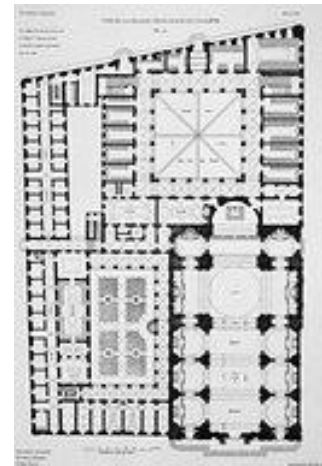
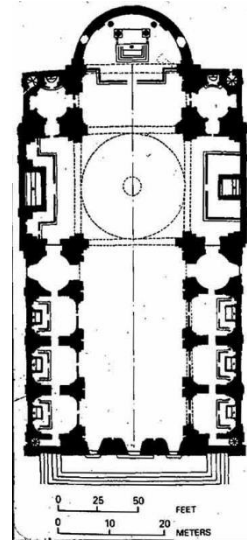


Sant' Ignazio di Loyola

Via del Caravita, 8A (00186)
Near Pantheon & Pamphili
(Piazza di Sant' Ignazio, 171, Campo Marzio)

7:30 AM - 7:00 PM (Mon - Sat)

9:00 AM - 7:00 PM (Sun)



Flanking a wonderful **rococo piazza**, this circa 1626 **Jesuit church** with a Carlo Maderno façade is most famous for a **trompe l'oeil ceiling fresco**, depicting **St. Ignatius being welcomed into heaven** by Jesus and the Madonna. For the best view of the uncanny three-dimensional image, stand on the marked spot of the nave floor and look up. Once off the mark, when you look up again, the optical illusion is gone—and you'll see that the ceiling, which previously appeared to be curved, is actually completely and totally flat.

History

The **Collegio Romano** opened very humbly in 1551, with an inscription over the door summing up its simple purpose: "**School of Grammar, Humanity, and Christian Doctrine. Free**". Plagued by financial problems in the early years the Collegio Romano had various provisional centres. In 1560, Vittoria della Tolfa Marchesa della Valle, donated her family isola, an entire city block and its existing buildings, to the Society of Jesus in memory of her late husband the Marchese della Guardia Camillo Orsini, founding the Collegio Romano

Although the Jesuits got the marchesa's land, they did not get any money from her for completing the church. Budgetary restraints compelled them to hire their own architect. Built entirely by Jesuit labour, the Church of the Annunciation was first used for worship in 1567. A **three-aisled church** dedicated to the Most Holy Annunciation (Italian: Santissima Annunziata) was built 1562 - 1567 on the foundations of the pre-existing construction. Since the earlier church had already been built to the height of the ground floor in 1555, there was no way for the Jesuits to expand the structure to hold the increasing number of students attending the Collegio Romano. In accordance with

the wishes of the marchesa, the façade proudly displayed the **Orsini arms**. The Church of the Annunciation was enlarged in 1580 when Pope Gregory XIII expanded the Collegio Romano itself, especially the side chapels.

The old church became insufficient for over **2,000 students** of many nations who were attending the College at the beginning of the **17th century**. Pope Gregory XV, who was an old pupil of the Collegio Romano, was strongly attached to the church. Following **the canonization of Ignatius of Loyola in 1622**, he suggested to his nephew, Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi, that a new church dedicated to the founder of the Jesuits should be erected at the college itself.

The old church was eventually demolished in 1650 to make way for the massive Church of St. Ignatius of Loyola, which was begun in **1626** and finished only at the end of the century. In striking contrast to the Church of the Annunciation, which occupied only a small section of the Collegio Romano, the Church of St. Ignatius of Loyola took up a quarter of the entire block when it was completed.

Interior - "Dome" of Sant'Ignazio

The church has a **Latin cross plan** with numerous side chapels. The building was inspired by the Jesuit mother church, the Church of the Gesù in Rome. The imposing order of Corinthian pilasters that rings the entire interior, the **theatrical focus** on the high altar at the rear of the broad eastern apse, the church's colored marbles, animated stucco figural relief, richly ornamented altars, extensive gilding, and **bold Tromp l'oeil paintings in the "dome"** at its crossing and in the nave ceiling all produce a festive, sumptuous effect. Funds to build a dome were lacking, hence a painter to paint the illusion of a dome was hired.

The nave's west wall has a sculptural group depicting Magnificence and Religion (1650). Other artworks in the church include a huge stucco statue of St. Ignatius by Camillo Rusconi (1728).

Frescoes of Andrea Pozzo - The trompe l'oeil ceiling of Sant'Ignazio.

Andrea Pozzo, a Jesuit lay brother, painted the grandiose fresco that stretches across the nave ceiling (after 1685). It celebrates the work of Saint Ignatius and the Society of Jesus in the world presenting **the saint welcomed into paradise by Christ and the Virgin Mary** and surrounded by allegorical representations of all four continents. Pozzo worked to open up, even dissolve the actual surface of the nave's barrel vault illusionistically, **arranging a perspectival projection to make an observer see a huge and lofty cupola (of a sort), open to the bright sky**, and filled with upward floating figures. **A marble disk set into the middle of the nave floor** marks the ideal spot from which observers might fully experience the illusion. A second marker in the nave floor further east provides the ideal vantage point for the trompe l'oeil painting on canvas that covers the crossing and depicts a tall, ribbed and coffered dome. The cupola one expects to see here was never built and in its place, in 1685, Andrea Pozzo supplied a painting on canvas with a perspectival projection of a cupola. Destroyed in 1891, the painting was subsequently replaced. Pozzo also frescoed the pendentives in the crossing with Old Testament figures: Judith, David, Samson, and Jael.

Andrea Pozzo's painted ceiling

Pozzo also painted the frescoes in the eastern apse depicting the life and apotheosis of St Ignatius. The Siege of Pamplona in the tall panel on the left commemorates the **wounding of Ignatius, which led to the convalescence that transformed his life**. The panel over the high altar, Vision of St Ignatius at the Chapel of La Storta, **commemorates the vision that gave the saint his divine calling**. St Ignatius sends St Francis Xavier to India recalls the aggressive Jesuit missionary work in foreign countries, and finally, St Ignatius Receiving Francesco Borgia recalls the recruitment of the Spanish noble who would become General of the Company of Jesuits. Pozzo is also responsible for the fresco in the **conch** depicting St. Ignatius Healing the Pestilent.

Side chapels - Apse

The first chapel on the right has an 18th-century altarpiece showing Saints Stanislaus Kostka and John Francis Regis Worshipping the Virgin and Child. The second chapel has an altarpiece depicting St Joseph and Virgin and a lunette (right wall) depicting the Last Communion of St Luigi Gonzaga, both by Francesco Trevisani (1656–1746). The third chapel has an 18th-century altarpiece of Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple by Stefano Pozzi.

The chapel in the right transept, dedicated to St. Aloysius Gonzaga, has a large marble high-relief depicting St. Aloysius Gonzaga in Glory (1697–99) by the French sculptor Pierre Legros. Andrea Pozzo painted the ceiling which also shows the Glory of the Saint. The chapel in the left transept houses the **relics** of Saint John Berchmans.

The chapel just to the right of the church's presbytery (at the south-east corner) houses the funeral monuments of Pope Gregory XV and his nephew, Cardinal Ludovisi, the church's founder. Pierre Legros and Pierre-Étienne Monnot made Gregory XV's monument some sixty years after Gregory's death.