldo's altarpiece was later removed from the Catrani chapel to the convent's refectory, probably in the 1710s. This documents also refers to the artist as '*un scolaro di Pietro*', which Manzoni, *op. cit.* (note 5), pp. 629 and 640, read to mean Raphael, but it could equally apply to Sinibaldo.

<sup>46</sup> Moretti, *op. cit.* (note 31), p. 48, and the annotated plan repr. between pp. 48–49.

<sup>47</sup> Moretti, *ibid.*, claimed that '*è visibile, ancor oggi, l'inquadratura del muro dentro cui il capolavoro è stato per 260 anni*' on the south wall of the chapel. The crude masonry frame and modern hook visible today are improbable remnants of the sixteenth-century arrangement. If they bear any connection to Raphael's painting, it may have resulted from Cardinal Ansidei's desire to move the altarpiece to a more fitting location in the late 1720s (see note 37 above). It is unclear whether the cardinal's wish was realised before the picture was sold in 1764.

<sup>48</sup> The plan is folded into the back cover of Padre Misserocchi's *Origine della chiesa e convento di S. Fiorenzo*, MS at note 34 cited above. Another copy, drawn in graphite and differing in minor details, is now in the Vatican, Archivio Segreto, Congregazione sopra lo Stato dei Regolari, Relationes 43 (Serviti), fols. 296v–297r. Misserocchi's manuscript dates from 1692, but the ground plan seems to have been drawn in connection with the Visitation conducted on 12th March 1650.

<sup>49</sup> The two side chapels, today joined to form a single chamber, were originally partitioned by a dividing wall; see Moretti, *op. cit.* (note 31), p. 56: '*qualcuno ha abbattuto una parte del muro che le divideva*'. This helps to explain their representation as separate structures in the Marianum plan.

<sup>50</sup> The Ansidei chapel is described in Appendix 5 as opposite an altar dedicated to



14. *St John the Baptist preaching*, by Raphael. 1505. Panel, 29.2 by 54 cm. (National Gallery, London).

in contemporary central Italian altarpiece production.<sup>55</sup> One of the passages describes 'a St John the Baptist preaching in the desert on the right, and a shipwreck on the left' (see Appendix 5); the first scene can be identified with the National Gallery panel, the latter with the well-known posthumous miracle of St Nicholas of Bari saving a ship in a storm. However, Manzoni asserted that the predella was divided into three scenes, with a *Sposalizio*, or *Marriage of the Virgin*, at the centre, notwithstanding the difficulties posed by the dimensions of the surviving *Baptist* panel.<sup>56</sup> In fact, the *Sposalizio* tradition depends entirely on a note appended to one of the eighteenth-century transcriptions describing the 1515 altar: 'beneath the altarpiece . . . there is painted on wood the Marriage of the Virgin by the hand of Pietro [Perugino] or Raphael' (see Appendix 4; the reticence regarding the attribution is not without significance). This *Sposalizio* scene must have formed part of the predella for Sinibaldo Ibi's *Virgin and Child enthroned with saints* of 1515 (Fig. 13), and it may be safely discounted from the reconstruction of Raphael's altarpiece.

This lends much greater credibility to the other early eighteenth-century description of the predella cited above which claimed that it showed the panel of *St John the Baptist preaching* on the right and a shipwreck on the left (see Appendix 5). Right and left may be confused here, or else perceived from the Virgin's point of view, for the arrangement of the narra-

tive scenes would surely have corresponded with the figures in the main panel, that is with *St John the Baptist preaching* to the left and the St Nicholas shipwreck scene to the right – indeed, the Baptist's emphatic gesture in the surviving predella scene seems to acknowledge his identically attired counterpart in the main panel above. J.D. Passavant later described a predella with three scenes devoted to the life of the Baptist, but this reconstruction should be rejected, together with the same author's related claim that the National Gallery's predella scene was the central image.<sup>57</sup> Passavant was writing some eighty years after the altarpiece had been sold and did not specify his source. Moreover, a predella wholly given over to the Baptist's life would have been eccentric for an altar dedicated to St Nicholas. Any central predella image must have been smaller than the two flanking narrative scenes from the lives of the saints, and may have doubled as some form of tabernacle.<sup>58</sup> Whatever the precise arrangement of the narrative scenes, the predella also incorporated 'dipinte nel gradino sotto del quadro', two Ansidei coats of arms (Fig. 15; see Appendix 6), and the need to accommodate these in any reconstruction (presumably at the extremities of the predella) must be a further argument against the existence of a third narrative scene.

