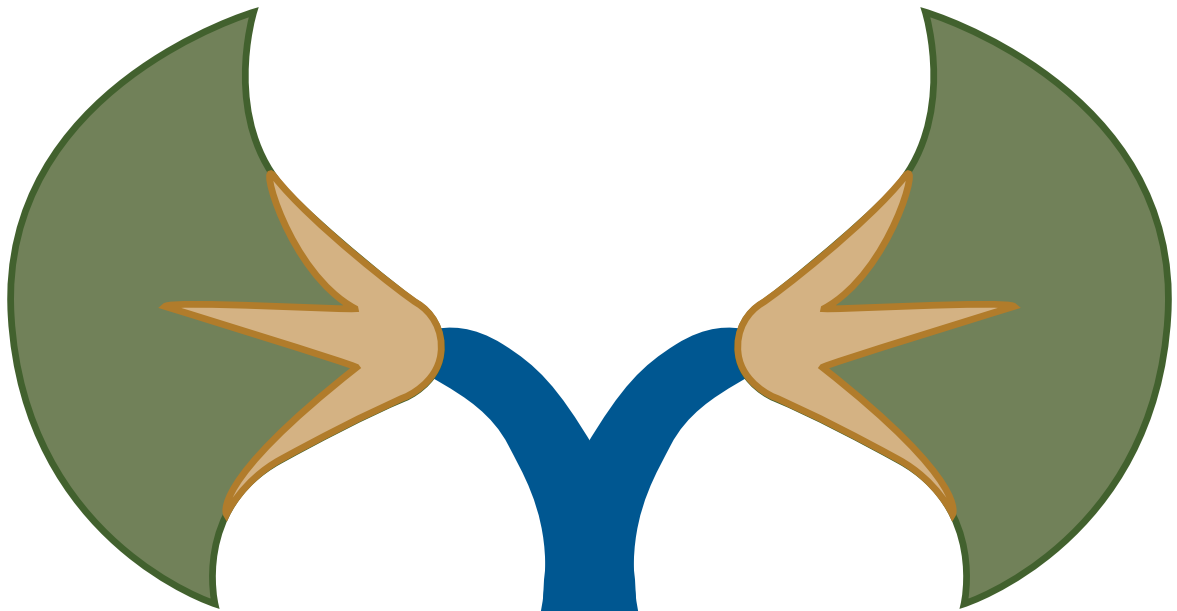


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# A PRIVATE VISIT TO..

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SECOND  
VATICAN  
COFFIN  
CONFERENCE

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A PRIVATE  
VISIT TO...  
ON 6 JUNE

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## LAPIDARY GALLERY

The Lapidary Gallery, home to the richest lapidary collection in the Vatican, occupies the southern part of the long corridor created to link the Vatican Palace with the Belvedere Palace, and was formerly called the *Ambulacrum Iulianum*, from the name of Pope Julius II (1503-1523), or the *Corridoio del Bramante* ('Bramante Corridor'), referring to the name of the architect who designed it. The primary nucleus of the collection, initiated by Clement XIV (1769-1774), founder of the Clementine Museum, had already been arranged in 1772 in the northern part of the *Ambulacrum* and was subsequently enriched by



acquisitions by the pontiffs Pius VI and Pius VII and by donations from private collections (Zelada, Galletti, Rusconi, Marini). When Pius VII decided to create the present-day Museo Chiaramonti, the stones were detached from the walls between 1805 and 1808 and transferred to the present-day Gallery, which during the same years was also enhanced by the arrival of numerous newly-acquired epigraphs. The curator of the new display was Gaetano Marini, co-adjutor of the Prefect of the Vatican Archive from 1772, Prefect from 1798, and first Custodian of the Apostolic Library from 1800. Why was a librarian chosen as the curator? The epigraphic collection was still within the competences of the Library: the lapidary inscriptions were assimilated within the collection of manuscripts and printed documents as a source of information. Indeed, the Gallery constituted a real 'stone library', vestibule to the library itself (the old entrance to which is located in the Gallery), containing more than 3400 'pages', written on slabs, bases, memorials *cippi*, urns, altars and sarcophagi, dating from between the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. Distributed over 50 walls (some of which were arranged after Marini) according to content - religion, emperors, consuls and magistrates, army, professions and trades, family and society, Christianity, and the Ostia excavations - they constitute an important source of knowledge on many aspects of the antique and late-antique world: populations, nations, international relations, war, the army and naval forces, administrative, legal and economic structures, the names of people and biographical summaries (careers, professions, provenance), social classes, personal and collective religiosity and spirituality, honours bestowed upon the living and the commemoration of the deceased, private and public acts of munificence in social, religious and building fields, the worship of the dead and of the tomb, testaments, private and public forms of associational life, notices, indications, prohibitions, signs, inventories, and topographical data. Sarcophagi, altars and bases are also displayed on the floor.

