

# Rome and its own Sapienza

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The link between our University and the city of Rome is more than seven centuries long; just a few historical notes are enough to remind us that the institutional events of the former are closely connected to the development – not only the urban development – of the latter.

Pope Boniface VIII founded the *Studium Urbis*, the University of Rome, in 1303 placing it outside the Vatican walls, thus promoting the beginning of an intense relationship between the city of Rome and the scholars who came to the center of Christianity from all over the world and who resided in the city, inside and outside the Vatican.

The close relationship between the University of Rome and the city of Rome has been nourished over the centuries through an intense and reciprocal exchange of cultural and scientific stimuli, also witnessed by the logistic shifting of the offices, first to Trastevere and then to Corso Rinascimento, and to the promotion of new institutions by the popes successor of the founder, such as the Biblioteca Alessandrina (Alexander VII), the realization of scientific cabinets and the establishment of study courses of scientific and experimental orientation (Benedict XIV). The secularization and autonomy of the teachings in the Roman university are affirmed during the years of the French Revolution, together with the start of a period of significant reforms. The Risorgimento further marks the adherence to the European spirit, to the new currents of modern thought and is fueled by the contribution of very high level intellectuals (Terenzio Mamiani). When, in 1870, the University of Rome became the university of the capital of the Kingdom of Italy, it also became the school where the political and administrative summits of the new unitary state were formed. In the years between the two wars the Fascist regime truncates the debate over thirty years on a new venue adapted to the times and the changed needs and decides to build the new University City, designed by Marcello Piacentini with the contribution of the best

Italian architects of that time. It was inaugurated in 1935 on an area not far from the recently modernized Termini station and is part of the Piacentini urban program of the Greater Rome (1925-26), in which, precisely, the university city played a fundamental role. According to that plan the rectorate, in Carpegna palace, and some laboratories in Via Panisperna would have remained in the historical center. During the war the University City followed the fate of Rome, also suffering the bombardment of San Lorenzo in July 1943. The years of the economic boom and the 1968 saw the headquarters of the University of Rome, in particular the University City and the School of Architecture in Valle Giulia, like the scene in which student protests took place, violent clashes, occupations, until the liberalization of access to the universities occurred in 1969. The stormy season continues until 1977, involving the entire city and its institutions, and lasts until the mid-eighties when, the excessive dimension of the university urges the creation of two new Roman university centers: Tor Vergata and Roma Tre. In 1982, by decree of the President of the Republic and at the request of the Rector Antonio Ruberti, the first university of Rome was named “La Sapienza University of Rome”, reintroducing the pre-existing historical reference that had also characterized the Borromini church of Corso Rinascimento.

La Sapienza, therefore, to an even greater extent than other major Italian universities, is an integral part of the history of its city and has a debt of gratitude towards it. La Sapienza has been and still is involved in the development of the capital not only as a place of formation for the new ruling classes, scientific, technical and humanistic, but also as a forum for the exchange of ideas and cultural, social and institutional discussion. But our University has also made an important contribution to the urban and architectural development of the city by hosting the first school of Architecture in Italy, whose lecturers, students and graduates were key players in the design of urban programs and the design of architectural features that redefine the functioning and the face of the city.

Rome, unquestionably, aspires to be “Capital of Italy”, and not only in politics, but can only be so together with Sapienza.