One final problem remains to be resolved: the identity of Raphael's patron. The chapel had been erected by Filippo Ansidei in 1483, and his testament of 1490 charged his direct

St Joseph ('*incontro S. Giuseppe*'), which is likely to be the chapel of St Joseph patronised by the Gregori family, recorded in S. Fiorenzo by Lancellotti, MS cited at note 34 above, fol. 88v. Its location is not specified, but the Marianum plan does depict an altar directly opposite the suggested location of Raphael's altarpiece. The chapel proposed by Moretti, on the other hand, does not have a symmetrical altar on the left nave wall. The same disposition of altars is recorded on the version of the ground plan in the Vatican; see note 48 above.

<sup>51</sup> This was originally a rose window but was converted by Carattoli into a rectangular opening topped by a segmental arch. The location of this light source confirms observations on the lighting in the painting made by A. Braham and M. Wyld: 'Raphael's "St John the Baptist Preaching"', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* 8 (1984), p. 15. For a reconstruction of the façade before Carattoli's interventions, see Moretti, *op. cit.* (note 31), second illustration after p. 52 (unpaginated). Traces of the earlier oculus are still visible in the masonry of the façade.

<sup>52</sup> Lancellotti, MS cited at note 34 above, fol. 476r.

<sup>53</sup> Crispolti, MS cited at note 33 above, fol. 28r: '*Nel predolino ancora della detta tavola si veggiono molto belle historiette, e degne di un tanto huomo.*'

<sup>54</sup> Spencer retained it for the rest of his life, and on his death it was sold to Lord Lans-

downe, from whose heirs it was acquired by the Gallery in 1983 to be reunited with the altarpiece; Gould, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 162–65, no. 48.

<sup>55</sup> The altarpiece itself is painted on a substantial poplar panel made up of six vertical boards, and measures almost 6 cm. at its thickest point. A broad unpainted border at the bottom, 20 cm. deep, would have slotted behind the predella construction. At the top, the longest boards extend well beyond the paint surface, presumably to help secure the painting to the wall and into the structure of the frame.

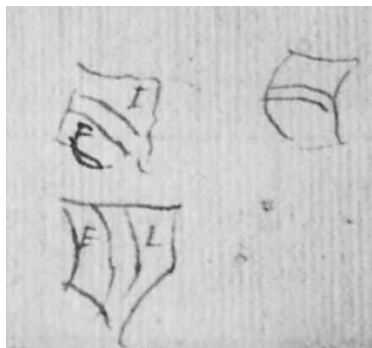
<sup>56</sup> The conflation originates in Manzoni, *op. cit.* (note 5), p. 637: '*Era divisa in tre parti in cui erano figurate tre storiette*'; most recently this is perpetuated in Meyer Zur Capellen, *op. cit.* (note 5), p. 165.

<sup>57</sup> J.D. Passavant: *Rafael von Urbino und sein Vater Giovanni Santi*, Leipzig 1839–58, II, pp. 44–45; the author's statement that the other two scenes were badly damaged when the rest of the altarpiece was sold may explain both the subsequent disappearance of the remainder of the predella and the confusion regarding its subject-matter.

<sup>58</sup> The likelihood that any central predella scene must have been smaller than the two lateral scenes, owing to the *Baptist preaching* being more than one-third the width of the painted area of the main altar panel, was raised by Braham and Wyld, *op. cit.* (note 51), p. 16, note 6.

heirs to execute the terms of the bequest (see Appendix 1). One of the documents copied in the 1720s described two coats of arms 'in pietra da piedi', with that on the right ('in Cornu Epistolae') bearing the initials 'F.I.' (see Appendix 6, the arms were then sketched below; see Fig. 15).<sup>59</sup> The initials in these stone *stemmi* (not to be confused with the arms painted on the altarpiece predella) surely stand for Filippo and his wife Giovanna (or Iohanna) and indicate that the altar *mensa* and the part of the chapel 'da piedi' dated from 1483.<sup>60</sup> Passavant claimed that Raphael's altarpiece was painted for Filippo's heirs and, to judge from his will, one would expect this to have been the case. As we have seen, there is no reason to connect Filippo's younger son Bernardino with the commission, as Manzoni attempted to demonstrate.<sup>61</sup>

