



BORJA-BORGIA:
ITINERARY OF A
UNIVERSAL FAMILY



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Following the Borgia

"Discover the legacy of the Borgia through this cultural tourism travel guide based on the lineage of this family of universal impact."

"Borja/Borgia: itinerary of a universal family" is a cultural tourism guide that brings together biographies, stories of the time, cities, places and cultural proposals, which value the story and history of this family of Valencian origin, of undoubted international attraction.

The Borgia and their time

Travel back in time and discover the daily life, culture and social rules of this unique historical period.

Alexander VI

His figure, reviled by history, is a fundamental part of the legend woven around the Borgia lineage.



Alexander VI

Rodrigo de Borja y de Borja, the future Pope Alexander VI, was born in Xàtiva on January 1, 1431, into a family of local minor nobility. The premature death of his father caused his entire

family to move to Valencia, to the palace of his uncle Alfonso de Borja, bishop of the city.

In 1449, already a canon of the Valencia Cathedral, he was summoned to Rome by his uncle, already a cardinal, to assist him in administrative and ecclesiastical tasks, accompanied by his brother, Pedro Luis, and his cousin, Luis Juan.

Under his protection he began an unstoppable career: he was appointed canon and cantor of the collegiate church of Xàtiva (1450) and studied law at the University of Bologna (1453).

On April 8, 1455, Alfonso de Borja is elected Pope with the name of Callixtus III and the influence of Rodrigo follows the rising trail. Despite his youth, in 1456 he was secretly appointed Cardinal and, a year later, Vice-Chancellor of the Church, a position of great influence that he held for more than 35 years.

After the death of his uncle, on August 6, 1458, Cardinal Borgia relaxes his personal habits, showing an interest in the female sex.

Around 1468, his first-born, Pedro Luis, was born to an unknown mother, followed by two sisters, Jerónima and Isabel. He later has four children with the Roman Vannozza Cattanei: Cesare (1475), Giovanni (1476), Lucrezia (1480) and Goffredo (1481). And two other sons are still known, Giovanni and Rodrigo, who he had later.

As Vice Chancellor, Rodrigo manifests an overflowing sumptuousness, complemented by the social position that all the components of the extended family are acquiring.

In 1472 he traveled to the Iberian Peninsula as a special legacy of the Pope, carrying the bull confirming the marriage of Isabella of Castile with Ferdinand II of Aragon.

Certain subsequent disagreements with Ferdinand were settled in 1485 with the purchase of the right to rule over the

town of Gandia, now elevated to a royal dukedom, and with the marriage of his son, Pedro Luis, to María Enríquez, the king's first cousin.

His keen intelligence and his political ability make him one of the richest and most influential cardinals of the moment and, on the death of Innocent VIII, thanks to the division between the factions of the curia and some skilful negotiation, he is elected Pope on the 11 August 1492, under the name of Alexander VI.

In the private sphere, the new pontiff acquires a new mistress, Giulia Farnesse, 45 years younger than he, a woman of renowned beauty.

Very soon he has to face political and territorial balances at stake with the kings of France and Naples. Like his uncle, Callixtus III, he promotes his children and relatives, always with the board of earthly power at stake.

His daughter Lucrezia will marry Giovanni Sforza, lord of Pesaro, Cesare will be appointed cardinal and will hold, among others, the rich Valencian diocese, Giovanni will end up marrying María Enríquez, the suitor of his brother Pedro Luis, who had died suddenly in 1488, and Goffredo will marry Sancha de Aragón, daughter of the king of Naples.

Lucrezia, after the annulment of her first marriage, will marry Alfonso of Aragon, natural son of Alfonso II of Naples, who is assassinated by his brother Cesare, and later with Alfonso d'Este, heir to the Duchy of Ferrara.

Tragedy knocked on his door in June 1497, after his son Giovanni, Duke of Gandia, was found dead in the waters of the Tiber.

Cesare, his most brilliant and impetuous son, who has set aside his cardinal's hat, marries Carlota d'Albret (1499), a relative of the French king, and becomes Duke of Valentinois. A possession that will mark the legend of him as Cesare il

Valentino. Cesare will also be Captain General of the Church (1500) and Duke of Romagna (1501).

On Friday, August 18, 1503, after a convalescence full of all kinds of repulsive details, Alexander VI died. Rumors attributed his death to the poison he ingested at a dinner, but it was malaria, in the pestilential summer of Rome, that ended his life.

His body was provisionally buried in the chapel of Santa Maria della Febbre, next to the Vatican basilica, alongside his uncle Callixtus III. In 1601 the remains of both pontiffs were transferred to the church of the Crown of Aragon in Rome, Santa Maria in Monserrato, where they still rest.

Alexander VI promoted the evangelization of the American lands discovered in 1492, showed tolerance towards the Jews, practiced artistic patronage, surrounded himself with a circle of humanists, showed special devotion to the Virgin Mary, and bequeathed a strong and powerful papal state. On the negative side, he practiced nepotism and showed a moral disorder for which he was censured by his contemporaries.

His figure, reviled and mistreated historically, was ardently defended by the distinguished Valencian novelist Vicente Blasco Ibáñez in his book on the Borgias: "What do they hold against Alexander VI?... His crime consisted in the fact that some of his children were energetic personalities, intelligent and daring, like true Borjas, eager for power and glory; and the children of the other popes were no more than simple parasites of the Vatican, intent only on fattening themselves like leeches with the blood of the Church, selling jobs and accruing fortunes."

Calixtus III

Alfonso de Borja begins the legacy of the dynasty by becoming Pope Calixtus III.



Calixtus III

Alfonso de Borja, future Pope Callixtus III, was born in the small town of Canals (Valencia) on December 31, 1378. His parents, Domingo de Borja, a local landowner without noble lineage, and Francisca de Borja, baptized him in nearby Xàtiva. Alfonso was the only male, and was followed by four sisters: Isabel, Juana, Catalina and Francisca.

At the age of fourteen, he began his studies in Lleida, where he

obtained a doctorate in canon law (1411) and in civil law (1413).

The anecdote in which, in his youth, he had an encounter with the preacher Vicente Ferrer, who predicted that he would be pope and that thanks to his intermediation he would be canonized, is well known and notorious. These events ended up taking place.

In 1417 he entered the royal chancellery, becoming one of the closest advisers to the monarch Alfonso the Magnanimous, intervening in the affairs of the Western schism that still survived in Peñíscola, receiving in compensation the rectorate of the church of San Nicolás de Valencia (1419).

Alfonso the Magnanimous incorporated him into his entourage in Italy (1420) and he was granted the archdeaconship of Xàtiva and the rectory of L'Alghero (Sardinia).

