

# 52° NATIONAL MEETING OF MADONNARI PARTICIPATION CRITERIA (Year 2026)

## INTRODUCTION

In 2026 the National Madonnari Festival, which this year reaches its 52th edition, will take place as part of the celebrations commemorating the 800th anniversary of the passing of St. Francis of Assisi.

For the occasion, the Municipal Administration of Curtatone has conceived a project dedicated to the figure and spiritual message of St. Francis in recognition of his religious, cultural, and artistic legacy.

The project, titled “The Message of St. Francis in the Colors of the Madonnari/Il messaggio di San Francesco nei colori dei Madonnari” aims to highlight the figure of the Saint of Assisi through the artistic interpretation characteristic of the Madonnari tradition, transforming the churchyard of the Sanctuary into a figurative journey dedicated to Franciscan themes, spirituality and the universal message of peace, brotherhood, and care for creation.

## DEFINITIONS

### **Article 1**

The National Madonnari Festival is a painting contest that takes place on the yard of the Sanctuary of the Beata Vergine delle Grazie of Curtatone (Mantua, Italy), in a reserved area divided into spaces (of 300×250 cm each) for the contest. In total there are 140 available spaces for the competition.

### **Article 1-bis – allocation and distribution of spaces**

The spaces as defined in Article 1, are divided into separate areas according to the categories of participants. Specifically:

- The lane adjacent to the square’s walls will be reserved primarily for Master Madonnari and Qualified Madonnari;
- The central lane and the one adjacent to the residences will be reserved primarily for Simple Madonnari.

The assignment of individual spaces within the respective areas will be determined by lottery.

In any case the organization reserves the right to intervene at its sole discretion in the distribution of spaces for organizational, artistic, or logistical reasons.

## **Article 2**

**The contest officially begins at 6.00 p.m. on 13<sup>th</sup> August and ends at 4.00 p.m. on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2026**, date of the Assumption of Mary festival. The award ceremony will take place later in the evening of 15<sup>th</sup> August.

Should the weather be rainy or should any other occurrence prevent the start of the event by **12:00 on 15<sup>th</sup> August**, the event will be postponed to the 16<sup>th</sup> or to a later date, always within the days of the Antichissima Fiera di Grazie, that the municipal authorities shall choose based on the scheduled events.

The new event start and close times shall be defined by the organizers.

## **EXPRESSION OF INTEREST AND REGISTRATION PROCEDURE**

### **Article 3**

The event has a predefined theme and each Madonnaro must, once they have viewed the criteria, express their interest in participating in the competition (pre-registration) by filling out the form at the following link <http://bit.ly/42naiQk> by the deadline of **May 15, 2026**.

Expressions of interest from the Master and Qualified categories will be given priority.

For the Basic Madonnari category, applications will be accepted until all available spots are filled. Any applicants not selected will be placed on a waiting list and contacted in the event of any cancellations or withdrawals.

Given the unique nature of this year's edition, the expression of interest will also serve as the platform through which individual Madonnari can indicate their willingness to participate in the artistic event taking place from August 28 to 30 in Assisi. For further details regarding the initiative, please refer to the specific addendum to these regulations.

At the end of the pre-registration phase, upon receiving confirmation that the process was successful, the Madonnari must submit their sketch and the formal application no later than **May 31, 2026**, to the following email address:

[concorso.madonnari@curtatone.it](mailto:concorso.madonnari@curtatone.it)

Please submit your application using the following form: <https://bit.ly/3QESCgt>

Please note that the design must be approved by a committee, which will assess its compliance with the principles underlying the competition.

Final acceptance will be communicated by **June 30, 2026**.

### **Article 4**

Registration to the contest is opened to people over the age of 16. A consent form duly signed by the parents is required for participants under 16.

Registrations are individual. Works made by a team are only admitted from the lower category i.e. Madonnari Semplici (for the breakdown into categories, please refer to Article 9 and subsequent in these criteria). A maximum number of three team members in each space is admitted. The team leader's name shall be notified who shall be the exclusive receiver of prizes and reimbursements, if any. The team members, i.e. people helping the team leader, must not have previously competed in the Grazie contest as individuals.

### **Article 5**

For organizational reasons, actual attendance of the registered participants must be confirmed at the Madonnari Museum in the following days:

- **13-08-2026** from **4 to 7 p.m.**
- **14-08-2026** from **7 to 10 a.m.**

This will help the organizers to arrange for replacements, if necessary (ref. Art. 3).