Mancini, rejecting Manzoni's Bernardino hypothesis, believed that the choice of saints depicted in the altarpiece pointed instead to the involvement of two other family members, Niccolò and Giovanni Ansidei. Mancini's proposal, however, was marred by several misunderstandings of the family's genealogy. He claimed that Niccolò and Giovanni were Filippo's brothers, whereas Niccolò was in fact his eldest surviving son. Filippo did have a brother named Giovanni, although there is no reason to think he was directly connected with the altarpiece commission.<sup>62</sup> Filippo also had a son of the same name, but this Giovanni had already died in 1478 at the age of six.<sup>63</sup> Nor do we know if either Giovanni was christened in the name of the Baptist rather than the Evangelist. Instead, the connection with the Baptist probably came through Filippo Ansidei's eldest son Niccolò, whose own son was baptised Giovanni Battista and would have been about nine years old when the altarpiece was painted.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, in 1505 Giovanni Battista was Niccolò's only surviving male child (his siblings Filippo and Eusebio had already died in childhood).<sup>65</sup> This reinforces the impression that Niccolò Ansidei, as Filippo's direct heir, was the prime mover behind the commission. Niccolò continued his father's book of *memorie* after Filippo's death in 1490 and resided with his family in the Palazzo Ansidei on Via Alessi.<sup>66</sup> There is some circumstantial evidence that other members of Filippo's wider



15. Sketch of Ansidei arms on the predella and base of the St Nicholas altar (ASP, Scritture disposte per alfabeto, no.25, *La Madonna degli Ansidei a S. Fiorenzo*).



16. Coat of arms from Filippo Ansidei's *catasto* entry (ASP, *Catasti*, serie II, reg.7, fol.152r).

family contributed towards the cost of the chapel, but Niccolò must have determined the major aspects of the altarpiece's imagery.<sup>67</sup> The finished panel thus illustrates with startling directness the succession of the Ansidei generations from father to son, as Niccolò's patron saint cedes pride of place by the Virgin's right hand to the vigorous young Baptist, representing his son and heir, Giovanni Battista.

The particular setting of the St Nicholas altar prompted Raphael to conceive the most resolved altarpiece of his early career. Technical examination has exposed a complex genesis; having first considered Perugino's vaulted arcade in the Frankfurt drawing, Raphael designed the main panel without architecture, before finally introducing an arched opening with barrel vault, a structure he had previously used in the altarpiece of the *Coronation of St Nicholas of Tolentino* of c.1500–01.<sup>68</sup> In this respect, Raphael's compensatory setting for the *Ansidei Madonna* carries wider implications for our understanding of contemporary altarpiece design, where fictive architecture is commonly considered to respond to existing space. The ingenious solution Raphael devised for the modest surroundings of the St Nicholas chapel anticipates the choices he later made when creating a much grander spatial illusion for his *School of Athens* within the confines of the Stanza della Segnatura.

<sup>59</sup> The heraldry conforms to the *stemma* that accompanies Filippo Ansidei's *catasto* entry; see Fig. 16.

<sup>60</sup> It is unclear why Manzoni, *op. cit.* (note 5), p.629, read the 'I' as for 'Isabella'. He also connected (p.632) the initial to Bernardino di Filippo's wife Elisabetta, or alternatively Isabella (based on a misreading of Appendix 5; see note 61 below). Filippo's will of 1490 names 'Dominam Vannam eius uxorem sibi heredem universalem', ASP, Archivio Notarile, Franciscus ser Iacopi 1472–94, fol.366r.

<sup>61</sup> The Bernardino mentioned in the document at Appendix 5 is Bernardino di Filippo's grandson of the same name (1565–1625). Angela (d.1671), daughter of this later Bernardino, is also named as possessing a claim to the patronage of the chapel, but the other family members cited are descendants of Filippo Ansidei's younger son Persiano, namely Persiano's great-grandson of the same name (1584–1651) and his nephew Francesco (d.1648); for these later generations of the Ansidei family, see Ansidei, *op. cit.* (note 39), pp.37, 47; Tavv. VIII, IX.

<sup>62</sup> Mancini, *op. cit.* (note 5), pp.57–60. It is not known whether Filippo's brother Giovanni di Ansideo was still alive in the first years of the sixteenth century; he is last documented as a member of the Collegio della Mercanzia in 1497; see Ansidei, *op. cit.* (note 39), p.29.

