



THE BALCONY ROOM

The large French door in this room opens onto the Loggia of Blessings. It was built in 1638 based on plans by Gian Lorenzo Bernini and sits directly above the main entrance to the Quirinale Palace.

The room also communicates with the Pauline Chapel and might have been used as a sacristy. In this room there are none of the ornamental frescoes which characterize the rooms of the papal apartments, although there is some elegant plasterwork on the vault which evokes the stucco decorations of the chapel.

During the conclaves that were held in the Quirinale Palace in the 1800s the room's French door was bricked up to symbolize the isolation of the Palace from any influence which might have filtered in from the outside world: European powers of the time would indeed try to direct the election of the successor to St Peter to their favour. However as soon as the new pope had been elected, the bricks were removed to herald the news and enable the new pontiff to bestow his first blessing on the crowd below.

The room was once known as the "Praecordia Room", because it was here that deceased popes were prepared for embalming. The internal organs, known as the "praecordia", were placed in two metal containers before being taken to the nearby Church of Saints Vincent and Anastasius in Piazza di Trevi.