



Episode 5: The Portiuncula

We continue our Dallas road trip all the way up north to Denison, about a 6 minute drive from the Oklahoma border!

St. Patrick in Denison is one of the oldest communities in the Dallas diocese and has been granted the Texas Historical Commission Marker.¹ Its first Mass is documented as being celebrated in 1872 by Father Joseph Martinere before there was even a church structure.² Though not noted in the episode corresponding with Old Churches of Dallas, its original building, erected in 1898, was destroyed by fire in 1911.³ It has since been rebuilt and is known by some as one of the most “impressive buildings in town.”⁴

On the St. Patrick property is a spiritual refuge of which not many are aware: two chapels, one dedicated to Our Mother Mary and one, a replica of the Portiuncula Chapel in Assisi. Throughout the week, parishioners at St. Patrick can be found in the Portiuncula with the Lord in Eucharistic Adoration.

The Portiuncula was a dream of Father John Dick, former pastor at St. Patrick, who inspired the community to raise the funds for this important structure. The Portiuncula has a very special place in the hearts of those with a Franciscan Spirituality, after the example of St. Francis of Assisi.

¹ [Texas History](#)

² [The Sunday Gazetteer](#)

³ [Texas History](#)

⁴ [Vanishing Texas](#)

St. Francis of Assisi in Italy is perhaps one of the most influential Saints of the Medieval period. After a conversion experience that inspired St. Francis to abandon all earthly wealth and possessions, St. Francis began living a life of poverty. In his desire to embody the Gospel in a literal sense, St. Francis begged for all that he had, spent his time traveling and preaching, and dedicated his life to “rebuilding the church.” His radical and counter-cultural response to the Gospel was found to be very attractive and soon, St. Francis had himself a set of followers. Never intending to establish a religious order, St. Francis authored a rule or document that detailed his particular way of life as a Christian.⁵

At one point, St. Francis of Assisi determined that his budding community was in need of a larger space and was able to obtain from the Benedictans a chapel he nicknamed “the little portion”, thus, the Portiuncula. St. Francis repaired the crumbling structure and it became a very dear location to himself and other Franciscans.

In 1216, at the request of St. Francis, the Pope granted a plenary indulgence – *a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins*- to all those who would visit the little chapel. Massive numbers of pilgrims then began visiting the chapel on August 2nd- the Feast of Our Lady of Angels- to receive this plenary indulgence. To accommodate the pilgrims, the Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels was built in 1684 ovetop of the Portiuncula, housing the tiny chapel within it’s much larger cavity.⁶

Today, the members of Franciscan Order can be found all across the globe, sharing their charisms of care for creation, solidarity with our brothers and sisters, non-violence, and poverty which are still very much needed remedies for the modern world. Franciscans are responsible for much of the missionary activity that took place in what is now the United States and, specifically, Texas. The Portiuncula at St. Patrick is only accessible with permission from the Parish. If you wish to experience a pilgrimage that will transport you to Assisi, please contact the Parish Office. As the original Portiuncula was dear to St. Francis, so is its replica to the community of St. Patrick.

⁵ https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=50

⁶ [OLA Province](#)