Latin captions accompany the walls, dating partially from Marini's display; these are numbered (with Roman numerals), entering from the Chiaramonti Museum, in descending order, alternating even numbers on the right (where we find Christian inscriptions up to wall 14) and odd numbers on the left.

Among the documents conserved here, we want to draw your attention to two: one Christian (wall XLII), the other, pagan, to be found on the wall of inscriptions relating to the army (wall XXIX). It is interesting to note how military inscriptions frequently refer to an individual's geographic provenience, witnessing to the international extent of both the army and the society of the Roman world.

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## SALA REGIA



This large ceremonial hall is connected to the Sistine Chapel, the Pauline Chapel and the Ducal Room. There is also a staircase, called *Scala Regia* ('Royal Staircase'), which leads to St. Peter's Basilica. Completely restructured during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, very little is known about the room's original appearance. It was probably similar in size, but lower in height and with a flat wooden ceiling.

Ever since ancient times, the political and social life of the popes was concentrated in this area of the palace while the East and North Wings were reserved for their private life. This room was used in particular for the reception of emperors and Christian kings. The people who had been granted an audience would get off their horses or out of their carriages in the Courtyard of the Marshall and go up the stairs, called *Scale del Maresciallo*, and then wait to be admitted before the pope in the Sala Regia.

Together with the *Sala Ducale* ('Ducal Room'), the *Sala Regia* was also used for private or public Consistories. When Pope Paul III was elected pope (1534) the area was much more disjointed and he therefore commissioned Antonio da Sangallo with its reorganization. The undertaking (1537-1538) cost more than 20,000 scudi. During the first stage of this restructuring the wooden ceiling was replaced with a majestic barrel vault that was 18m high at the keystone, resting on a stone cornice 13m above the ground. Between 1541 and 1547 the vault was decorated by Perin del Vaga and his workshop with refined stucco and gold decoration designed by Sangallo portraying the coat of arms and feats of the Farnese family. When Perino died in 1547 Daniele da Volterra was entrusted with completing the stucco decorations still left unfinished on the wall; he was also commissioned with the paintings. Da Volterra worked extremely slowly, so much so that upon pope Paul III's death (1549) very little had actually been done.

The pope's death led to a complete interruption of the works, which were only resolved in 1560 when Pius IV decided to continue. As work was still proceeding too slowly, the attempt was made to involve Giorgio Vasari and his workshop.

## SALA REGIA

Vasari was known as an “energetic, rapid, manually dextrous and resolute” painter, and of such value that Paolo Giovio wrote to Cardinal Alexander Farnese, “in a flash he will serve the Father, Son and Holy Spirit”. However, Vasari turned the invitation down and instead suggested Francesco Salviati, who completed the first large panel (to the right of the door of the Ducal Room), which was finished by his pupil Giuseppe Porta (called Il Salviati), with the portrayal of *The Reconciliation of Pope Alexander III and Frederick Barbarossa*. Even before Salviati’s death, upon P. Ligorius’ suggestion many other artists were summoned to take part in completing the decorations: L. Agresti (above the door of the Ducal Room, *Peter II of Aragon offering the Kingdom to Pope Innocent III*); T. Zuccari (above the door of the Marshall staircase *Donation to Charlemagne in 774*, and on the wall of the Pauline Chapel the *Battle of Tunis*; on the same wall, the *Reconciliation of Pope Gregory VII with Emperor Henry IV at Canossa*, by the brother Federico in 1573); O. Sammachini (above the door leading to the Loggia of the Blessings, *Otto I Returns the Church Territory to Pope Agapitus II*); G.B. Fiorini (above the door of the Spezieria, *Gregory II Receives from Liutprand Confirmation of Aripert’s Gift*) and G. Siciolante, called Il Sermoneta, (above the door of the Sistine Chapel, *Donation of the Exarchate of Ravenna and of the Pentapolis by Pepin the Short to Pope Stephen II*).

