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NATIONAL SHRINE TO ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI OPENS IN SAN FRANCISCO SATURDAY - NUOVA PORZIUNCOLA HERE ENVISIONED BY ANGELA ALIOTO - POPE BENEDICT XVI VISIT 2010 PREDICTED

21 September 2008



*[Photo by Jason Steinberg Imagery © 2008](#)*

**BY PAT MURPHY**

Sentinel Editor & Publisher

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Pope Benedict XVI may visit San Francisco October 4 2010, the 784th Anniversary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi, although Angela Alioto has yet to inform His Holiness of such probability.

The Tibetan Buddhist Dalai Lama is a probable also, portends Alioto who by force of will — and grace — formally opens the [Nuova Porziuncola National Shrine](#) this Saturday.

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Former San Francisco Supervisor Angela Alioto spearheaded *Nuova Porziuncola* development two years ago facing doubt and some outright disbelief.

“No one thought she could get it done,” mused Mayor Gavin Newsom during a media tour of *Nuova Porziuncola* last week.



*Photo by Jason Steinberg Imagery © 2008*



*Photo by Bill Wilson © 2008*

Not only did she get it done, the Shrine “is the first papally ordained Holy Place in the United States that I can find,” stated Alioto.



*Photo by Bill Wilson © 2008*

“We’ve researched this issue. We’ve looked all over. We can not find any other that has a Papal Decree.”

Cardinal William Levada and San Francisco Archbishop George Niederauer will officiate a procession, a Mass and a special blessing of *Nuova Porziuncola* Saturday, September 27, at 9:30 a.m., attended by invitation only.

Street closure surrounding *Nuova Porziuncola* will accomodate 2:00 p.m. public opening of the Shrine located at 624 Vallejo Street at Columbus Avenue.



*Photo by Jason Steinberg Imagery © 2008*

San Francisco is named after St. Francis of Assisi and the City officially reveres Francis as its patron saint.

Francis was born the son of a wealthy fabric merchant, and went off to war as a knight defending Assisi against nearby Perugia.

After a year as a war prisoner, Francis returned to Assisi renouncing all of his worldly goods and began to care for the sick and the poor. He dedicated himself to the Gospel teachings of Jesus.

Today Francis is the patron saint of the sick and the poor, of the environment and of animals.

“I am totally *passionate* about what St. Francis stood for,” Alioto told The Sentinel.



*Photo by Jason Steinberg Imagery © 2008*

“Love thy neighbors, take care of the sick and the poor, no war, take care of the environment and the animals.

“The four issues which St. Francis stood for *is what we are as a City.*”

Alioto experienced grace at age 14 when she first visited Assisi and developed a lifelong devotion to Francis.

“My passion comes from when I was 14-years-old and I got off that train and walked up that hill to Assisi — you can feel it — and I’ve been back every summer since.”

*Nuova Porziuncola* is for all people, added Alioto, the daughter of San Francisco Mayor Joe Alioto.

“This little shrine is for all faiths... the universality of St. Francis.”



*Gian-Paolo Alioto Veronese, youngest son of Angela Alioto, brother to past Police Commissioner Joe Alioto Veronese, and cousin to [Joe Alioto Jr.](#), a leading contender for the San Francisco Supervisor District 3 seat, seen center*  
*[Photo by Bill Wilson © 2008](#)*

**" 'I want you all in paradise', " Alioto quoted Francis.**



*[Photo by Bill Wilson © 2008](#)*





*Tao symbol important to many faiths*  
*Photo by Bill Wilson © 2008*

“The *Tao* is the last letter of the Jewish alphabet,” explained Alioto.

“It means eternity — it was Francesco’s symbol.

“He signed the end of his letters with it.

“It means eternity and constant movement. It was his symbol.”

The *Tao* permutates through Yin and Yang, and through Taoism.

It also is the symbol of the Roman Catholic Franciscan Third Order.

Within Catholicism, there are three Orders of consecrated life. The first is comprised of bishops and priests, the second of brothers and nuns, the third of lay people.

“That’s what I’m a member of, the tertiaries, the [Third Order of Franciscans](#),” detailed Alioto.

