



1619-2019: 4th Centenary of the
***Historia del Concilio Tridentino* by Paolo Sarpi**

Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana
4 December 2019 – 19 January 2020

The Council of Trent (1545-1563), one of the most important in history, represents the Catholic Church's response to the rise of the Protestant Reformation on the European continent.

In 1619, the *Historia del Concilio Tridentino* (History of the Council of Trent) was published the first time in London in Italian by the printer John Bill, in the name of Pietro Soave Polano (anagram of Paolo Sarpi Veneto).

Born in Venice on August 14, 1552, Pietro Sarpi – barely thirteen years old – wore the habit of the Order of the Servants of Mary according to the strict Servite Observance and took the name of Paolo.

He had a quick career within the Order and soon became Attorney General, in Rome, between 1585 and 1588. Not approving the malpractice of the Holy See, he returned to Venice, where he devoted himself to scientific, medical and astronomical studies in collaboration with figures such as Girolamo Fabrici d'Acquapendente and Galileo Galilei.

When Venice was struck by the Interdict by decree of Pope Paul V in 1606, Sarpi was appointed *canon theologian of the Republic* by the Senate. From that moment on, he defended the prerogatives of the Serenissima with interventions and writings of great vigour and absolute historical and legal value. In 1607, he was excommunicated by the Inquisition and subsequently experienced several attacks, but he became subject of growing consideration and esteem, especially in the Europe of the Reformation.

On November 18, 1619, the *Historia* was immediately included in the *Index of Prohibited Books*; the first Italian edition would be released in Verona only in 1761.

Paolo Sarpi died in Venice on 15 January 1623.

The Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana preserves the manuscript containing the final version of the *Historia del Concilio Tridentino*, compiled by Marco Fanzano with numerous and conspicuous interventions by Sarpi himself and his secretary Fulgenzio Micanzio, as well as several copies of the first edition and subsequent editions in various languages.

The manuscript, previously kept in the library of Cattarina Sagredo Barbarigo, a noblewoman of great culture and independence and open-minded to the Enlightenment, was purchased in 1773 by the Publica Libreria – now the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana – as evidenced by documents from the Library of the Museo Correr.

The exhibition aims to outline a path that starts from the Council of Trent and the documents produced by it. Its core is the figure of Paolo Sarpi and his *Historia*. The exhibition continues with the reactions of the Tridentine orthodoxy and the editorial success of the text to the present day.