



## **The Basilica of Santa Maria di Collemaggio in L'Aquila, seriously damaged in the 2009 earthquake, has been restored and returned to the city's inhabitants**

*Eni contributed its know-how in complex projects and advanced technology to the restoration that was completed on schedule thanks to a unique partnership between Italian Universities, Superintendency, Municipality and Eni*

*L'Aquila, 20 December 2017* – Thanks to a unique partnership between Eni, Superintendency, Italian Universities and the Municipality of L'Aquila, the Basilica of Santa Maria di Collemaggio was today returned to the city's inhabitants, completely restored after the serious damage caused by the 2009 earthquake. The commitment and competence of all those involved has ensured that the restoration was completed on schedule. Eni contributed its know-how in complex projects and advanced technology. The ceremony marking the reopening of the Basilica was held today in the presence of the Italian Minister for Culture and Tourism, Dario Franceschini, the Metropolitan Archbishop of L'Aquila, Giuseppe Petrocchi, the Mayor of L'Aquila, Pierluigi Biondi, the Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape Superintendent of L'Aquila and of the other municipalities affected by the earthquake, Alessandra Vittorini and Eni's Chief Services & Stakeholder Relations Officer, Claudio Granata. The ceremony also included the moving of Saint Celestine V's urn.

The Basilica di Santa Maria di Collemaggio, which is owned by the City of L'Aquila, is an icon of medieval architecture and is considered one of the city's most important churches. When it was built, in 1287, the Basilica was the largest in Abruzzo, and its architectural austerity was seen as a reflection of the teachings of Pietro del Morrone, who was crowned as Pope on the very site of the church, on 29 August 1294 with the name Celestine V.

The complex and careful restoration of the Basilica, which over the centuries has become a core element of local identity, the monument has been returned to the city in its entirety, respecting both its sacredness and historical significance. The church underwent works of structural consolidation, including seismic improvements, the careful reconstruction of collapsed parts, the restoration and reconstruction of architectural and decorative elements, and technological adaptation. Work on the Basilica also included the

redevelopment of the adjacent Parco del Sole, which is due to be completed in the spring of 2018.

The recovery project entrusted the planning, direction of works and coordination for safety to the Architectural Heritage and Landscape Superintendency for the Region of Abruzzo, as well as the Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape Superintendency for L'Aquila and the other affected municipalities, which coordinated the scientific technical support activities provided by the Polytechnic University of Milan, the Sapienza University of Rome and the University of L'Aquila.

In addition to project finance, Eni's contribution consisted in providing its organizational skills in articulated projects, the use of advanced technologies and management expertise gained in an internationally competitive level in highly complex contexts.

The conservation, safety and seismic improvement of the Basilica were the main objectives of the restoration project, as well as the protection of the historical, artistic and cultural value of the monument. The overall structure has been consolidated, the collapsed parts reconstructed using modern techniques and technologies compatible with and respectful of the principles of careful conservation and restoration.

An extremely detailed digital model was developed using a scanner to support a vast and complex database to facilitate surveys and measurement activities, and to ensure the optimal construction management and future maintenance optimization.

In particular, the restoration work on the Basilica involved the consolidation of the façade, bell tower, apse, all of the walls and pillars of the nave (also using controlled demolition techniques), the reconstruction of the collapsed part of the transept, the poly-lobed pillars, the triumphal arch and roof, the careful restoration of the side altars, the precious chapels of Jean Bassand and of the Saint. The restoration led to the most interesting discoveries, particularly the recovering, in new light and colours, of forgotten decorative baroque features. Restoration was also necessary for the floor of the transept area, marble balustrades, frescoes and many other of the Basilica's precious details.

In addition, new technological systems were developed and a structural monitoring system has been installed and a geothermal plant was built for the heating system of the Basilica's pews.

Eni reaffirms its attention and commitment to the area with the re-opening of the Basilica, in line with its long-standing commitment to sustainability. The re-opening is a strong signal marking the return to normal life for the people of L'Aquila, and giving back to them an emblematic symbol of the city's economic and cultural life. To this end, in addition to contributing its skills and project management expertise, Eni has also prioritised safety, a feature of all of the works completed over the last two years, continuing an intervention model developed in the past with great success.

The Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape Superintendency contributed its protection, research and restoration expertise gained in previous complex projects carried out in the Basilica, in addition to the technical and scientific expertise matured in recent broad and articulated reconstruction of cultural assets since 2009. The specialised contribution of the three universities has been fundamental in this process as they oversaw the detailed preliminary analysis and supported the planning process with a high level of professionalism and competence.

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