“We’re all over. There are over 260,000 in the United States.

“He was really fun. In his lifetime, he realized civilians were the way to get the word out to the general masses.

“Masses — people who could get married, have kids, have regular lives but try to live the life of St. Francis, try to take care of the [sick](#) and the [poor](#), what we have

done with our (City) homelessness plan, try to take care of the [environment](#) and be [peaceful people](#), not be war people.”

Newsom, a faithful Roman Catholic, shrugged off perception of San Francisco as a secular community.



*Photo by Jason Steinberg Imagery © 2008*



*Photo by Jason Steinberg Imagery © 2008*

“That couldn’t be farther from the truth,” Newsom told The Sentinel.

“There are few cities in America that invest more in faith based solutions to problems.

“We do it, though, in a way [that doesn't divide](#).

“San Francisco has always been a spiritual place.

“It's more intuitive and, in that way, it is more European.

“It requires that all people recognize that their faith is connected to one another, and that's really the spirit of St. Francis and that's the spirit of this project.”

The mayor recalled project obstacles overcome by Alioto.

“No one thought it was going to happen,” Newsom smiled.

“No one understood what she was talking about.

“But then started to take shape. She put up her own money. Her own time and energy.

“All of a sudden now everybody jumped on and now they all claim it as their own idea.

“The church doesn't have a lot of money — ‘Why don't you just put up the money to create a facility next door? Why are you adding to the burdens, the costs?’

“No one knew that she had some tough timelines. She had to demonstrate the ability to raise money for the Archdiocese and they weren't sure she could do it in the allocated time.

“We were out at dinners in people's houses and they weren't necessarily buying into it.

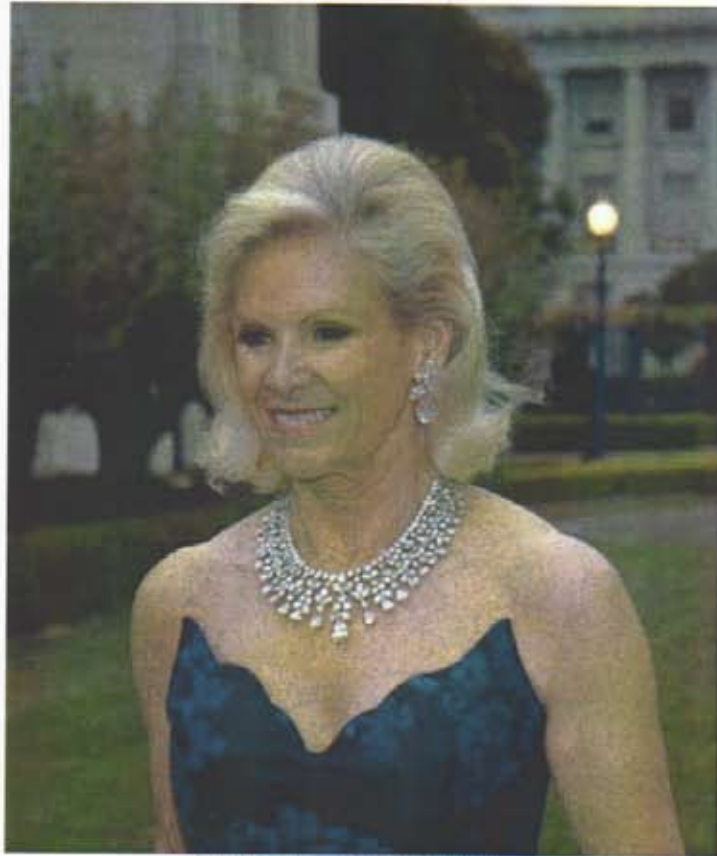
“They were giving her a thousand dollars, a pat on the back, five hundred dollars, but she needed hundreds of thousands of dollars.

“Then a few folks really stepped up.

“The first one was [Nibbi Brothers](#) that said, ‘Alright Angela, we'll do it, we'll try to make it as inexpensive as possible.’

“But then, some of their workers really started to believe in it, were very passionate about it, went way above and beyond. There was a connection beyond just the work.

