

FROM THE KALENDERHANE TO THE CHURCH OF ST. ANTHONY

ST. FRANCIS' LEGACY IN TÜRKİYE ON THE
EIGHT-HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY
OF HIS DEATH

An exhibition promoted by
The Basilica of Saint Anthony of Padua
The Apostolic Vicariate of Istanbul
The Consulate General of Italy in Istanbul
The Italian Cultural Institute in Istanbul



INAUGURATION SATURDAY, 6 JUNE 2026

Basilica of Saint Anthony of Padua
İstiklal Caddesi No:171
Istanbul



The Basilica of
Saint Anthony
of Padua



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PRESS RELEASE

“From the Kalenderhane to the Church of St. Anthony” An Exhibition on the Eight-Hundredth Anniversary of the Death of Saint Francis

Istanbul, June 2026

The year 2026 marks the 800th anniversary of the death of Saint Francis of Assisi (1226–2026), one of the most revered figures in the history of Christianity, for which the Catholic Church has declared a special jubilee year. On this occasion, the Consulate General of Italy in Istanbul, together with the Apostolic Vicariate of Istanbul, the Basilica of Saint Anthony of Padua, and the Italian Cultural Institute in Istanbul, is pleased to announce the inauguration of the exhibition *From the Kalenderhane to the Church of St. Anthony: St. Francis' Legacy in Türkiye on the Eight-Hundredth Anniversary of His Death*, organized at the initiative of H.E. Msgr. Massimiliano Palinuro, Bishop and Apostolic Vicar of the Latin Catholic Church of Istanbul, with the support of Consul General Mrs. Elena Clemente and the Franciscan Friars of Saint Anthony's Church, and curated by Prof. Paolo Girardelli of the Department of History at Boğaziçi University.

The inauguration will take place on Saturday, 6 June 2026, at the Basilica of Saint Anthony of Padua in Beyoğlu, at the presence of H.E. Giuseppe Manzo, Ambassador of Italy to Türkiye.

The title of the exhibition traces the arc of Franciscan history in Istanbul: from the Kalenderhane — the Byzantine church of the *Theotokos Kyriotissa*, where Franciscan friars were already present during the Latin occupation of Constantinople (1204–1261) — to the present-day Basilica of Saint Anthony on İstiklal Caddesi, built for the most part between 1905 and 1912.

The exhibition traces this long history in five thematic sections: from the origins of the Franciscan Order and its earliest presence in Constantinople, through the establishment of Galata as a center of Latin Catholicism and the dramatic losses and relocations of the seventeenth century, to the role of Saint Anthony's as an intercommunal church serving Levantine Catholics, Armenian Catholics, and even non-Christians alike, and finally to the ambitious early twentieth-century project that gave the Basilica the monumental form it bears today.

After this introductory section — displayed in five panels in the courtyard of the Basilica — visitors are invited to descend into the lower church, which is not normally open to the public, to explore the original architectural drawings of the Basilica by its designers, Giulio Mongeri and Edoardo de Nari. The drawings range from richly colored, artistically elaborated renderings to precise technical plans; together, they offer a vivid picture of the ambition behind this landmark project.

The construction of the Basilica reflected a significant diplomatic and political transition. The protection of the Franciscans in the Ottoman Empire had passed from France to Italy, and the church stood — and still stands — as a symbol of Italian cultural and religious presence in the East. It was declared a Minor Basilica in 1932. Today, the Basilica of Saint Anthony of Padua stands as one of the most prominent landmarks of İstiklal Caddesi and a living testament to eight centuries of Franciscan presence in Istanbul — a history this exhibition invites all visitors to discover.