The death of pope Pius IV (1565) resulted in a renewed suspension of the works and it was not until 1572 after the Victory of Lepanto (1571) that Pius V decided to continue, summoning Vasari to Rome and commissioning him with two frescoes to celebrate the victory of the Christian League against the Turks. The painter began with the *Battle of Lepanto* (to the right of the door of the Spezieria), completed with great haste between 19 April and 2 May, the day after the death of Pius V.

After another interruption, caused by the pope’s death, the decorations were finally finished by Vasari and assistants under pope Gregory XIII. First the new pope decided to have the contemporary events of the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre portrayed (23-24 August 1572), painted by Vasari in the three scenes of the *Massacre of the Huguenots*. This was followed by the painting with *The Return of the Papal Seat from Avignon Back to Rome by Gregory XI*, the *Excommunication of Frederick II by Gregory IX* (above the door of the Royal Staircase) and, lastly, the fresco with the *Fleet of the Turks and the Holy League in Battle at Lepanto*, based on a cartoon that had already been prepared under Pius V. Vasari was assisted in these paintings by L. Sabbatini, who had just arrived from Bologna, G. Francesco from Bologna, the Flemish painter D. Calvaert and Raffaellino da Reggio, who painted the two angels at the sides of the papal throne on one of the shorter sides together with Sabbatini.

Vasari must have been satisfied with the work as he wrote the following in a letter: “and this work is certainly one of the most beautiful I have ever completed and never before have I invested such energy and importance to my paintings. God has enlightened me”.

The marble flooring is by Matteo da Castello while the coat of arms of Gregory XIII is the work of P. Antichi. The room was solemnly inaugurated on 21 May 1573 on the occasion of the *Corpus Domini* celebrations.

## PAULINE CHAPEL

Built in 1537-1538 according to the wishes of pope Paul II as part of the restructuring of the palace area around the *Sala Regia*, it was designed by Antonio da Sangallo Younger. Located in the very heart of the Apostolic Palace, it is the most private and intimate papal chapel, used by both the pope and his family. The chapel is rectangular in shape with a keel-shaped vault and a more narrow presbyterial area that is also rectangular in shape with barrel vaulting. The room is illuminated by three large lunette windows, two of which still exist; two along the long sides of the aisle (one walled up) and a third, that no longer exists, above the altar. In 1542 Perin del Vaga was commissioned with the stucco decoration of the vault, which was removed at a later date, while Il Pastorino completed the stained glass windows in 1543.



Pope Paul III summoned Michelangelo, who was working in the nearby Sistine Chapel, painting the *Last Judgment*. On the sidewalls of the chapel the artist created his adulthood masterpiece, *The Conversion of Saint Paul* (1542-1545) and *The Crucifixion of Saint Peter* (1545-1550), tormented works that were only completed after lengthy interruptions owing to the artist's poor health. Indeed, he fell ill twice (1544, 1546) and was so seriously ill that he wrote his will, was confessed, and received Holy Communion.

Paul III did not live long enough to see the work finished although shortly before his death, on 13 October 1549 he visited the chapel, and climbed up a ladder to see the paintings. Once the frescoes had been completed, work on the decoration came to an abrupt halt, which lasted until the papacy of Gregory XIII, who summoned a vast group of artists (frescoers, decorators, sculptors, stucco decorators and gilders) to complete the decorations on the walls and vault, which were embellished with gilded and multi-coloured stuccoes. On the walls L. Sabbatini painted (1573-1576) the *Stoning of Saint Stephen*, *Ananias Healing Saint Paul* and the *Fall of Simon Magus*, while F. Zuccari and assistants painted the *Baptism of Cornelius* on the wall and the *fifteen Stories of Saint Peter and Saint Paul* on the vault (1580-1585).