“And then when that started taking shape, and were able to tour some folks, folks like [DeDe Wilsey](#) and others said, ‘I'll write a big check.’



*Philanthropist DeDe Wilsey*  
*Photo by Bill Wilson © 2008*

**“Once she did it, others started to write big checks and here we are.”**

**The *Nuova Porziuncola* features all the details of St. Francis’ *Porziuncola* in Assisi — rock for rock, fresco for fresco, marble stones for marbles stones are identical replicas.**

**All frescos were done by Stefano Lazzari in Citta del Costello working nine months in his studio and in front of the original *Porziuncola*.**

**Lucio Duchi produced all of the wood artwork.**

**A team of master of fine arts painting students from the Academy of Art University is creating an original mural in the Medieval Giotto-esque style under leadership of master muralist Angela Tirrell and director of the School of Fine Art, Mark Tennant.**



*Jonathan Ahn, MFA student worked on the mural.  
Ahn mentioned they worked many consecutive  
12 hour days to complete the work,  
with Joseph Murphy, Music Director of Nuova Porziuncola  
[Photo by Jason Steinberg Imagery © 2008](#)*



*[Photo by Jason Steinberg Imagery © 2008](#)*

*The mural will grace the entrance to *Luogo di Santa Chiara*, which holds the *Porziuncola*.*

"I'm the only around here probably who hasn't been to Assisi, so this is *my* Porziuncola," said Father Robert Cipriano, Rector of The National Shrine of St. Francis of Assisi.

"This is the one I'll have in my heart when I leave here to go there.



*Rector Bob Cipriano right, and photo below  
Photo by Bill Wilson © 2008*



*Photo by Bill Wilson © 2008*

"St. Francis was a man for all people, and that is exactly what is in my heart — the whole concept; we have Buddhists already coming, we have Jewish friends coming, everybody will come.

“We have two churches in San Francisco — one Lutheran and one Episcopalian — that are called St. Francis.

“He was a man or all people and he went to meet the Kaliff of the Muslim people, and wanted to talk to him about Jesus and the Kaliff loved him so much he kept him with him an entire week.

“He is a man for our times. A man for peace.”

The times summon a San Franciscan Shrine to peace, asserted Michael O’Leary, who serves as Director of Development for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco, Marin, and San Mateo Counties.



*Mike O’Leary with Angela Alioto*  
*Photo by Bill Wilson © 2008*

“It’s going to be a destination where people can feel the presence of St. Francis, and I think in today’s world we need something like that,” O’Leary stated.

“In this City where there is so much action, so much motion, this is a place just to relax and feel that presence.”

Alioto lived her dream to fruition.

“This is an incredible dream come true for my little Franciscan *San Franciscan* heart,” reflected Alioto.

"I go to bed at night and I lie there thinking, 'I cannot believe Francesco's little *Porziuncola* (Francis' part or place) is in the heart of our City, this American City, San Francisco'.

"This will be something that a hundred years from now they will be celebrating the *centennial* going 'Mayor Gavin Newsom, and Archbishop George Niederauer and Cardinal William Levada did an amazing thing for this City'.

"And I think, 'I can't believe we did it'.

"It's *so cool!*" Alioto beamed.



*Photo by Jason Steinberg Imagery © 2008*

"Just one person's vision, one person's dream became our collective reality," the mayor acknowledged.





*Photo by Jason Steinberg Imagery © 2008*

“We’re here to celebrate not just the passion of Angela Alioto but her action, her resolve, her commitment, her constancy, her desire to not take no for an answer and to fight against all odds to make this real.

“I think people don’t yet realize what an extraordinary accomplishment this has been, and what this will mean to this City in terms of marking those significant connections that make this truly a unique place.

“Thank you for fighting and thank you for believing.”

Newsom said chances of a papal visit are real.

“The chances, I think, are very real that the Pope makes a trip out here (with) Cardinal Levada’s connection to this,” Newsom told The Sentinel.

“You’re talking about the right-hand person to the Pope.

“The Pope will be very proud to come out here, and this is a very significant milestone in the history of the Church, not just here in San Francisco but in the United States.”



*Photo by Bill Wilson © 2008*