Alfonso de Borja intervenes successfully in the definitive resolution of the schism of Peñíscola (1429), which continued in the person of Gil Sánchez Muñoz, successor of Benedict XIII with the name of Clement VIII, obtaining his resignation. In reward he receives the bishopric of Valencia (1429), a city in which he will have little presence due to his obligations to the crown.

On July 24, 1438, he set sail for Italy in the company of the royal bastard, Ferdinand (future Ferrante I of Naples), of whom he was tutor. After the conquest of the Neapolitan capital by Alfonso the Magnanimous in 1442, Alfonso de Borja collaborated in the legal organization of the new kingdom.

His ecclesiastical career took a qualitative leap when he was appointed cardinal (1444) with the title of the Four Crowned Saints, and moved his residence to Rome, a city where his surname was altered, becoming the latinized Borgia. From that moment on, the Latin form will be the one with which the part of the family settled in Italy is known, while those who

remained in the Peninsula or returned to it would continue to be called Borja.

Away from pomp and circumstance, he will maintain a prudent and simple life, preserving his prestige as an eminent jurist. Around 1449 he claimed the help of his nephews Pedro Luis and Rodrigo de Borja, and Luis Juan del Milà, who would end up obtaining numerous ecclesiastical benefits.

On the death of Nicholas V, Alfonso de Borja was elected Pope on April 8, 1455 under the name of Callixtus III. An unexpected election of the neutral candidate, favored by the fights between the Orsini and the Colonna. A non-Italian Pope: Spanish and Catalan. His provenance rivalled that of the French in unpopularity. The Catalans dominated Sicily and Naples and harassed the galleys of various Italian republics and principalities.

His pontificate focused on three aspects: the fight against the Turks, which did not arouse great enthusiasm, the defense of the inherited political balance, and the consolidation of papal authority in the Papal States. From his new dignity, the process of canonization of Saint Vicente Ferrer concluded.

Callixtus III had several clashes with his former protector, Alfonso the Magnanimous. The most notorious: the refusal to grant him a divorce from Queen María and the ratification of Ferrante as successor to the monarch. The accusations and threats were a constant between the two.

The Pope used relatives and compatriots to limit the power of the powerful Roman families. His nephews Rodrigo and Luis Juan would end up being cardinals (1456) despite his youth, and Pedro Luis, captain general of the Church. This behavior earned him numerous criticisms for his excessive nepotism.

During the summer of 1458, the pope's state of health suffers. His legs are swollen and his pain forces him to remain prostrate. The end is expected. Borgia properties are raided

and looted, but his nephew Rodrigo, in a display of cool self-control, remains by his side. The palace under construction in Rome is stormed and completely destroyed.

On August 6 Callixtus III expires and his remains are buried in the chapel of Santa Maria della Febbre, attached to the Vatican basilica. Later they will be transferred to their current resting place in the church of Montserrat in Rome.

His nephew Rodrigo will manage, decades later, to vindicate and increase the legacy of the Borgias.

Cesare Borgia

Image of the Renaissance prince, praised by Machiavelli and reviled by history.



Cesare Borgia

Cesare Borgia, the living image of the Renaissance prince, praised by Machiavelli and reviled by history, was the example of the intelligent politician, loved by his people and feared by his enemies, with whom he was implacable.

He was the first of the children that Cardinal Rodrigo de Borja had with Vannozza Cattanei, born in Rome in September 1475, who would be followed by Giovanni, Lucrezia and Goffredo.

When he was only six years old, he already began to receive ecclesiastical positions, a social sphere to which he had been assigned by his father. In 1491, at the age of 16, he was appointed bishop of Pamplona.

The pontifical election of his father, in August 1492, boosted his ecclesiastical career and he received the archbishopric of Valencia and the Cistercian abbey of Valldigna. In 1493 he

settles in Rome and begins to show some of the skills that will make him famous: his bearing and his wit.

Charles VIII of France, on his way through Rome in 1493, on his way to Naples, took him with him as papal legate and hostage. Cesare stars in a resounding escape that will increase his prestige. Pretending that his trip is going to be long, he organizes a large retinue loaded with luggage. The French did not think that the famous cardinal would abandon all his trousseau and lower their guard. Cesare escapes, leaving behind bundles full of stones.

On the night of June 14, 1497, Cesare said goodbye to his brother Giovanni and his body was found a few days later floating in the Tiber. Knowing the disagreements between the two brothers, the gossip echoed the accusation of fratricide that floated in the environment. They never found the culprit.

In August 1498 Cesar managed to get his demands met and passed to the secular state.

Louis XII of France, after agreeing with the pope to divorce his wife Joan of Valois, grants him the Duchy of Valentinois and marries him to Princess Carlota of Albret (1499), with whom he would have a daughter named Luisa. Although he had no recognized mistresses, he would later have two natural children, Girolamo and Camila.

At the service of the French monarch, Caesar enters Italy with his troops (1499) and during his stay in Rome maintains tense relations with Alfonso de Bisceglie, husband of his sister Lucrezia, whom he orders assassinated (1500).

That same year he expands the Borgia territories throughout central Italy and his father grants him the title of Duke of Romagna (1501).

In this convulsive time, full of intrigues, he breaks up a conspiracy against him carried out by the Orsini, which ends in the prison and execution of the conspirators and the capture

of the indomitable Catalina Sforza, whom he confines for a time in the castle of Sant'Angelo (1502).

On August 18, 1503, Alexander VI died. Cesare convalesces in the pontifical rooms, a victim of malaria. Some attributed his state of health to the poison, which his father would have also ingested.

The new Pope, Pius III, confirmed his charges, but died a few months later and was succeeded, like Julius II, by Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, the bitterest enemy of the Borgias.

Without influence and without power, he took refuge in the Castel Sant'Angelo, to embark for Naples in April 1504. But his freedom did not last long. Ferdinand II of Aragon orders his imprisonment and transfer to Spain in September of that same year.

In the peninsula he will be confined, first in Valencia, and later in the castles of Chinchilla and de la Mota (Medina del Campo). In the latter, he stars in a bizarre escape (1506) that takes him to the domain of his brother-in-law, the King of Navarre, who appoints him general of his armies.

On March 12, 1507, he died in a skirmish in Mendavia, near Viana, where he was buried.

His body remained in the church of Santa María until the middle of the 16th century, when the Bishop of Calahorra ordered his remains to be taken out of the temple, in revenge for the murder of a family member armed in his day by the Borgias.