From the 17<sup>th</sup> century on, the Machine for the Forty Hours would be displayed in the chapel; this was an extraordinary wooden apparatus with a series of spiral columns and two small choirs opposite one another and a machine for the display of the Holy Sacrament to be placed on the altar. It was a sort of fake architectural structure, testimony of which is an engraving by G.P. Panini, with a faithful reproduction of the ceremony inside the chapel. It must have taken up nearly the whole area around the altar and was used on the occasion of the adoration of the Holy Sacrament during Advent and the Holy Week.

It was pope Clement XI who had the Machine of the Forty Hours embellished and placed on display, but it was later removed during the papacy of Gregory XV when the area around the altar was restructured. A new altar wall was created with a marble tabernacle to house the Holy Sacrament. The marble panel flooring is datable to the papacy of Gregory XVI. Under Pius IX the wooden structure of the Machine was restored (it has not survived) and A. Angelini was commissioned with decorating the internal façade wall with fake architecture decorated with vases that are still visible. The chapel has recently been restored.

There are two tapestries from the 'Scuola Nuova' in the apsidal area with *The Presentation at the Temple* and the *Descent of the Holy Spirit*, woven in Brussels in the workshop of Pieter van Aelt based on cartoons by Raphael's school (1524-1531) while the *Transfiguration* on the altar is by S. Cantarini.

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## A PRIVATE VISIT TO... ON 6 JUNE

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### CORTILE OTTAGONO

In the past this octagonal court used to be called the *Cortile delle Statue* (Courtyard of the Statues) and housed the original nucleus of ancient classical sculptures collected by the popes. At the end of the XV century this court was a square garden with orange trees and fountains at the centre of the small Belvedere Palace built by Pope Innocent VIII (1484-1492).

In this space Pope Julius II della Rovere (1503-1513) staged an extraordinary display of ancient statues, aimed at reviving the Rome of the Caesars in the Rome of the Popes. The works came partly from Pope Julius II's own original collection, and partly from acquisitions made expressly for a programme which, by recalling the foundation of Rome as described in Virgil's Aeneid, portrayed the Pope as the new Caesar. In the years following this first display the collection was enriched by further sculptures, but then followed long years of oblivion.

In the second half of the 1700s, when the Popes Clement XIV and Pius VI decided to exhibit the collection in a properly organised museum, the Courtyard was included in the new arrangements and became, in fact, its fulcrum. To protect the works from the weather and to increase the exhibition space, the area was transformed into an octagonal portico by the architect Michelangelo Simonetti.

The most important pieces in the collection are kept in the so-called Cabinets, spaces which correspond to the four corners of the original square courtyard. At the beginning of the 19th century Canova walled up the front accesses to the cabinets, which were only opened again in 1957. Notwithstanding the passage of centuries and the intervening changes, some of the sculptures exhibited have been here since the beginning of the 16th century: the **Laocoön** is one of these, and also the **Apollo Belvedere**, the **Perseus Triumphant**, the statue of a reclining river god (the river Arno), and the whole cycle of theatrical masks from Villa Adriana, which can be found built into the structure of the original courtyard.



## CORTILE OTTAGONO

### THE BELVEDERE APOLLO

This statue was part of the collection which Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere held in his palace in Rome. When he was elected Pope as Julius II (1503-1513) the statue was transferred to the Vatican, where it has remained since at least 1508. The god, Apollo, moves forward majestically and seems to have just released an arrow from a bow which he originally carried in his left hand. The work has been dated to mid-way through the 2nd century A.D. and is considered to be a copy of an original bronze statue of 330-320 B.C. by Leochares, one of the artists who worked on the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus. The statue has always been greatly admired, but owes its fame particularly to Johann Joachim Winckelmann who considered it the sublime expression of Greek art, "of all the works of antiquity that have escaped destruction, the statue of Apollo represents the highest ideal of art".

