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**FIRST MAJOR HISTORIC STRUCTURE RESTORED
AFTER 2009 ABRUZZO EARTHQUAKE
IS RETURNED TO COMMUNITY**

For Immediate Release—Friday, April 8, 2011... Two years after a devastating earthquake hit the Abruzzo region of Italy, an important historic structure damaged in the tremor has been returned to its community fully restored.

Following the earthquake, Bertrand du Vignaud, President of World Monuments Fund Europe, in coordination with the Italian Ministry of Culture, identified the twelfth-century Abbey of San Clemente a Casauria as a priority project. **World Monuments Fund (WMF)**, the foremost independent, nonprofit historic preservation organization, and the **Fondazione Pescaraabruzzo**, the most important local benefactor, agreed to cover the total cost of the conservation program. WMF supported this project through the Robert W. Wilson Challenge to Conserve Our Heritage and the Rudolf-August Oetker Stiftung.

At the inauguration ceremony on April 8, **Gianmarco A. Marsili**, Mayor of the municipality of Castiglione a Casauria; **Bertrand du Vignaud**; and **Nicola Mattosco**, **President** of the Fondazione Pescaraabruzzo, will welcome **On. Gianni Letta**, Undersecretary to the Italian Prime Minister; **On. Francesco M. Giro**, Undersecretary for Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities; **Gianni Chiodi**, President of the Abruzzo Region; and **Luciano Marchetti**, Vice-Commissary for the protection of cultural heritage. **S.E. Mons. Tommaso Valentinetti**, Bishop of Pescara, will give his blessing. During the event, the Conservatory of L'Aquila will present a brief concert.

Abbey of San Clemente a Casauria

The Abbey of San Clemente a Casauria was founded by Holy Roman Emperor Louis II in 871. The following year, the abbey received the remains of Saint Clement, a late-first-century pope and martyr. During the twelfth century the church was rebuilt, with a remarkable Romanesque façade that includes a sculpted tympanum depicting the building's history, as well as Saint Clement in papal dress receiving a model of the rebuilt abbey. This type of façade, with an oratory above the portico, is rare in Italy.

(more)

The main doors of the church, created in 1191, are fine examples of medieval bronzework with a strong Byzantine influence. The doors are divided into square panels containing religious iconography, decorative patterns, and images of abbots and castles.

The earthquake of April 6, 2009, caused the collapse of a tympanum into the nave, damaging an ambon (pulpit) and a large medieval stone candlestick used to hold the Paschal candle. This collapse occurred over the grave of Pope Saint Clement, but his relics were retrieved from the rubble.

World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund (WMF) is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world's most treasured places. For over 45 years, working in more than 90 countries, its highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to preserve important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through partnerships with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF inspires an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York, WMF has offices and affiliates worldwide.

Since its founding in 1965, WMF has undertaken more than 50 projects in Italy, ranging from the Venice floods of 1966 to the completion of San Clemente a Casauria. Recent projects have included the Bartolomeo Colleoni monument, in the Campo dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo, and the State Dining Room in the Museo Correr's Palazzo Reale, both in Venice; the cloister of the Santi Quattro Coronati and the Temple of Hercules in Rome; and the Limonaia at Boboli Gardens in Florence. Current WMF projects in Italy include Santa Maria Antiqua and the Temple of Portunus in Rome, Theodelinda's chapel in Monza, and the Villa dei Vescovi in Padua.

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