A model of political cunning in the eyes of Machiavelli, history has presented him as a character without scruples or morals. But Cesare Borgia has also passed into the collective memory as the image of the Renaissance prince, cultured and of exquisite taste.

The motto that was engraved on the sword that accompanied it accurately described it: “Either Caesar or nothing”.

Lucrezia Borgia

Victim of tragedies associated with her father's political interests, she piously ended her life as Duchess of Ferrara.



Lucrezia Borgia

Lucrezia Borgia was born on April 18, 1480 in Subiaco, a town about 70 kilometers from Rome. Her father, the then Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia, who had relations with Vannozza Cattanei, had already had two sons, Cesare and Giovanni. Her other brother, Goffredo, would be born a year later.

At an early age she was placed in the care of Adriana Milà, the cardinal's cousin. Installed in the Orsini palace, together with

Giulia Farnese, Adriana's daughter-in-law, she was instructed as a good Renaissance lady, simultaneously practicing Spanish, Catalan and Italian. Valencian was, in fact, the colloquial language of the Borgias. Sweetness, grace, ingenuity and joy were already manifested in Lucrezia as a genetic sample of her family.

He would soon discover that their destinies would depend at all times on his father's political strategies. She was used as a bargaining chip, when she was twelve years old she had a first arranged marriage with Querubín de Centelles and Ayora, son of the counts of Oliva, which she did not crystallize.

The new interests of the already pontiff Alexander VI ended up formalizing the marriage between Lucrezia, who was barely 13 years old, and the Count of Pesaro, Giovanni Sforza, nephew of the powerful Duke of Milan and twenty years her senior. The ceremony is held in the Vatican on June 12, 1493.

Relations between Alexander VI and his son-in-law are clouded to the point of mediating a possible assassination order by the pontiff. Giovanni Sforza flees from Rome and the Vatican machinery is set in motion to base the marriage annulment on the basis of a supposed homosexuality of the husband.

The outraged husband strikes back and launches the accusation of incest, which is soon taken up and spread by the enemies of the Borgias. Pamphlets begin to appear against Alexander VI and against Lucretia, in which they speak of orgies, unrestrained sex, murders. "The biggest whore in Rome", as Lucrezia is called, starts the seed of infamies that will haunt her for centuries.

The marriage annulled on December 20, 1497, the Pope negotiates a new marriage contract for his daughter. This time with Alfonso de Aragón, Duke of Biseglia, a wedding that takes place the following year. Cesare's relations with Alfonso are not good either and in July 1500, Lucrezia's husband is the

victim of an attack in the middle of Saint Peter's Square from which he manages to survive, but during his convalescence, Cesare orders his death.

This fact deeply affects Lucrezia, who retires in strict mourning to Nepi's castle, away from all luxury and dedicated to a pious lifestyle.

Alexander VI does not miss the opportunity and negotiates a new marriage, this time with Alfonso de Este, heir to the Duke of Ferrara.

On January 6, 1502, Lucrezia said goodbye to her parents and her son Rodrigo, the fruit of her marriage to Alfonso de Aragón, whom she would never see again.

On February 2, she enters Ferrara and finds herself in a city that welcomes her with great luxury and spectacle. A population with a cultured court, with which she soon connected and that distances her from the intrigues that have led her life.

Lucrezia forges a new destiny here, which will turn her into a religious and prudent woman, with an intense Christian life, where she will spend the last stretch of her life watching her loved ones disappear from a distance. First to her father, in 1503, then to Cesare, in 1507, to his eldest son Rodrigo, in 1512, to her brother Goffredo, in 1517 and to her mother Vannozza, in 1518.

Lucrezia had six children and died at just 39 years old, on July 24, 1519.

Her body remains buried in the monastery of Corpus Domini in Ferrara, with the Franciscan tertiary habit with which she was buried, along with other members of her family.

Saint Francisco de Borja

His life of humility and the greatness he had renounced caused admiration at the time.



Saint Francisco de Borja

Francisco de Borja y Aragón was born in Gandia (Valencia) on October 28, 1510, the result of the union between Juan de Borja, third Duke of Gandia, and Juana de Aragón. His life is already marked by the lineages from which he descends. By paternal branch that of the Borgia popes and, by maternal branch, that of Ferdinand II of Aragon.

The early death of his mother will influence the spiritual process that will accompany him throughout his life.

After a first period of training in Zaragoza, when he was only 12 years old, he was sent to Tordesillas as a page for the Infanta Catalina, the youngest daughter of Joan la Loca, who is

confined with her mother. There he remains from 1522 to 1526, to return to Zaragoza and complete his studies.

In 1528 he leaves for the court of Charles V. Francisco is seventeen years old. A year later he married Leonor de Castro, one of the ladies-in-waiting of Empress Isabella. After the wedding he is named Marquis of Llombay and Chief Equestrian of the Empress. Leonor, on her part, is appointed Chamberlain Mayor. The Borja marriage becomes the shadow of the Empress Isabella. In the court of Toledo, Francisco closes the relationship with Charles V, with whom he will forge a close friendship.

On May 1, 1539, the empress died. Charles V is dejected and Francisco is in charge of transferring her remains to Granada. The funeral procession takes 16 days to reach the city. The stench given off by the coffin and the disfigured image of the adored Isabella produce a great emotional and spiritual impact on Francisco.

Soon after, Charles V named him Viceroy of Catalonia, rewarding him for ten years in the service of the Crown.

On January 8, 1543, his father died and Francisco renounced the viceroyalty to become the IV Duke of Gandia.

His wife died in 1546 and Francisco, who had already had contact with the Jesuits since the time of the Viceroyalty, intensified his spiritual life. That same year he makes the votes of the company with a code name to keep his identity secret. Ignatius of Loyola has advised against disclosing his purpose, since "the world has no ears to hear such a din."

After obtaining a degree in Theology in 1550, the time had come to make his decision public. At the age of 39, he leaves his land and his family on August 31 and leaves for Rome.

His arrival in the city causes great expectation. The cardinals and the pope himself offer him lodging, but the duke wants to be with Ignatius of Loyola.

The news of his return to Spain spread like wildfire. Borja settles in Azpeitia (Guipúzcoa) and accepts all the tests of humility that are imposed on him, among them those of the cook's assistant. Spiritual transformation is accompanied by a physical transformation. He shaves his head and beard and takes the clerical habit on May 26, 1551.

Joan de Austria, daughter of Charles V, widow of the heir to the crown of Portugal, calls Francisco to Tordesillas. The young woman, barely 20 years old, is captivated and makes the company's vows in secret, with the code name of Mateo Sánchez.

