



THE PAULINE CHAPEL

This large chapel takes its name from Pope Paul V, born Camillo Borghese, who ordered its construction in 1615 in order to endow the Quirinale Palace with a space the same size as the Sistine Chapel. Its layout corresponds precisely to that of the Sistine Chapel, making it possible to hold ceremonies indifferently either in the Vatican or in the Quirinale Palace.

From 1823 the Pauline Chapel was used as the seat of four consecutive conclaves. The first pope elected here was Leo XII and the last Pius IX. After the Capture of Rome on September 20th, 1870, the Pope had to leave the palace to the functionaries of Victor Emmanuel II, the first King of Italy.

The polychrome marble floor and the splendid ceiling decorations in white and gold stuccos date back to the 17th Century, when the Chapel was first decorated. A marble balcony projects from the right-hand wall, it too from the 1600s: it was called *cantoria*, the chancel that accommodated the choir during High Mass.

The wall paintings, however, are more recent. They were painted in 1818, in barely over a month, by a group of eleven painters. The architectural decoration is of faux niches containing figures of the Apostles, the Evangelists and of St. Paul.

Upon the altar we do not find a painting but a tapestry: it was woven in 1817 in the Parisian factory of Gobelins and depicts the *Last Sermon of St. Stephen*.

Every Sunday, during the opening of the Quirinale Palace, the chapel hosts a concert which is open to the public and is broadcast live by radio.