On this occasion, participants can submit the following documents if they have not done so yet:

- Identity card;
- Tax reg. card;
- IBAN code;
- Travel ticket;
- Car registration number (where applicable)

Furthermore, participants are also kindly requested to inform the Contest Office, through the dedicated form, about their intention to use the Madonnari Campus and specify any other diet-related matters (vegetarianism or veganism).

In the event that it is not possible to provide for the substitution of artists, the participants are asked for any availability for the creation of the missing works in order to complete the artistic project as a whole.

## **MATERIALS, TECHNIQUES, THEMES AND SUBJECTS**

### **Article 6**

The drawings on the yard:

- Must be made exclusively using chalks, water-soluble oil pastels, chalk powder or powder pigments;
- When creating their work the participants are required to use up the entire assigned space (a maximum distance of 10 cm from the edges of the area is allowed);
- During the creation of the preparatory drawing it is possible to use squaring or other transport systems with the exception of molds or dusting technique, the use of which is forbidden;
- The use of spray colors, acrylics and oil-based paints is prohibited. Any Madonnaro using these unauthorized and harmful techniques will be excluded from the contest;
- Failure to comply with the provisions of this article, in the event that the materials used cause permanent damage to the assigned square (which can also be recognized retrospectively), the madonnaro responsible will be required to reimburse the costs of cleaning; also he will be prohibited from registering for the subsequent contest;

Designated staff shall verify compliance with the materials and techniques as indicated in the previous sections.

### **Article 7**

For the 2026 edition, the theme commissioned by the Municipal Administration of Curtatone and agreed upon with the representatives designated by the Diocese must be interpreted using techniques and characteristics specific to the Art of Madonnara.

The project aims to:

- celebrate St. Francis of Assisi on the 800th anniversary of his death (1226–2026);

- to promote the memorandum of understanding signed between the Municipality of Curtatone and the City of Assisi, strengthening the cultural and artistic bond between the two communities;
- to organize the 52nd edition of the Madonnari Competition, aimed at promoting the Madonnara artistic tradition and its figurative language.

## CATEGORIES AND PRIZES

### Article 8

Three contestant categories have been identified:

1. Maestri Madonnari (Master artists)
2. Madonnari Qualificati (Qualified artists)
3. Madonnari Semplici (Simple artists)

### Article 9

The base level category is the Madonnari Semplici. Applicants who register in the contest and do not belong to any of the other two categories (Qualificati or Maestri) are included in this category, without any other test or institutional process being required.

The first 3 artists in the ranking of the Madonnari Semplici category shall be admitted to the Madonnari Qualificati category; the first 3 artists in the ranking of the Madonnari Qualificati category shall be admitted to the Maestri Madonnari category.

The “Santuario Madonna delle Grazie” award and the “Alla Creatività” special award may also include promotion to a higher category, based on the jury's unquestionable assessment.

The winner of the Maestri Madonnari category shall create the sketch that will be used as the image of the poster for the next edition of the competition, which must be delivered by **April 1<sup>o</sup>, 2027** to proceed with the payment (350 euros).

### Article 10

2026 prizes are as follows:

- **Maestri Madonnari:** the first place winner will receive a medal, will be designated to make the sketch for the poster of the 53<sup>th</sup> edition of the competition (according to the methods indicated in article 9 of these criteria) and will be awarded a prize of € 1.000,000 (including the intended compensation).
- The second and third place winners will be awarded a medal.
- **Madonnari Qualificati:** the first place winner will receive the Madonnaro trophy (the original of which will be stored at the Museo dei Madonnari in Grazie) for one year, promotion to the higher category of Maestri Madonnari and a prize of € 750.00 (including the intended compensation).
- The second and third place winners will receive a medal and advance to the higher category of Maestri Madonnari.
- **Madonnari Semplici:** the first place winner will receive a medal, advance to the higher category of Madonnari Qualificati and a prize of €500.00 (including the intended compensation).
- The second and the third in the ranking will receive a medal and will be admitted to the higher category of Madonnari Qualificati.

### **Article 11**

Receivers of prize money shall send the organizers a copy of their winning work, either on canvas or panel (approximate size 100×120 cm) using the chalk technique, **no later than 30<sup>th</sup> November 2026** at the address of the Cultural Office of the Curtatone Town Hall: [cultura@curtatone.it](mailto:cultura@curtatone.it)

In the event of failure to comply with the time limits, it will not be possible to guarantee payment for the work.

## **COMPENSATION**

### **Article 12**

The organizers shall offer each Madonnaro the opportunity to have lunch and dinner free of charge at the Campus on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> August.

