



THE CHAPEL OF THE ANNUNCIATION

The chapel of the Annunciation is one of the artistic jewels of the Quirinale Palace. It was part of the private apartments of Pope Paul V, born Camillo Borghese, and was decorated in 1610 by one of the greatest masters of the time, Guido Reni, who made use of a number of collaborators including Giovanni Lanfranco and Francesco Albani.

The frescoes in the chapel are dedicated to episodes from the life of the Virgin, from the Archangel's announcement to her father Joachim to the glory of the Virgin meeting God the Father in heaven. The altar piece portrays the Annunciation.

A 17th Century door, decorated with the emblems of the Barberini Pope, Urban VIII, has recently been returned to a space at the side of the altar. The door turned the chapel into a space reserved for the pontiff who could enter it directly from his quarters. From that position the Pope faced the most unusual painting in the chapel, which is today the most famous subject of this series: the scene portrays the young Mary in the Temple, busy sewing and assisted by two angels.

The only non-original element in the chapel is the floor, which was laid in 1815 for Pope Pius VII, born Barnaba Niccolò Maria Luigi Chiaramonti, whose coat of arms is represented at the centre of the geometric coloured marble pattern.

Given the great artistic value of the room, the chapel was not modified at the time of the Savoy family's renovation of this wing of the Palace. However, it was used as a room in which to wash the dinnerware when receptions were taking place in the adjacent halls.