

## SANTA MARIA DELLE GRAZIE CHURCH

The church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, also known as the church of the Beata Vergine del Furlo, stands on a stretch of the road Via Flaminia, which fell into disuse after 76 AD. Built at the end of 1400 on the ruins of a pre-existing structure, it has undergone several changes over time. Sources indicate that around 1720, the building consisted of a series of small aligned rooms, three of which were located downstream and made up the actual church while other rooms were designated for service and housing use; these premises still existed in the early 1900s.

The appearance of the local gabled stone façade is currently distorted as a result of the elevation of the road network during the construction of the dam. The façade also accommodates an epigraph placed there in 1911 in memory of the resistance by Colonel Luigi Pianciani in 1849 to defend the Roman Republic. Next to the entrance door there is an inscription LA MANO STENDI E GRATO / DONO INVIA A HI VI / REGNA E LA DIRAI MARIA testifying that passers-by said a prayer for the safe crossing of the gorge. For centuries, in fact, the roughness of the place facilitated the raids of thieves and brigands who threatened and robbed travellers. As far back as the time of the Romans, the emperor Marcus Julius Philip, known as the Arab, had set up twenty soldiers on site to guarantee surveillance. The brigandage was eliminated only after 1860 with the unification of Italy.

A remarkable seventeenth-century sandstone altar, remodelled and originally painted as shown by the colour residues on it, occupies the central room. It is a semi-circular pediment aedicule with columns and other decorative elements characteristic of the stonemasons of Sant'Ippolito, a village about 15 km away with a centuries-old tradition in the art of stone working.

The niche contains the classic image of the Madonna of Loreto. We also read a dedication "LORENZO BASE / CORRIEO DI VENETIA / PER VOTO". The horse-drawn character depicted in the plinths that frame the niche also refers to the postal courier activity. Even the statue of St. Charles Borromeo placed in a niche in the room to the right of the entrance is probably the work of the hand of the stonemasons of Sant'Ippolito. In the room on the left there is a stone and fake marble altar with a reproduction of an image of St. Ubaldo, as the original canvas was unfortunately stolen.



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**VIDEO ON THE HISTORY  
AND THE BEAUTIES  
OF THE FURLO CANYON**