### **Article 13**

The National Madonnari Festival is an artistic contest where each participant is awarded a compensation.

At the end of contest, a panel of judges shall define compensation for each Madonnaro, based on the amounts below:

- for the Maestri Madonnari up to € 430 (four hundred and thirty euros) net;
- for the Madonnari Qualificati up to € 380 (three hundred and eighty euros) net;
- for the Madonnari Semplici up to € 270 (two hundred and seventy euros) net. Compensation for team work will be paid in one single amount.

Compensation will be recognized as an occasional provision of services.

The panel of judges may, at their sole discretion, identify works whose execution fails to meet the minimum required standard, based on which the above-mentioned compensation is recalculated, in light of what contained in art. 6.

Compensation shall be paid by wire transfer to the IBAN number specified at the time of registration.

## **ADDITIONAL AWARDS**

### **Article 14**

In addition to those already described, the meeting includes a series of prizes illustrated below:

- Opere Segnalate (Nominated Works): up to a maximum of 20 prizes, without ranking;
- Premio Santuario Madonna delle Grazie;
- Premio Speciale alla Creatività (Creativity Special Award): for first-time and original work;
- Premio Parco del Mincio (Parco del Mincio Award);
- Premio Giuria Popolare (Popular Jury Award);
- Premio Rotary (Rotary Award);
- Premio Unione Nazionale Cavalieri d'Italia

### **Article 15**

No joint award or prize shall be given. All special awards, excluding nominated works, shall be individual prizes.

### **Article 16**

The appointments and qualifications awarded are exclusive of the place of the origin of the event National Madonnari Festival in Grazie di Curtatone.

## **PANEL OF JUDGES**

### **Article 17**

The Jury is appointed by the Municipality of Curtatone as the owner of the event and supplier of the prizes.

The Jury is composed of a president and the jurors. The president acts as *primus inter pares*.

### **Article 18**

The jurors are required to oversee the work of Madonnari.

The Panel of Judges are responsible for evaluating the drawings and shall be entitled to watch them at least three times.

On 15<sup>th</sup> August, tentatively in the morning and afternoon, and in any case by 4:00 pm, the judges shall visit the yard to check the work progress and to make the assessments required to eventually create the ranking.

The Panel of Judges shall be entitled to use photographs of the work of art, as taken from time to time for updates. This tool shall be in support and not in replacement of direct viewing of the works of art; photos shall form the base for assessment should the contest be concluded beforehand.

After the evaluation process, a report shall be drafted and signed by all Panel members, which will be filed at the municipal offices.

The Panel members are required to attend and provide their support during the award giving ceremony that will take place in the evening of the contest end.

## **Curtatone Town Hall**

The Mayor  
Carlo Bottani

## **ADDENDUM – SPECIAL EVENT IN ASSISI**

As part of the celebrations marking the 800th anniversary of the passing of St. Francis of Assisi (1226–2026), a special artistic initiative linked to the Grazie Competition is planned for the year 2026.

In the expression of interest form, participants will be given the opportunity to indicate their willingness to take part not only in the Grazie Competition but also in an artistic event to be held in the city of Assisi.

The organizational procedures and rules of participation will be defined in a specific document approved by the City of Assisi.

The event will take place from August 28 to 30, 2026, and will involve a maximum total of 50 artists, selected according to the following criteria:

- All Master Madonnari and Qualified Madonnari will be automatically admitted;
- Among ordinary Madonnari, only those who, as of the 2025 edition (excluding the results of the 2026 edition), in chronological order of registration:
  - have participated in at least five editions, even if not consecutive, of the Grazie Madonnari Competition,
  - and/or
  - have won at least one special prize among those listed in Article 14 of these regulations.

On this occasion, the following works are planned:

- a collective work created by Master Madonnari who have won at least one edition of the competition;
- additional works created by Master Madonnari, Qualified Madonnari, and Simple Madonnari who have expressed their willingness to participate, in accordance with the criteria outlined above.

Artists will receive:

- a net fee of €700.00 (seven hundred)
- accommodation provided by the Municipality of Assisi from August 28 to 30, 2026 (two nights' accommodation and meals from lunch on August 28 to dinner on August 30)
- materials for the creation of the works

The cost of round-trip travel is the responsibility of the individual artists. For any logistical information, please contact: [turismo@comune.assisi.pg.it](mailto:turismo@comune.assisi.pg.it) or the phone number 0758138680

It is also specified that participation in the Grazie Madonnari Competition is a mandatory requirement for taking part in the event in Assisi.