

**Monastery of  
St. Gregory  
the Armenian**




The Monastery of St. Gregory, the Armenian is accessible through **33 steps** with stairs made of *piperno* (magmatic rocks present in areas where there have been volcanic activities).

Authentic 18th century tiles enameled with yellow and green leaves decorate both sides of the entrance walls with frescoes by **Giacomo del Po**, which culminate above the entrance door with the painting of Saint Benedict among the angels.

As you go up the stairs you would notice at the right side, 3 rooms which were then intended for contact between the nuns and the outside world. The side doors led to the "grates": the first grate was for the abbess; the middle one was for the converse; and the last (upper) grate was used by the nuns.

Arriving at the end of the stairs, you find yourself on a marble floor, where there are piperno seats with marble backs on each side. The main door is made of walnut wood. There are "wheels", two large wooden cylinders covered



with bronze and brass, which, in ancient times, were the means of transmission of food, clothing and other objects that had to enter or exit the convent.

Entering the door you will find an L-shaped vestibule (the porter's lodge): on the left side, you can admire a painting by **Paolo De Matteis** while at the right, there are elegant sixteenth-century seats surmounted by frescoes of landscapes with soft colors.

### The CLOISTER

From the vestibule you are introduced into the cloister, worked by the architect **Vincenzo della Monica** (who also made the cloister of San Marcellino).

At the center of the cloister you will be caught by a superb marble group depicting *the meeting of Christ with the Samaritan woman at the well*, a work that



was built in 1783 under the abbess Violante Pignatelli and then restored in 1843 by the will of the abbess Francesca Caracciolo. The marble group is attributed to **Matteo Bottiglieri**.

Looking up to the left, you can see the beautiful **dome** covered with yellow and green majolica tiles, with its characteristic design-like-scales, which was widespread in the Neapolitan architecture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Walking on the left towards the fresco of Saint Benedict, which is the background of the exedra, are the **five command keys** for the water jets of the fountain, coming out from the mouths of four dolphins, from a ring around the ball that supports the dolphins, from sea horses and shell-shaped trays. It must be emphasized that the fountain is the final part of an ingenious reservation of rainwater.



Returning to the entrance and continuing to the right side, you can see the porches along the 4 corridors.

### 1st Corridor

At the first corridor, you will see **the living room of the abbess** full of Baroque paintings that cover both its vault and walls. These decorations probably date back to 1773, the numbers engraved on the fountain, when Violante Pignatelli was then the abbess.



This is confirmed by the painted balustrades, in the vault that line small pots-shaped columns, probably in homage to the aforementioned Abbess.

Walking until the end of the first corridor you enter the door leading to the NUNS' CHOIR. It overlooks the Church of Saint Gregory the Armenian with paintings 4on the walls by the master artist **Luca Giordano**



depicting the lives of Saint Benedict and Saint Gregory, manifestations of the fusion that took place between western and eastern monasticism. Most probably, the year 1632, written in a corner of the ceiling, refers to the completion of the choir.

### 2nd Corridor

Leaving the choir and continuing on the 2nd corridor you can see, on the left, some openings with grates and seats from which the nuns could attend religious functions directly from the Cloister.



At the right side is the grotto of the Blessed Virgin Mary alongside of which is a small museum with displays of utensils used in ancient times by the nuns: two old millstones (one of which bears the name of



the abbess D. Cornelia Piscicelli inscripted also the year 1761) and some remains of the old monastery, including numerous pieces of wayside

shrine, which probably belonged to the ancient Temple of Ceres, demolished during the renovation in 1500s. Some of which have been transformed into

the white marble mortars, as evidenced by a mortar that still has remains of acanthus leaves.

### 3rd Corridor

At the middle of the 3rd corridor, to your right, you will see the **Chapel of Santa Maria dell'Idria**. The canon Celano says that the chapel was named Santa Maria dell'Idria because of the image of the Virgin Mary with a *hydria*, that is, a vase under the feet. On the other hand, the Neapolitan priest, Genaro Aspreno Galante had a different opinion, saying that: Santa Maria dell'Idria is a contraction of "Santa Maria dell' odegitaria" which in Greek language means "guide of the good path".



The chapel is the oldest place in the whole monastic complex with traces that can still be found in the pointed arch of the main altar and in the chapel vaults. The rest dates back to an eighteenth-century renovation commissioned by the abbess Antonia Gonzaga and completed in 1712 by the abbess Claudia di Sangro. The chapel is adorned with 18 paintings by **De Matteis**, with scenes depicting the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary.



Continuing towards the end of the 3rd corridor, at your left side, you enter the NUNS' REFECTORY which was built between 1680-1685 under the direction of **Dioniso Lazzari**

and **Matteo Stendardo**, consisting of walnut seats with inlaid backs. At both ends you can admire the paintings: "*Wedding at Cana*" and "*Multiplication of the loaves*", attributed to the workshop of **Corenzio**, while on the side walls are paintings attributed to a painter from the **circle of Solimena**, done between 1714-1715. Glancing up to the right side you can see a **pulpit carved in 1577 by Nunzio Ferraro**.

### 4th Corridor

At the right side of the 4th corridor, you can see a 'well' decorated with wrought iron bars, which in reality is the covering of an excavation from which the tuff, construction material for the sixteenth-century factory was taken.

Pausing at the middle of the 4th corridor, you find a door that leads to the dormitories of the nuns and facing the fountain, you can meet the gaze of the sculptured Christ who seems to be saying and repeating the words He uttered to the Samaritan woman: "give me a drink", only to give you return, "the Water of Life".



### Information

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Saturday and Sunday - 9:30 to 13:00 / 15:00-18:00