

PIANA LIBRARY

An amazing casualty made the fortune of this library, beautifully placed just in front of the Aula del Nuti. The name derives from the man who owned it and who gave it to his home town: **pope Pious VII**. He, being very concerned in antiques and beaux arts (he was called “archeolog Pope”), had assembled at Quirinale a great number of books (mostly printed books), of various arguments. In 1821 he stated that, when he would die, the library should have been destined to the Abbey of S. Maria del Monte (where he had begun his ecclesiastic career), with the Chiaramonti always proprietors. In 1866 the State took possession of the complex and translated the Library in front of the Malatestiana; the diatribe against family Chiaramonti came to an end only in 1941, when the State eventually became the official owner.

Coming in through the vestibolo which shares Piana and Malatestiana, you will note the two portals of 1500's, once at the Monte (the best of the two is due to Tommaso Fiamberti from Campione and dates back to 1518). In the centre of the wide room, a building by Vincenzo Camuccini depicts the owner: pope Pious VII (Luigi Barnaba Chiaramonti). Inside the wardrobes on the walls 5057 volumes are settled, together with 89 manuscripts and 52 incunaboli and cinquecentine; some of the most interesting books can be observed in the centre of the room: among them, the book which is thought to be the littlest one in the world to be read without lenses (a letter from Galileo to the Granduchess Christine of Lorena, printed in 1897 by brothers Salmin of Padua, mm. 15x9); an *Evangelario* (1104), with a *Cristo benedicente in trono*; a *Cosmographia* by Tolomeo illuminated with scenes perhaps by Crivelli.

The most attraction of the Piana Library consists of two series of **15 choral books** dating back to XV cent., adorned with glamorous illuminations. The two series are different for dimensions and history. Seven are named “Bessarione” and were commissioned in Bologna around 1450 from cardinal Bessarione for the Observants of Costantinopoli; when it fell under the Turks (1453) and he got to Rome, the set was interrupted (1455); the chorals were ended in Ferrara between 1458 and 1460, when Borso d'Este took care of them; then Bessarione destined the whole set, thank to Malatesta Novello, to the Observants of Cesena; during the Napoleonic suppressions, their number dropped to seven and they were assigned to the Malatestian Library Fund. Among the most astonishing illuminations, the scene of the Ascension of the Bessarione 1 and the front-page of the Bessarione 2. The second series consists of the eight Duomo chorals, coming from the Cathedral (1486 ca., illuminations 1485-95 ca.) which were commissioned by bishop Giovanni Venturelli to master Enrico from Amsterdam and realized until 1486; to the illuminations at least ten artists worked; the Duomo chorals are set here since 1918. Among the illuminations, the architectonic front-page of Duomo C (showing *San Sebastiano* and *Decollazione di S. Giovanni*) and the perspective one of *Commune Sanctorum* (Duomo D).