

The Seven Virtues in Florence's Baptistry Doors

By Stephanie Korczynski

Title: The Seven Virtues (and Humility)

Artist: Andrea Pisano

Date: 1330-36

Technique/Medium: gilded bronze relief

Location: Florence Baptistry, South Door (Italy).





1	2	11	12
3	4	13	14
5	6	15	16
7	8	17	18
9	10	19	20
A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H

Scenes on the South Door (Andrea Pisano) **1.** The angel announces to Zachariah. **2.** Zachariah is struck mute **3.** Visitation **4.** Birth of the Baptist. **5.** Zachariah writes the boy's name. **6.** St John as boy in the desert. **7.** He preaches to the Pharisees. **8.** He announces Christ. **9.** Baptism of his disciples. **10.** Baptism of Jesus. **11.** St John reprimands Herod Antipas. **12.** Incarceration of St. John. **13.** The disciples visit St. John. **14.** The disciples visit Jesus. **15.** Dance of Salome. **16.** Decapitation of St. John. **17.** Presentation of St John's head to Herod Antipas. **18.** Salome takes the head to Herodias **19.** Transport of the body of St. John. **20.** Burial. **A.** Hope **B.** Faith **C.** Charity **D.** Humility **E.** Fortitude **F.** Temperance **G.** Justice **H.** Prudence



Another image for scale- Can you see how tall the girl is? She is looking at the panel which depicts charity.

For a virtual tour of the baptistry (inside and out) see http://firenze.arounder.com/florence_baptistry/

Florence's octagonal Baptistry stands in the Piazza del Duomo (Duomo Square), across from the Duomo cathedral and the Giotto bell tower (Campanile di Giotto). It is one of the oldest buildings in the city, built between 1059 and 1128. The architecture is in Florentine Romanesque style. It is the spiritual heart of Florence, and at one time every child born in the city was baptized inside its great stone font. The baptistry has eight equal sides with a rectangular addition on the west side.

Recommended by Giotto, Andrea Pisano was awarded the commission to design the first set of doors in 1329. The South Doors were originally installed on the east side, facing the Duomo, but transferred to their present location in 1452. The bronze casting and gilding was done by the Venetian Leonardo d'Avanzano, widely recognized at the time as one of the best bronze smiths in Europe. This took no less than six years, the doors being completed in 1336. These Proto-Renaissance doors consist of 28 quatrefoil panels, with the 20 top panels depicting scenes from the life of St. John the Baptist. The eight lower panels picture the seven virtues of hope, faith, charity, (plus humility), fortitude, temperance, justice and prudence. The molded reliefs in the door case were added by Lorenzo Ghiberti in 1452. There is a Latin inscription on top of the door: "Andreas Ugolini Nini de Pisis me fecit A.D. MCCCXXX" (Andrea Pisano made me in 1330).

The bottom two rows depict personifications of virtues seated on benches with identifying inscriptions and the usual attributes. For example, Charity has a flame and holds a cornucopia (symbol of earthly charity), Justice has her sword, Faith a cross and chalice, Hope receives the crown from heaven, and Prudence holds a mirror. Pisano needed a fourth virtue for the layout but Humility was a relevant choice. Historically, this is a time when mendicant orders (religious orders that relied on begging), which stressed simplicity and humility, were influential, and also a time when two important churches of mendicant orders were built--Santa Croce (Franciscan) and Santa Maria Novella (Dominican).



Faith



Hope



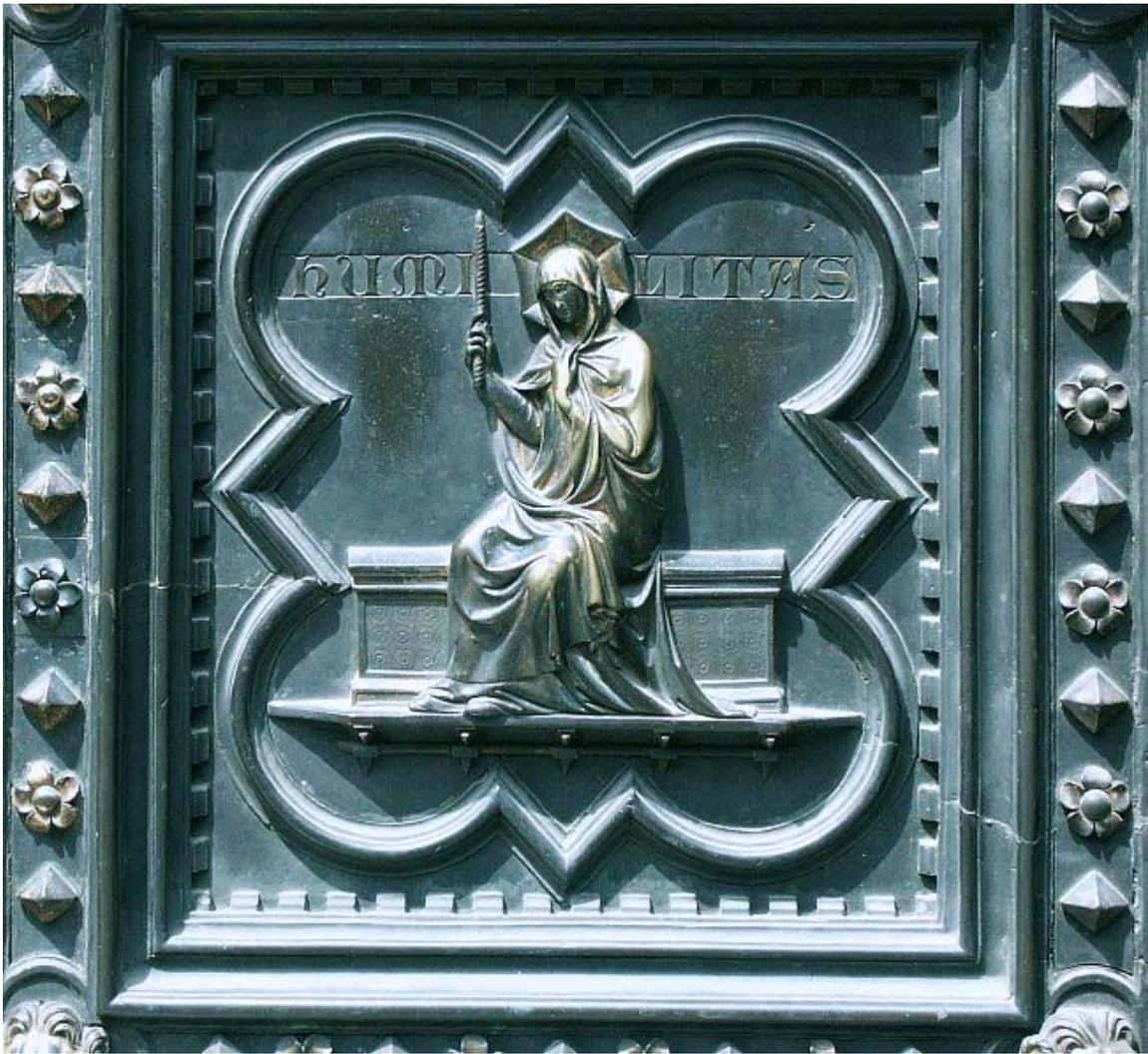
Charity



Fortitude and Temperance



Justice and Prudence



Humility

Humility was added as a needed eighth panel to complete the set and make it balanced. What else could they have included as the eighth panel?