



HALL OF THE POPES

The Quirinal Palace served as a papal seat during the pontificate of thirty popes, from Gregory XIII Boncompagni (1572 – 1585) to Pius IX Mastai Ferretti (1846 – 1878), whose portraits are reproduced inside the hall.

Among the effigies it is good to dwell on the aforementioned Gregory XIII Boncompagni (1572 – 1585). He had the Palazzina Gregoriana (1583 – 1585), i.e., the oldest nucleus of the Palace where we are currently located, built by renovating an ancient property of the Carafa family. This was followed by Sixtus V Peretti (1585 – 1590), promoter of the acquisition of the Carafa property by the Apostolic Chamber (1587) and the building of the west wing, facing Piazza del Quirinale. Paul V Borghese (1605 – 1621), on the other hand, was the proponent of the completion of the palace with the construction of the wing facing the gardens to the east (1609 – 1611) and the south wing (1615), which faces Via del Quirinale.

Pius VII Chiaramonti (1800 – 1823), on the other hand, was the pope arrested inside the Palace by French troops on July 6, 1809; the Quirinal was then chosen as the Roman residence of Napoleon Bonaparte, King of Italy since 1805, who, however, never resided there. The pontiff was on that occasion deported to France (to Fontainebleau), only to return to Rome and retake possession of the palace in 1814.

The last four portraits show instead the pontiffs who were elected in the very Pauline Chapel of the Quirinal Palace: Leo XII Della Genga (1823 – 1829), Pius VIII Castiglioni (1829 – 1830), Gregory XVI Cappellari (1831 – 1846) and Pius IX Mastai Ferretti (1846 – 1878). The latter resided in the Quirinal until 1870, when he had to leave the Palace after the seizure of Rome.

The layout of the room includes the display of a series of artifacts and works of art pertaining to the figures of the pontiffs, some of which are part of the meager papal holdings that remained at the Palace following the transfer of property to the Vatican in 1870.

The large canvas painting on the west wall was made by Jacques Courtois known as Il Borgognone and depicts The Martyrdom of the Forty Jesuits near the island of Palma (1661).

Between the two windows on the north side is a micromosaic reproduction of the famous Madonna of the Chair given by Pope Pius XI to Queen Helena on the occasion of the first visit of Italian sovereigns to the Vatican after the signing of the Lateran Pacts (Feb. 11, 1929).

The room houses a wooden reproduction of the marble sundial designed in 1628 by Francesco Borromini for the gardens of the Quirinale on commission of Urban VIII Barberini (1623 – 1644).

Also in the room is a valuable porcelain vase, placed on a tall gilded wooden base. It belongs to a nucleus of vases scattered in the rooms of the piano nobile that formed part of the oriental porcelain collection of two 18th-century popes, Benedict XIV Lambertini (1740 – 1758) and Clement XIV Ganganelli (1769 – 1774).