In 1554 he was appointed general commissioner of the Company in Spain and Portugal. The duke who has become a priest begins to become the sensation of the times and everyone wants to see him preach, from the poorest to the noblest. Thanks to Francisco's work, the company experienced a notable expansion.

Charles V, already retired in Yuste, asks him to spiritually assist his mother, Queen Joan, confined in Tordesillas, whom he accompanies in her last moments.

The news of the death of Ignacio de Loyola, on July 31, 1556, caused him "loneliness and grief". Already at that time, the Society of Jesus began to have powerful enemies who questioned its work in Spain.

After the death of Charles V (1558) Philip II returned to Spain as king and Francisco perceived the misgivings of the monarch towards the Jesuits. Without the protection of his former mentor, Borja's enemies prepare the assault on his person.

On May 21, 1559, the auto de fe is celebrated in the Plaza

Mayor of Valladolid, presided over by Joan de Austria. Father Francisco's intervention saves Ana Enríquez, his daughter's sister-in-law, from death. A few months later, the Inquisition published a catalog of prohibited books, including a work attributed to Francisco de Borja. The Jesuits and their friends at court tried to defend him without success. Philip II washes his hands and the Inquisition continues with its procedure.

To the chagrin of the Spanish monarch, Francisco accepts an invitation from Cardinal Infante Enrique of Portugal and moves to the neighboring country, avoiding his possible imprisonment.

Borja remained in Portugal for almost three years until Pope Pius IV requested his presence in Rome, where he was appointed General Assistant of the Company.

After the death of the second general of the Company, Francisco de Borja is elected as the new General of the Jesuits on July 2, 1565. He is 54 years old and in poor health. As head of the Company, he completes the edition of the rules and the construction in Rome of the house and church of Saint Andrew in the Quirinal.

In 1571, a diplomatic mission takes him to the courts of Spain, Portugal and France. This long journey will become the agony of a Francisco de Borja plagued by illnesses. After a painful and eventful return, he will end up dying in Rome on September 30, 1572.

A century later, Francisco de Borja was canonized in 1671 by Pope Clement X.

His name day is celebrated on October 3.

Vanozza Cattanei

Mistress of Rodrigo Borgia and mother of Cesare, Giovanni, Lucrezia and Goffredo.

Vannozza Cattanei, mother of Cesare (1475), Giovanni (1476), Lucrezia (1480) and Goffredo (1482), is the best-known lover of Rodrigo Borgia, whose relationship began around 1470.

Vannozza, diminutive of Giovanna, born in 1442, nine years younger than Cardinal Borgia, must have been endowed with a rare beauty and sensuality to maintain such a lasting and fruitful relationship.

The relationship between Vannozza and Rodrigo was socially covered up with three marriages of convenience. Domenico d'Arignano (1474) was followed by Giorgio de Croce (1480) and Carlo Canale (1486). Everyone turned a blind eye in exchange for social and economic benefits.

When Rodrigo Borgia becomes Pope, the pontiff's heart has long been trapped by his relationship with the beautiful and young Giulia Farnese. Vannozza is no longer her mistress and is taking care of her children and managing the various lodging businesses she owns.

The last years of his life, after the death of Alexander VI, are peaceful. She gains social recognition and becomes a pious woman and patron of the Church.

She died at the age of 72 on November 26, 1518 and was buried in the church of Santa Maria del Popolo, but her remains disappeared during the sacking of Rome in 1527.

His tombstone is preserved in the portico of the Basilica of San Marco, in Rome.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola

Ignacio de Loyola was born in 1491, in the castle of Loyola, in Azpeitia. The son of one of the oldest and noblest families in the region, he began a brief military career, which ended abruptly on May 20, 1521, when a cannonball broke his leg during the fight in defense of Pamplona castle.

The painful recovery from the wound forces him to convalesce for a while and he begins to read books on spirituality. Under the influence of these readings, he rethinks his existence and criticizes his life as a soldier, until causing the definitive conversion of the soldier into a religious.

In the Monserrat Monastery, on March 25, 1522, he hangs his military clothing in front of the image of the Virgin and leaves the enclosure with rags and barefoot. He locks himself in a cave for ten months in spiritual exercise and then sets off on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He returns to Spain and studies in Barcelona and Alcalá de Henares, where he is accused by the Inquisition.

In 1528 he arrived at the University of Paris, where he remained for seven years. There he meets the first companions with whom he founded the Society of Jesus on August 15, 1534: Francisco Javier, Pedro Fabro, Alfonso Salmerón, Diego Laínez, Nicolás Bobedilla and the Portuguese Simón Rodrigues.

In 1538 he moved to Rome, in 1540 Pope Paul III approved the new religious order and in 1541 Ignacio de Loyola was named General of the Company.

Ignatius has been in correspondence with Francisco de Borja since the time of viceroy, but the first personal meeting took place in 1550, when Borja, already a Jesuit, moved to Rome,

where he stayed for three months in the company of Ignatius.

The founder of the Jesuits understood from the first moment the great value of joining the order of a great man from Spain, with so much influence at court, and decided, when Borja returned to Spain, to maintain the direct line with the founder, appointing him commissioner for Spain and Portugal and entrusting him with delicate diplomatic missions.

Ignatius of Loyola died on July 31, 1556 in his cell at the Jesuit headquarters in Rome. The news arrives a month and a half late to Francisco de Borja, who is deeply affected.

Ignatius of Loyola will be canonized on March 12, 1622.

The death of Giovanni Borgia

The assassination of Giovanni Borgia, Duke of Gandia, was never clarified.



El río Tíber visto desde el castillo de Sant´ Angelo

On the night of June 14, 1497, Cesare and Giovanni had dinner at their mother's house near San Pietro in Vincoli, on the current Borgia steps. The relationship between the two has traditionally been contentious.

When they arrive at the gate of what is now the Sforza Cesarini Palace, they say goodbye. Giovanni walks away in the company of a masked man. Everything seems to indicate that he is preparing for another licentious night.

The next day hours pass and his brother does not appear. The pope, worried about the fate of his son, orders to search all of Rome. At noon on the 16th they find the body of the Duke of Gandia floating in the waters of the Tiber.

The body of Giovanni Borgia is clothed, with his throat slit and his chest pierced by nine wounds. The perfectly buttoned clothing, the gloves hanging from his waist and his bag retains thirty gold ducats.

That same night his body is exposed in Santa María del Pópolo and buried with great pomp.

The investigations never managed to find out the name of the murderers. Discarded the Orsini, great enemies of the Borgias, the eyes point to Cesare. Alexander VI, who has entered a deep depression, closes the investigation without clarifying the facts.

