



POPE URBAN VIII

(FLORENCE, 5th APRIL 1568 – ROME, 29th JULY 1644)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Maffeo Barberini was born in Florence on 5th April 1568, the second youngest of six children, to Antonio, a wealthy textile merchant, and Camilla Barbadori. He moved to Rome at a very young age under the protection of his uncle Francesco, an apostolic protonotary, studied at the Roman College and completed his legal training in Pisa, where he obtained his doctorate in 1588.

He was Apostolic Nuncio to France under Henry IV (1604-1607), an appointment conferred on him by Clement VIII (1592-1605), which earned him a lasting connection with the court of Paris. On 11th September 1606, he was created cardinal by Paul V (1605-1621), who sent him as bishop to Spoleto in 1608. Papal legate in Bologna between 1611 and 1614, he returned permanently to Rome in 1617.

He ascended to the papal throne on 6th August 1623, at the age of fifty-five, at the end of a long and complex conclave, at a crucial moment for Europe marked by the Thirty Years' War.

A lover of beauty and splendour, in keeping with the tradition of the Barberini family, Urban VIII was a refined connoisseur of art and a generous patron. Under his pontificate, the city of Rome was profoundly transformed by monumental interventions entrusted to the greatest artists of the time, including Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini, Pietro da Cortona, Andrea Sacchi and Giovan Francesco Romanelli. He commissioned the majestic gilded bronze canopy in St. Peter's Basilica to cover the high altar and helped to make the family palace at Quattro Fontane an important breeding ground for artists.

A cultured and intelligent man, a scholar and poet in Italian and Latin, Urban VIII died on 29th July 1644. His funeral monument in the apse of the Vatican Basilica, created by Bernini, features a bronze skeleton recording his death on a scroll, flanked by allegories of *Charity* and *Justice* and surmounted by the imposing statue of the pontiff who, with a blessing gesture, watches eternally over the temple he consecrated.