<sup>63</sup> Ansidei, *op. cit.* (note 39), p.30; Giovanni di Filippo di Ansideo, born on 27th August 1472, died on 18th July 1478 and was buried in S. Fiorenzo. Filippo's will mentions only 'Nicolaio, Bernardino et Persiano suis filiis legitimis', ASP, Archivio Notarile, no.226, fol.366r. It is unclear why Manzoni, *op. cit.* (note 5), p.632, claimed that Bernardino inherited most of his father's estate, as he is only named in conjunction

with his two brothers in Filippo's will. Niccolò's precedence is acknowledged by the clause pertaining to Filippo's daughter Urbana, who was only to marry with the 'consensu et voluntate domine Vanne eius matris, Nicolai eius fratris et Francisci Benincase' (fol.366r). Urbana is omitted from Ansidei genealogies, but for Francesco di Benincasa, one of Filippo's executors, see Ansidei, *op. cit.* (note 39), p.21.

<sup>64</sup> Ansidei, *op. cit.* (note 39), p.31; Giovanni Battista di Niccolò di Filippo was born on 22nd June 1496 and is documented in 1532 and 1533.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.31–32; Niccolò's first son, named Filippo after his grandfather, was born on 15th March 1495 but died a few days later. Eusebio di Niccolò, born on 17th September 1498, died in 1502. Niccolò's other sons, Fabio, Ottaviano, Francesco and Orazio, were all born after 1507.

<sup>66</sup> Niccolò recorded the births of his own children in his father's book of account, just as Filippo had done before him; document cited at note 7 above, fols.17r and 110v.

<sup>67</sup> In September 1505 Aurelio di Simone Ansidei, Filippo's nephew, willed one hundred florins to the church of S. Fiorenzo. The money had been left to him by his uncle Gaspare, another of Filippo's brothers; see ASP, Archivio Notarile, no.529, Ser Vittorio di Ser Matthei, fol.78v. Returning to the Frankfurt drawing (Fig.8), it is conceivable that St Nicholas of Tolentino may have had some significance as a second name saint for Niccolò Ansidei.

<sup>68</sup> Most clearly visible in the study for this altarpiece now in Lille; see Chapman, Henry and Plazzotta, *op. cit.* (note 6), pp. 100–03, no.17. For Raphael's early facility with architecture, see J. Shearman: 'The Born Architect?', Beck, *op. cit.* (note 30), pp.203–10.

## Appendix

## Documents concerning the two Ansidei chapels in S. Fiorenzo, Perugia

1. Extract from Filippo Ansidei's will, stipulating a bequest of one hundred florins for his chapel dedicated to St Nicholas in S. Fiorenzo, 12th October 1490. (ASP, Archivio Notarile, no.226, Ser Francesco di Ser Iacopo, fol.365r-v; published in Manzoni, *op. cit.* (note 5), pp.643-44, with some errors and misdated to 12th December).

In nomine domini amen. Anni Domini millesimo cccc.lxxxx. indictione optava tempore domini Innocentii pape optavi die xii. octobris. Actum Perusii in domo infrascripti testatoris in camera ubi iacet infirmus sita in porta Solis et parochie sancti Florentii in suos confines presentibus Antonio Nicolai alias el Patriarcha, Basilio ser Tholomei ser Nicolai, Antonio Bartolomei Antonii, civibus perusinis porte Solis, Bonifatio Melchioris Fini de Perusio porte sancte Suxanne, Guidone Cristofori Vignatelli de Perusio porte sancti Angeli, Antonio Nicolai di Asisio habitatore Perusii et Egidio Menenchi(?) dicto el Camerlengho, de castro Sancti Fortunati testibus ad infrascripta habitis vocatis et ab infrascripto testatore rogatis.

Cum hominis vita labilis sit et caduca et nil certius morte et nil incertius hora mortis id circho spectabilis vir Philippus Ansidei Simonis de Perusio, porte Solis et parochie sancti Florentii, sanus, per gratiam domini nostri Jesu Christi, mente, sensu et intellectu, licet corpore languens, in bona et recta scientia et memoria constitutus, timens mortis casum, nolens intestatus decedere, ne de suis bonis et rebus aliqua inter alios valeat exoriri discordia, hoc ipsius testamentum nuncupativum, quod dicitur . . . (?) in infrascriptum modum facere procuravit et fecit.

In primis quidem comendando animam suam omnipotenti deo, a quo creata extitit, iudicavit corpus suum sepelli apud ecclesiam sancti Florentii (fol.365v) apud quam sui corporis sepulturam eligit, et supra sui corporis sepultura expendi illam quantitatem pecuniarie, quam videbitur et placebit infrascriptis suis fideicommissariis.