The language of the Borgia

All the sons of Alexander VI, despite being mestizos of Italian and Spanish and never having been to Spain, spoke Spanish to their father's friends and protégés, and used Valencian with him, as if such a means of expression give them more privacy.

Prevent poisoning.

"There was no ruler or rich character who failed to make his servants taste food and drinks before sitting down at table. Nor was there a Pope, king, prince, cardinal or simple condottiere who did not own a silver ship with unfurled sails, whose The hull was opened with a key, keeping their own cutlery, napkin, salt and all the spices inside, to avoid possible poisoning Every guest at a banquet sent his ship ahead with a faithful servant in charge of placing it in the table, and when he arrived he opened it with his key, taking out the cutlery and the spices, without the owner of the house being offended by such precaution". (Blasco Ibáñez - "At the feet of Venus - The Borgias")

It has been shown that many deaths caused by the legendary Borgia poison were really the result of syphilis, a very widespread disease at the time.

Rome

Callixtus III, Alexander VI and Saint Francisco de Borja left their mark on the city.



The Rome of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries witnessed innumerable events related to the Borgias. The appointment of the two Valencian popes, Callixtus III (1455) and Alexander VI (1492), and the rise to the generalship of the Jesuits of Saint Francisco de Borja. City in which, in addition, the three die.

It is in Rome where the lineage of the Borgias expands in the ecclesiastical and administrative strata of the Vatican, where the two weddings of Lucrezia Borgia take place and where the murders of Giovanni Borgia, second Duke of Gandia, of Alfonso de Aragón, husband of Lucrezia, and the multiple criminal acts attributed to Cesare Borgia.

The artistic patronage of Alexander VI had a strong imprint on the city, with works in the Castel Sant'Angelo, Santa Maria Maggiore and the Borgia tower of the Vatican Palace. Among his urban reforms, the reorganization of Piazza Navona, the restoration of the city walls and the opening of Via Alexandrina, to link the Basilica of San Pedro with the Castel Sant'Angelo.

The Rome of the fifteenth century is that of the resolution of

the schisms in the Catholic Church, that of the advance of Islam with the fall of Constantinople (1453) and that of the discovery of America (1492).

At the end of this century the conflicts between the great powers of the time were accentuated: the popes and the kings of France, Naples and Aragon

In this period humanism and the Renaissance began their implementation as cultural expressions. The Vatican library is organized, the first museum in the world is created and the jubilee of the year 1500 takes place.

The Renaissance rediscovers the artistic and intellectual values of antiquity. Creators will be hired to embellish the city, whose works will mark the history of art: Bramante, Raphael or Michelangelo.

Rome is sacked by the troops of Charles V (1527) and Paul III founds the court of the Inquisition (1542) under the supervision of the Dominicans. Ignacio de Loyola sees the Jesuits approved (1540) putting himself at the forefront of the evangelizing work and the counter-reformation.

In the sixteenth century the popes consolidate their power, but the Lutheran schism causes a tear in all of Christianity. The Counter-Reformation sets in motion a set of measures with which the papacy tries to counteract the crisis, planned in the extensive Council of Trent (1545-1563).

At that time it will be Saint Francisco de Borja who will rescue the memory of the lineage, by renouncing the sumptuousness of this world and placing himself under the orders of Saint Ignacio de Loyola (1550), residing in Rome since his appointment as general of the Jesuits, in 1565, until his death in 1572.

Places of interest

Civil Architecture

Appartamento Borgia

Alexander VI restructured these spaces for his own use in the heart of the Vatican rooms.



Appartamento Borgia

The Valencian Rodrigo de Borja, who was elected Pope at the death of Innocent VIII under the name of Alexander VI, links his name to this part of the Vatican rooms used during his

pontificate (1492-1503).

The space corresponds to six rooms that the pontiff himself had restructured and decorated: the Room of the Sibyls and the Room of the Creed, in the Torre Borgia, the Room of the Liberal Arts, the Room of the Saints and the Room of the Mysteries, named as "secret chambers" in the diary of Johannes Burckhard, Alexander's master of ceremonies; and finally, the Hall of the Pontiffs, in the oldest wing.

The papal residence occupied the entire first level of the Apostolic Palace, and also included two small rooms accessible from the Liberal Arts Room, probably used as a bedroom and bathroom.

After the death of Alexander VI, Julius II, an enemy of the Borgia pope, abandoned the rooms and decided to move to the upper floor, known as the Raphael Rooms. At the end of the 19th century, Leo XIII opened these spaces to the public.

The pictorial decoration of the rooms reserved for private use was the work of the painter Bernardino de Betto, better known by the name of Pinturicchio. The Pope's family, himself, and occasional visitors served as models for the figures depicted. The vaults were decorated with stucco and gold. The rehabilitation was carried out between the autumn of 1492 and the beginning of 1494 and was the culminating work of Pinturicchio, who enjoyed the absolute confidence of the Pope.

In the time of Alexander VI they served as rooms for his son Caesar, and in them he must have given some of his publicized and scandalous banquets.

The Hall of the Sibyls, located in the Borgia tower, which the Pope had built to strengthen the Vatican's defensive apparatus, is decorated with sibyls accompanying prophets and apostles.

The small Creed Room, also inside the Borgia tower, was used for receptions. It is decorated with couples formed by the

apostles and the prophets.

The Liberal Arts Room was designed as the pontiff's office and is full of coats of arms and family symbols. First of the secret rooms. Its decoration alludes to the arts or disciplines that formed the basis of medieval school education. The coats of arms of the Borgias are present in different places in the room. It was the study space and home of the private library.

The Hall of the Saints has mythological representations and episodes from the lives of seven saints in the lunettes. The fresco of the Dispute of Saint Catherine of Alexandria is one of Pinturichio's masterpieces, where Lucrezia Borgia appears in the face of Saint Catherine. Above the door that leads to the Mysteries, in a representation of the Virgin with the Child, the historian Giorgio Vasari (16th century) pointed out the possibility that her features coincided with those of the beautiful Giulia Farnese, lover of the Dad.

One of the best portraits of Alexander VI is preserved in the Hall of Mysteries. The scene of the Resurrection draws the pontiff with his ceremonial cape, where the soldiers of the tomb could be three of his sons.

The Hall of the Pontiffs is the largest. Intended for official ceremonies, it was here that the Pope nearly lost his life after the roof collapsed in 1500.

Alexander VI died in a room adjacent to the Liberal Arts room on August 18, 1503.

The Appartamento Borgia is a true jewel of the time, transporting you to the heart of the Borgias and to the life of the Renaissance.

