

Florence Cathedral, also known as the Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Flower, is the cathedral of Florence, Italy. It was begun in 1296 in the Gothic style to a design of Arnolfo di Cambio and was structurally completed by 1436, with the dome engineered by Filippo Brunelleschi. The exterior of the basilica is faced with polychrome marble panels in various shades of green and pink, bordered by white, and has an elaborate 19th-century Gothic Revival façade. The cathedral complex, includes the Baptistery and Giotto's Campanile. These three buildings are part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site covering the historic center of Florence and are a major tourist attraction of Tuscany. The basilica is one of Italy's largest churches, and until the development of new structural materials in the modern era, the dome was the largest in the world. It remains the largest brick dome ever constructed. The cathedral is the mother church of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Florence. The first stone was laid on September 9, 1296, by Cardinal Valeriana, the first papal legate ever sent to Florence. The building of this vast project was to last 140 years; The plan for the eastern end, although maintained in concept, was greatly expanded in size. After a hundred years of construction and by the beginning of the 15th century, the structure was still missing its dome. His brick model, 15.1 feet high, and 30.2 feet long, was standing in a side aisle of the unfinished building, and had long been sacrosanct. It called for an octagonal dome higher and wider than any that had ever been built, with no external buttresses to keep it from spreading and falling under its own weight. The church is particularly notable for its 44 stained glass windows, the largest undertaking of this kind in Italy in the 14th and 15th century. The windows in the aisles and in the transept depict saints from the Old and the New Testament, while the circular windows in the drum of the dome or above the entrance depict Christ and Mary.

A mid-15th-century pen-and-ink drawing of the so-called Giotto's façade are both on display in the Museum of the Opera del Duomo. This façade was the collective work of several artists, among them Andrea Orcagna and Taddeo Gaddi. This original façade was completed in only its lower portion and then left unfinished. It was dismantled in 1587–1588 by ordered by Grand Duke Francesco I de' Medici, as it appeared totally outmoded in Renaissance times. Some of the original sculptures are on display in the Museum Opera del Duomo, behind the cathedral. Others are now in the Berlin Museum and in the Louvre. The competition for a new façade turned into a huge corruption scandal. The wooden model for the façade of Buontalenti is on display in the Museum Opera del Duomo. A few new designs had been proposed in later years but, the façade was then left bare until the 19th century. In 1864, a competition held to design a new façade was won by Emilio De Fabris in 1871. Work began in 1876 and was completed in 1887. This neo-gothic façade in white, green and red marble forms a harmonious entity with the cathedral, Giotto's bell tower and the Baptistery, but some think it is excessively decorated. The whole façade is dedicated to the Mother of Christ.



one LORD,  
one Faith,  
one Baptism....  
EPHESIANS 4:5