Item iudicavit et reliquit ecclesie sancti Florentii et fratribus ipsius ecclesie florenos centum ad rationem xl. bolognenorum pro quolibet floreno pro dote capelle ipsius testatoris erepte in dicta ecclesia sub nomine sancti Nicolai . . . (?) pro infrascriptum eius heredem et convertendos in emptione bonorum stabilium; que bona sic emenda non possint ullo umquam tempore vendi sit continue fructus recolligendi ex bonis emendis sint pro victu fratrum dicte ecclesie; cum hoc onere dictis fratribus iniuncto, quod dicti fratres perpetuis futuris temporibus teneantur debeant et astrepti sint qualibet die qua misse secundum ritum sancte matris celeste celebrantur in dicta capella celebrari facere missam unam, et in die festivitatis sancti Nicolai de mense decembris celebrari facere missam cantandam. Et si dicti fratres dicte ecclesie in promissis remissi essent et predicta non observarent, dictam ecclesiam et fratres a dicto legato privavit et bona sic emenda devenire voluit ad infrascriptam eius heredem et ad ipsius heredes.

2. Cardinal Ansidei requests information from the friars of S. Fiorenzo regarding the chapel of his ancestor Filippo Ansidei, c.1726-30. (ASP, Scritture disposte per alfabeto, no.25 (*La Madonna degli Ansidei a S. Fiorenzo*), no foliation; published in Manzoni, *op. cit.* (note 5), p.630, described 'In altro foglietto, di carattere meno antico').

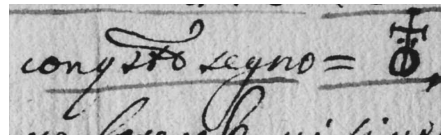
Filippo Ansidei figlio di Simone Ansidei ascendente comune delle tre Famiglie Ansidei ora esistenti fece la Cappella di S. Nicolò nella Chiesa di S. Fiorenzo col Quadro dipinto da Raffaello di Urbino l'anno 1483.

Desiderando ora il Signor Cardinale Ansidei, e il Signor Fulvio Antonio Ansidei trasferire si nobile Quadro ad altra migliore Cappella, e farvi qualche notabile ornamento di Cornice, et altro, et avendo fatto ciò motivare al Signora Aldegonda Ansidei vedova del Signore Andrea Ansidei, questa ha replicato che credeva spettasse a' suoi figli, atteso che la sua Casa paga certa annua prestazione a' Padri di S. Fiorenzo.

Si desiderano pertanto tutte le notizie che abbino i PP. di S. Fiorenzo circa la detta Cappella, come sta descritta nei loro libri, che cosa paghi l'anno la Casa del Signore Andrea Ansidei, che per quanto si sa non ha più ragione delle altre famiglie, ma come restò questo Ramo nell'antica casa e gli altri Rami ebbero necessità prendere casa altrove, così si crede che abbia continuato qualche atto possessorio che non hanno gli altri rami continuato.

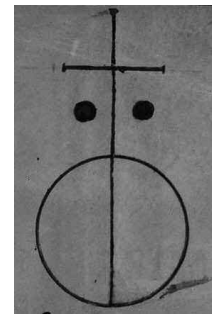
3. Description of the chapel dedicated to the Madonna delle Grazie founded by Antonio and Bernardino de Catrano in 1515 with Ansidei stemmi, text copied c.1726-30. (ASP, Scritture disposte per alfabeto, no.25 (*La Madonna degli Ansidei a S. Fiorenzo*), no foliation; excerpts published in Manzoni, *op. cit.* (note 5), pp.629-30, described 'In un foglietto volante dell'archivio domestico').

Nella chiesa di S. Fiorenzo a man sinistra nell'entrare vicino al Pulpito vi è una Cappella detta della Madonna delle Grazie, et è una delli sette Altari privilegiati con ornamento di legno dorato, et a man destra di detta Cappella vi è dipinta nel legno l'Arma Ansidei con il campo rosso, et una benda gialla d'oro, et a man sinistra vi è un altr'arma in campo bianco, con questo segno = ☩ Essi dall'una come dell'altra parte laterale vi si vedono descritte [le medesime] queste parole, cio'è = Antonius, et haeres Bernardini de Catrano Deo Optimo Maximo dedicaverunt 1515.



17. Emblem from the Bernardino de Catrano inscription of 1515 (ASP, Scritture disposte per alfabeto, no.25, *La Madonna degli Ansidei a S. Fiorenzo*).

18. Emblem accompanying Antonio and Bernardino di Piergiovanni de Catrano's *catasto* entry (ASP, *Catasti*, serie II, reg.7, fol.207r).