House of Fiammetta

Dwelling attributed to the courtesan Fiammetta Michaelis, who had Cesare Borgia among her lovers.



House of Fiammetta

This 15th-century building, on two floors, with an altana and a front porch supported by columns and pillars, has traditionally been attributed to the Florentine courtesan Fiammetta Michaelis, who had Cesare Borgia among her lovers.

In his testament, issued on February 19, 1512 (date of his death), he states his relationship with the son of Alexander VI by signing as "Fiammetta del Duca de Valentino".

After several changes of ownership at the end of the 19th century, the house belonged to the Bennicelli family, who restored it at the beginning of the 20th century.

Castillo de Sant'Angelo

Alexander VI, who undertook several reforms, used it as a prison and as a personal refuge.



Castillo de Sant'Angelo

This imposing fortress has its origins in the mausoleum that Emperor Hadrian had built for himself and his family in the year 135. In the year 403 it was transformed into a military building within the Aurelian wall.

During the plague epidemic that devastated the city in the year 590, Pope Gregory I had a vision of the Archangel Saint Michael on top of the castle, announcing the end of the epidemic. The figure of him crowns and gives name to the construction that has survived to this day.

In 1277, a fortified corridor of 800 meters was built that connected the castle with the Vatican and allowed the popes to take refuge in the fortress in case of siege or danger.

The castle is divided into five floors which are accessed via a spiral ramp. The upper floors maintain different rooms that functioned as a residence, decorated with Renaissance frescoes.

On the upper floor there is a large terrace from which the entire city could be watched.

On the ground floor there is an extensive lapidary of Alexander VI, a pope who undertook various improvements to the defensive complex, building the four pentagonal bastions and the moat. The pope embellished the castle with gardens and fountains (Alexander VI's courtyard, with a well decorated with the Borgia coat of arms), and ordered the installation of a new apartment, frescoed by Pinturicchio.

Alexander VI himself used the defensive function of the castle in 1494 to take refuge during the invasion of Rome by the troops of Charles VIII of France, and Cesare Borgia secluded himself in the enclosure several times after the death of his father to safeguard the family from the wrath of their enemies.

The history of the castle is full of illustrious prisoners and prisoners, a good number of whom did not come out alive. Catalina Sforza, the secretary of Alexander VI, Bartolomeo Flores, the Archbishop of Calahorra, members of the Caetani family, Astorre Manfredi or Cardinal Orsini, who died of poison, were locked up by direct order of the Borgias.

Borgia Staircase

The upper part preserves the balcony of the residence of Vannozza Cattanei, lover of Alexander VI.



Borgia Staircase

This staircase, which connects Via Cavour with Piazza San Pietro in Vincoli, is part of a building where Vannozza Cattanei lived, owned by Rodrigo Borgia.

They say that from the balcony, which can still be seen, Vannozza Cattanei, Rodrigo Borgia's lover and mother of Cesare, Giovanni, Lucrezia and Goffredo, saw the parades and celebrations in which her family participated.

Over time, some rooms in the building became part of the current church of San Francisco. The tower of the palace became the current bell tower.

Locanda della Vacca

15th century building that was owned by Vannozza Cattanei.



Locanda della Vacca

Close to Campo de Fiori, at numbers 11 and 14 of Vicolo del Gallo, is this 15th century building, famous for housing the Locanda della Vacca, owned by Vannozza Cattanei, lover of Alexander VI and Caesar's mother, John. Lucrezia and Goffredo.

In 1517, Vannozza left the building, in equal parts, to the Hospital della Consolazione and to the company of the SS Salvatore ad Sancta Sanctorum.

The place was active until the end of the 17th century.

Orsini Palace Taverna

Lucrezia Borgia lived in this palace when it was in charge of Alexander VI's cousin, Adriana de Milà Orsini.



Orsini Palace Taverna

The current set of buildings, on Monte Giordano, that make up the Orsini Taverna palace, was owned by one of the most important families in Rome, the Orsini, and for some time the residence of Lucrezia Borgia, when it was in charge of Adriana de Milà Orsini, niece of Cardinal Luis de Milà y de Borja and cousin of Alexander VI. Lucrezia remained in the palace until her marriage, in 1493, to Giovanni Sforza, lord of Pesaro.

Giulia Farnese, the young and beautiful lover of the Pope, also shared a residence as she was married to Adriana's son. Lucrezia was here instructed in the manners of the distinguished ladies of the Renaissance: music, literature,

Latin...

Around 1286, the Orsini settled on this hill occupied by an old fort, building a palace with defense towers, which ended up being transformed into a set of noble buildings, at the service of the various branches of the family.

In 1668 Flavio Orsini, the last Duke of Bracciano, had to sell the property, which ended up, after passing through the Gabrielli family, in the hands of the Taverna counts of Milan, in 1888, current owners.

The various stately homes of the palace overlook a larger courtyard, dominated by a 17th-century fountain, which is accessed through a large vaulted entrance.

Sforza Cesarini Palace

Residence of Rodrigo Borgia in his long period as Vice Chancellor of the Church.



Sforza Cesarini Palace

The Sforza Cesarini Palace was built in 1458 by Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia as the seat of the Apostolic Chancellery, of which he was Vice-Chancellor. Situated between Sant'Angelo Bridge and Campo de' Fiori, on the important Via dei Banchi Vecchi, this opulent building passed into the hands of Cardinal Ascanio Sforza after his election as Pope.

Rodrigo Borgia had his residence here during the years in which he served as Vice Chancellor, a position he had accessed thanks to his uncle Calixtus III, in 1457, and which he held with the four successive popes until his appointment as pontiff.

During that period he maintained a relationship with

Vannozza Cattanei, who had acquired a nearby house at number 58 via del Pellegrino, the place where Cesare Borgia could have been born. From his residence he could easily manage a hostel owned by him in the old Pizzo di Merlo square and the other family establishment in Vicolo del Gallo.

It was also at the main door of the building that Cesare Borgia said goodbye to his brother Giovanni for the last time on the night of June 14, 1497, whose body appeared in the waters of the Tiber two days later.

Little remains of what was once considered one of the finest palaces in Rome. Decorated with extraordinary luxury in its day, we can still see the Florentine Renaissance portico inside. Its current style is the result of works carried out at the beginning of the 18th century.

After the death of Alexander VI, the palace passed into the hands of Julius II's nephew, Galeotto della Rovere, who died in 1508, and shortly afterwards it was renamed the Old Chancellery, to distinguish it from the New Chancellery, located in the nearby Riario Palace, which concentrated administrative activity in 1517 by decision of Pope Leo X.

