

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Twenty-first century technology and Old World craftsmanship merge to
create PORZIUNCOLA NUOVA**

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA – In the early 13th century, the beloved St. Francis rebuilt a tiny chapel in Santa Maria degli Angeli, Assisi, and dedicated it to the Holy Mother. It is there that he began his journey of peace and service. He named the small chapel Porziuncola —“little portion” of land.

Eight centuries later, a 78 percent scale replica of the Saint’s personal place of worship has been built in San Francisco’s North Beach. The Porziuncola Project at the National Shrine of St. Francis marks the culmination of a remarkable international endeavor. It also celebrates what is possible when new-age construction technologies meet true Old World craftsmanship.

Angela Alioto, Esq., has been the guiding force in the shrine’s creation from the start. She traveled with friends, supporters and project executive John Kugler to Italy in June 2006 to determine the size of the original Porziuncola. The small contingent first measured the original’s dimensions with dental floss. Soon after, Alioto met with the Provincial of the Basilica and garnered permission for more exact measurements. In December 2006, the Porziuncola was measured and photographed, foot by foot, thereby insuring the precise calibrations critical to the replica.

With photos in hand and prayers in motion, project leaders broke ground in May 2007.

General contractor Nibbi Brothers, Inc. chose Western Construction Group's San Francisco branch for Porziuncola's masonry and stonework. The two firms had worked successfully in restoring The Cliff House. Moreover, Mike Nibbi knew of Western's multi-generational expertise—sons having learned the secrets of stone selection, cutting and placement from their fathers, uncles and grandfathers. Such trade wisdom would be needed, for some of the tools required were hundreds of years old.

Alfonso Rocciola, a retired Nibbi Brothers' project superintendent, came out of retirement to supervise the project. Rocciola traveled with Angela Alioto and Western's crafts manager, Monty Montgomery to Italy to examine the Porziuncola's stonework and other details of the original.

The goal was to use materials so the new replica's stonework would have the same look and color as the original. Budget restraints prohibited shipping all the materials from Assisi. To accomplish the task, Montgomery harvested stones for the front of the chapel from the same nearby fields that St. Francis gathered stones for the original. The natural stones were boxed and shipped back to Western's branch in San Leandro, CA. These stones were the benchmark for use in identifying sources in the United States for similar type and color. Western then used their resources to locate a quarry in Wisconsin to supply the remainder of natural stone needed for the veneer on the interior and exterior walls.

Nibbi Brothers Concrete was in charge of constructing the shotcrete shell. The structure had to be earthquake compliant as required by Bay Area standards. Once the shell was completed, work began on forming of the archways for the doors and windows. To match the look of the original archways, Western used TransMineral Le Décor LimeStone® LD100HP. The mineral charge was plastered in lifts to create the radius shape. Once the mortar was placed, Montgomery had 72 hours to hand-carve the limestone into the needed look.

A four-person Western team crafted the masonry. The natural stone was cut for the veneer application. Then it was cut to replicate the shape of the stone in the photos. Next, the stone was laid out on tables to assure proper placement on the wall. The stone veneer was pointed and stained to match the original walls.

Replicating the radius wall of the nave posed a unique challenge. All of the radius limestone rock had to be manufactured. A mold was fabricated to create the shape and a bench run was

used to form the stones. The stones were then cut to form the radius. This bench run process was the same method used by the original craftsmen over 700 years ago.

After all the cutting was completed and the stones placed, the staining process began. Natural powder oxides were used to mix the stains. The oxides were used because it provides a stable color that will last for centuries.

The results are not only authentic, but earthquake compliant as required by Bay Area standards.

The Porziuncola Nuova was named by Papal Edict on August 2, 2008 and opened to the public on September 27, 2008. The total cost of the project is placed at \$2.9 million. The Porziuncola has been paid for by major donors and the Archdiocese of San Francisco.

Owner: Archdiocese of San Francisco

General Contractor: Nibbi Brothers, Inc., San Francisco

Project Manager: Hunter Brown

Project Superintendent: Alfonso Rocciola

Project Engineer: Murphy Burr Curry, Inc. Structural Engineers

Architect: Taylor Lombardo Architects, LLP, San Francisco

Western's Project Team:

Branch Manager: Barry Petersen

Project Manager: Cecily Olson

Crafts Manager: Monty Montgomery