Si dice poi da i PP. di S. Fiorenzo, che dieci anni sono Lucchesini loro Generale, ordinasse vi fusse posto in detta Cappella un quadro della Madonna tenuta in gran venerazione, e fusse levato il quadro, che vi era pure con l'Imagine della Madonna opera d'un scolaro di Pietro, che poi fu posto nel Refettorio.

4. Description of the chapel dedicated to the Madonna delle Grazie founded by Antonio and Bernardino de Catrano in 1515 with Ansidei stemmi and the Marriage of the Virgin represented in the predella, text copied c.1726-30. (ASP, Scritture disposte per alfabeto, no.25 (*La Madonna degli Ansidei a S. Fiorenzo*), no foliation; excerpts published in Manzoni, *op. cit.* (note 5), pp.630).

In S. Fiorenzo alla destra del Pulpito vi è una Cappella chiamata della Madonna Santissima delle Grazie con ornamento di legno dorato, et è uno delli sette altari, a man destra [del quadro] vi è dipinta l'arma Ansidei con il campo rosso, et una benda gialla d'oro, a man sinistra, vi è un arma con il campo bianco, con questo segno = ☩, e sotto il quadro, che è coperto, che solo dimostra la faccia della Madonna e del Bambino, vi è dipinto in legno lo sponsalizio [della Madonna] di mano di Pietro, o Raffaello.

Antonius, et Haeres Bernardini de Catrano Deo Optimo Maximo dedicaverunt 1515.

5. Description of the chapel dedicated to St Nicholas founded by Filippo Ansidei with images of the Baptist preaching and a shipwreck in the predella by the hand of Raphael, text copied c.1726-30 (the 1442 foundation date may be an error, but see note 34 above). (ASP, Scritture disposte per alfabeto, no.25 (*La Madonna degli Ansidei a S. Fiorenzo*), no foliation; published in Manzoni, *op. cit.* (note 5), pp.630-31).

Nel corpo della Chiesa, in contro S. Giuseppe nel Pilastro, vedesi un altare o cappella con un'Ancona, dove è dipinta la Madonna con S. Giovanni Battista et un S. Nicolò, e però si chiama la Capella di S. Nicolò, nel cui gradino vi è un S. Giovanni Battista predicante nel deserto a man dritta, et a man sinistra un Naufragio, il tutto di mano di Raffaello d'Urbino.

Questa Capella sino dell'anno 1442 fù eretta da Filippo Ansidei quale vi fece descrivere il suo nome, e imprimere l'arme della Casa Ansidei, nella quale vi hanno, e conservano il ius il Signor Persiano Ansidei, la Signora Isabella Ansidei moglie del già Bernardino Ansidei, di cui resta solo la Signora Angela, Moglie del Signor Diomede dell'Oddi, figlia di detto Bernardino, et il signor Francesco figlio di Pandolfo Ansidei fratello di Persiano.

Fra l'obliqui della Chiesa di S. Fiorenzo:

Item sono obligati dire una messa il giorno all'Altare di S. Nicolò per l'anima di Filippo Ansidei, e nel giorno della Festa di detto Santo la Messa Cantata, quale sino dell'anno 1490 lasciò alla Chiesa di S. Fiorenzo fiorini cento, qual obbligo fù ridotto alla Messa Cantata il giorno della Festa e due Anniversarij l'Anno, e così si osserva.

6. Description of the chapel dedicated to St Nicholas founded by Filippo Ansidei in 1483 incorporating Ansidei stemmi with F.I. monogram, text copied c.1726-30. (ASP, Scritture disposte per alfabeto, no.25 (*La Madonna degli Ansidei a S. Fiorenzo*), no foliation).

Andare a S. Fiorenzo all'Altare di S. Nicolò, che è degli Ansidei, notare il millesimo, che par che vi sia ed in qual parte dell'Altare, e se oltre il nome di Filippo Ansidei, vi sia altro scritto.

Nella Chiesa di Fiorenzo vi è una Cappella di S. Nicolò e sopra di essa vi è scritto [in pietra] = Divo Nicolao Epo. Baren. Philippus Ansidei de Katrano humiliter eressit 1483. Vi sono due arme in pietra da piedi et in quella in cornu epistolae vi sono dentro lo scudo F I, e ve ne sono due altre dipinte nel gradino sotto del quadro.

[three Ansidei shields are sketched below, two containing the F.I. monogram; see Fig.15]