Piazza Navona

Alexander VI offered in this scenario the first bullfight that the Romans witnessed.



Piazza Navona

Piazza Navona is one of the most spectacular and characteristic urban settings of Baroque Rome. The square is delimited by the buildings that were erected on the remains of the old Stadium of Domitian, whose track shape and dimensions are preserved.

The original shape of the current square faithfully imitates the perimeter of the old stadium that Domitian had built in the year 86 after Christ for the practice of athletics and horse races.

Piazza Navona has been the theater for popular festivals, races and walks for centuries.

The Borgias promoted it as the center of the cultural life of the

city and Alexander VI offered in this scenario the first bullfight that the Romans witnessed.

Borgia Tower

The tower was part of the palace complex in which Vannozza Cattanei lived.



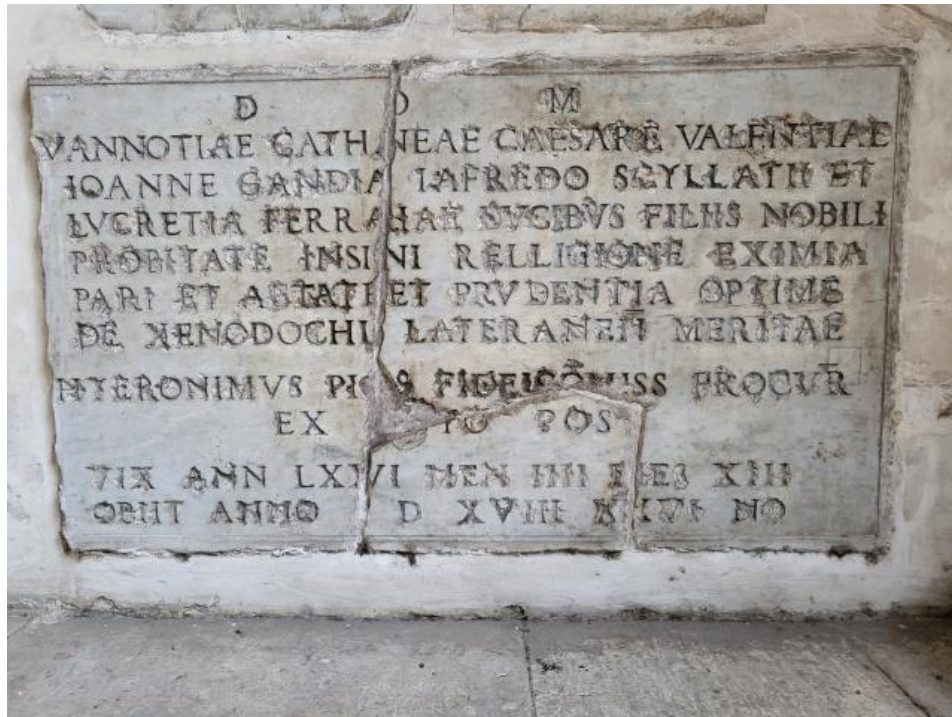
Borgia Tower

In a corner of Piazza San Pietro in Vincoli, near the Borgia steps, is the so-called Borgia tower, a 12th-century building that, at the time, was part of the palace complex in which Vannozza Cattanei lived. Rodrigo Borgia's lover, and father of Cesare, Giovanni, Lucrezia and Goffredo.

Today the tower is part of the church of San Francesco di Paola ai Monti.

Basilica of San Marco Evangelista

In its portico is the tombstone of Vannozza Cattanei, mother of Cesare, Giovanni, Lucrezia and Goffredo Borgia.



Basilica of San Marco Evangelista

Located in Piazza di San Marco, next to Piazza Venezia, it was built in the year 336 by Pope Marcos, whose remains rest under the main altar. After successive restorations, at the end of the 15th century Paul II transformed it according to Renaissance taste with a portico and a loggia.

In the 18th century restorations the church received its current baroque decoration.

In the portico there are several Paleo-Christian tombstones, as well as that of Vannozza Cattanei, the mistress of Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia.

Vannozza, who died on November 26, 1518, was buried in the church of Santa Maria del Popolo, where her son Giovanni rested.

During the Sack of Rome in 1527, the chapel where his remains were found was looted. Only the tombstone that can currently be seen in the porch was recovered.

Basilica of San Pietro

The primitive funerary monument of Calixtus III is preserved in the Vatican Grottoes.



Basilica of San Pietro

The Basilica of San Pedro was an initiative of the Emperor Constantine who, in the 4th century, decided to build this temple where the apostle had been buried. Used for the celebration of worship, as a covered cemetery and as a funerary banquet hall, during the High Middle Ages it was the main pilgrimage site in the West.

In 1452, Pope Nicolas V began a reform of the temple, maintaining the original surface, which was left unfinished after his death. Successive popes limited themselves to consolidating the structure.

It would be Julius II, in 1506, who would start the construction of a new building. After several designs, it is Michelangelo Buonarroti in 1546 who will give the definitive form. His project was completed twenty-four years after his death by

Domingo Fontana and Jacobo de la Porta. When the latter died, in 1602, all that remained was to erect the façade and design the square.

The characters of the Borja saga did not know the complex as it has reached our days, except for Saint Francisco de Borja, who was able to contemplate the works of the new elevation.

The footprint of the Borgias in this place of reference for Christianity is limited to the primitive funerary monument of Calixtus III exhibited in the Vatican Grottoes and an artistic theory that identifies the faces of Michelangelo's Pietà with those of Vannozza Cattanei and Giovanni Borja, his son assassinated in Rome on June 14, 1497, since Alexander VI was the promoter of this famous sculpture. The work was commissioned to the young artist, in 1498, by Cardinal Jean Bilhères, legate of Charles VIII of France.

The steps of San Pedro was the scene in which Alfonso of Aragon, Duke of Biseglia and husband of Lucrezia, was stabbed by a group of masked men on July 15, 1500, when he was going to meet his wife in the Vatican. Soon after, he would be assassinated by order of Cesare Borgia.

Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore

In the coffered ceiling you can see the coats of arms of Callixtus III and Alexander VI, commissioned by the latter pontiff.



Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore

The Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore is one of the four papal basilicas in Rome and the only one that has preserved the primitive Christian structure of its origins.

Legend tells us that the wealthy Roman patrician Giovanni and his wife, having no children, decided to dedicate a church to the Virgin Mary, who appeared to them in a dream one night in August 352.

In the dream, the virgin informed them that a miracle would

show them where to build the church.

Pope Liberius also had the same dream, and the next day, going to the Esquiline, he found it covered with snow. The Pope himself drew the perimeter of the building, and the church was built at the expense of the two spouses.