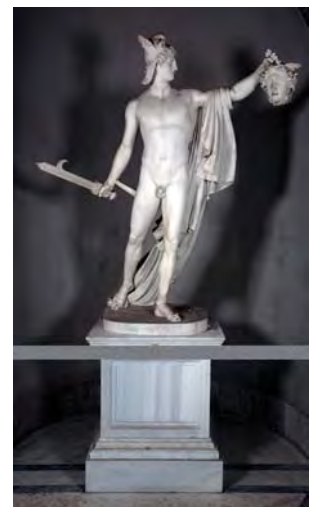


### LAOCOÖN

This statue group was found in 1506 on the Esquiline Hill in Rome and immediately identified as the Laocoön described by Pliny the Elder as a masterpiece of the sculptors of Rhodes. The story is that during the Trojan War, Laocoön, a priest of Apollo in the city of Troy, warned his fellow Trojans against taking in the wooden horse left by the Greeks outside the city gates. Athena and Poseidon, who were favouring the Greeks, sent two great sea-serpents which have wrapped their coils around Laocoön and his two sons and are killing them. From the Roman point of view, the death of these innocents was crucial to the decision of Aeneas, who heeded Laocoön's warning, to flee Troy, and this led to the eventual founding of Rome. Such an important sculpture could not escape the notice of Pope Julius II (1503-1513) who bought it immediately and had it displayed in the *Cortile delle Statue* (Courtyard of the Statues), making it the centrepiece of the collection. There has been much debate over the date of the statue, which would seem to have been made around 40-30 B.C.

### PERSEUS TRIUMPHANT

The statue shows the triumphant Perseus holding the severed head of the Medusa, one of the three Gorgons. The hero is shown with the winged cap, the sandals of Mercury and the sword which had been given to him in order to complete this task. This statue was carved by Antonio Canova (1757-1822) in the space of a few months between the end of the year 1800 and the beginning of 1807. Made for the tribune Onorato Duveyriez, the first owner of the statue, this Perseus was ceded to the Cisalpine Republic for the new Bonaparte Forum in Milan. Later the statue was bought by Pope Pius VII Chiaramonti (1800-1823) who displayed it on the pedestal of the Apollo of the Belvedere which had been taken to France following the Treaty of Tolentino. It was the weight, proportions and expressive character of the statue of the Belvedere Apollo which inspired Canova in this famous statue of Perseus.



## VILLA BARBERINI

In 1929, following the Lateran Treaty and the subsequent creation of the Vatican City State, Villa Barberini became part of the extra territorial area of Castel Gandolfo.

From 1930 pope Pius XI ordered important restoration works of the historic buildings and reclamation of the gardens. During these works many ancient structures of Domitian's villa, the *Albanum*, were rediscovered. The *Albanum* was the largest of the emperor's residences outside the city, extending over at least three large terraces stretching from the crest of the volcanic crater of Lake Albano down towards the Via Appia.



The highest terrace had service structures, cisterns and tanks for collecting water which was used for supplying fountains and *nymphaei* as well as providing for domestic use. The central terrace was closed to the north west by a theatre, still clearly visible in parts. The wealth of decorative features is evident from the architectural finds preserved within the *Antiquarium* to be found on the ground floor of the Villa Barberini.

Various archaeological remains, now immersed in luxuriant vegetation, are to be found near to the theatre, approached by means of a wide, modern avenue, bordered upstream by buttresses with fountains and joke water features. These have to have been the residential parts of the villa. The drop in height between the middle and lower terraces is bordered by an impressive *cryptoportico*, one of the most attractive buildings from Roman times which still remain. The impressive construction extends for 300m along the slope of the hill; the vault, 10m high, is decorated with elegant stucco coffers and the walls were once decorated with frescoes and precious marble. The purpose of this structure was not, as one might think, that of a passage, but rather a stage-set, where the emperor, standing at the top of the flight of steps still existing today, welcomed his guests. He was illuminated by the light which spread from the hall behind him, and must have seemed almost god-like, ideally placed as he was above them all.

Other ancient structures are visible in the park, but we know with certainty that the imperial property was much more extensive and also included the shores of the lake, where there were temples and pavilions for moments of relaxation and socialisation.

The prominent position on the crest of the volcanic crater guaranteed a double view: to the east, the glassy mirror of Lake Albano, dominated by Monte Cavo, and to the west, the exceptional panorama of the surrounding plain, extending as far as Rome itself, the Mediterranean coast and the towns of southern Lazio. The beauty of the nature of the place and the impressive remains of the villa surrounded by luxuriant vegetation have always attracted the attention of artists and antiquarians; most famous are the 18<sup>th</sup> century impressions, particularly the numerous engravings of Giovan Battista Piranesi, who was fascinated by the emerging archaeological monuments.