The deep transformations of the basilica, which until then had preserved its medieval appearance, took place between the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th. At that time the two large side chapels, called Sistine, were erected. and Paolina, and the building to the right of the facade. Its medieval bell tower is the tallest in Rome.

The ceiling dates back to the time of Alexander VI and, according to tradition, was gilded with the first shipment of American gold, a gift from Isabella of Castile. In the coffered ceiling you can distinguish the coats of arms of the two Borgia popes, Calixtus III and Alexander VI.

Church of Montserrat

Temple in which the remains of Callixtus III (Alfonso de Borja) and Alexander VI (Rodrigo de Borja) rest.



Church of Montserrat

Near Campo de' Fiori is the church of Santa Maria in Monsterrato, the national church of the Spanish, where the remains of the two Valencian popes, Callixtus III (Alfonso de Borja) and Alexander VI (Rodrigo de Borja), rest.

Callixtus III, who died on August 6, 1458, was buried in the chapel of Santa Maria della Febbre, attached to the Vatican basilica. His nephew, Alexander VI, who lost his life on the 18th of 1503, was buried in the mausoleum that he himself had built for his uncle.

Decades later, the then Jesuit Francisco de Borgia, great-grandson of Alexander VI, who served as General of the Company, tried to take the remains of his relatives to the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore or to the future Jesuit church in Ferrara. His death in 1572 cut short the initiative.

The remodeling of the Piazza di San Pietro, in 1585, and the disappearance of the chapel where they were buried meant that their remains ended up being stored in a lead urn. In 1610, Joan Bautista Vives, from Seville, at the service of the Inquisition in Rome, transferred the remains to the sacristy of the church of Santa Maria in Montserrat.

Already in the 19th century, the Spanish ambassador in Rome, the Count of Coello, decided to dignify the burial of the two Spanish popes and commissioned a funerary monument from Felipe Moratilla, completed in 1889, located in the chapel of San Diego. Space that they shared until 1980 with the remains of Alfonso XIII.

The church of Montserrat has its origins in a hospital created in 1350 to house the subjects of the crown of Aragon and in the subsequent church, whose construction began in 1518 and lasted well into the 17th century.

The current invocation of Santiago and Montserrat is already more recent. In 1817, the church of Santiago, located in Piazza Navona, was closed, and that of Montserrat became the official church of Spain in Rome. Most of the works of art from the extinct temple passed to the new headquarters.

The Main Chapel is presided over by a crucifixion painted by Girolamo Siciolante da Semoneta in 1565. In the Chapel of the Virgen del Pilar there is a canvas where his figure is accompanied by those of Saint Vicent Ferrer and the Apostle Santiago, the work of Francisco Preciado de la Vega, Sevillian painter of the 18th century.

The two tombs in the chapel of Santiago el Mayor are of great

interest. One by Alfonso de Paradinas, who died in 1485, founder of the church of Santiago, and the other by Juan de Fuensalida, bishop of Terni, secretary of Alexander VI, who died in 1498.

Links of interest

Más información:

[**https://www.ineroma.org/**](https://www.ineroma.org/)

[**https://www.enroma.com/iglesia-de-montserrat-en-roma/**](https://www.enroma.com/iglesia-de-montserrat-en-roma/)

Church of Sant'Andrea al Quirinal

Built as an oratory for the Jesuit novitiate, established by Saint Francisco de Borja in 1566.



Church of Sant'Andrea al Quirinal

The church of Sant'Andrea al Quirinal was built between 1658 and 1670 as an oratory for the novitiate of the Society of Jesus.

In 1566, the Jesuits had opened their second novitiate, the first in Rome, on the Quirinal Hill, on a property that included a small abandoned 13th-century chapel dedicated to Saint Andrew.

Saint Francisco de Borja, General of the Company, decided to use the place as the residence of the novitiate, which remained in charge of the order until its suppression in 1773. Later it was recovered from 1814 to 1870. In 1925 the Jesuits took over again church.

With an elliptical plan, its stucco decoration was designed by Bernini.

Inside are the remains of Saint Stanislaus Kostka, a young Polish nobleman who traveled from Vienna to Rome alone to become a Jesuit and who died ten months after his arrival.

In the chapel dedicated to Saint Ignatius of Loyola there is a painting by Ludovico Mazzanti (1686-1775) in which Saint Francisco de Borja appears in the company of Ignatius and Saint Luis Gonzaga.

Church of Sant'Ignazio di Loyola

In the chapel of the Immaculate Conception and in the apse there are representations of Saint Francisco de Borja.



Church of Sant'Ignazio di Loyola

The Church of Saint Ignatius of Loyola is a baroque church, erected according to the project of the Jesuit mathematician Orazio Grassi, based on the plans of Carlo Maderno.

The interior, shaped like a Latin cross, has three adjoining chapels on each side.

The polychromy of the marble, the stucco, the pictorial decoration and the richness of the altars define it as one of the most sumptuous churches in Rome.

The vault of the main nave is decorated with a fresco representing the "Ascent of Saint Ignatius", painted by the Jesuit Andrea Pozzo in 1685. This church is famous for its false dome, since what we see is actually a perspective painting done on a flat ceiling. A 13 meter diameter canvas on which Andrea Pozzo created this effect of visual deception.

The original painting, completed in 1685, was destroyed by fire and faithfully reproduced in 1823.

On both sides of the apse, there are two important works: the monument to Pope Gregory XV, from the 17th century, and the gigantic statue of Saint Ignatius, made in 1728.

To the left of the apse there is a representation of Saint Francis Xavier in India and in the other part another of Saint Francisco de Borja, received into the Company at the hands of its founder.

In the chapel of the Immaculate we find a representation of Saint Francisco de Borja together with Saint Francisco Javier.

Church of the Gesu

Saint Francisco de Borja, as general of the Society of Jesus, begins its construction.



Church of the Gesu

The mother church of the Society of Jesus was a personal project of Saint Ignatius of Loyola who, in 1551, commissioned the plans for its construction. In 1561, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese provided the budgets and Saint Francisco de Borja, as general of the order, began its construction.

In one of the wings of the temple is the chapel of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, with a baroque work that covers the tomb of the saint and on one side there is another dedicated to Saint Francisco de Borja.

Attached to the church is the professed house, which preserves the four original rooms where Saint Ignatius lived for the last

17 years of his life, where he died and where the four generals of the company who succeeded him lived.



BORJA-BORGIA: ITINERARY OF A UNIVERSAL FAMILY

Actividad subvencionada por el
Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte



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