

The Capture of Rome (Italian: Presa di Roma) on 20 September 1870 was the final event of the unification of Italy (Risorgimento), marking both the final defeat of the Papal States under Pope Pius IX and the unification of most of the Italian Peninsula (except San Marino) under the Kingdom of Italy, a constitutional monarchy.

The capture of Rome by the Royal Italian Army brought an end to the Papal States, which had existed since the Donation of Pepin in 756, along with the temporal power of the Holy See, and led to the establishment of Rome as the capital of unified Italy.

On 18 September, Minister of War Cesare Ricotti-Magnani gave Cadorna the order to attack Rome, but informed that the Leonine City, which would be reserved for the pope, should be spared, while also advising moderation. The plan of attack was left entirely up to the general. When the Italian army approached the city's ancient Aurelian Walls, the Papal force, commanded by General Kanzler, was composed of the Swiss Guard, the Palatine Guard and the Papal Zouaves, for a total of 13,157 defenders against some 50,000 Italians. The American consul in Rome, Maitland Armstrong, described the civilian population as unwilling to defend the pope's rule, and only two hundred people in the whole city answered the papacy's call for volunteers.

The Italian army reached the Aurelian Walls on 19 September and placed Rome under siege. Pius IX decided that the surrender of the city would only be granted after his troops had put up enough resistance, to make it plain that the Italian takeover was achieved through force and not freely accepted. At 5 a.m. on 20 September, Italian artillery began firing at the city walls. After a few hours, the Italian army breached the Aurelian Walls near Porta Pia, through where the troops flooded into Rome.

By 6 a.m., the terms of the Act of Capitulation were presented by Cadorna and signed by Kanzler at Villa Albani, by which all of Rome, excluding the Leonine City, came under control of the Royal Italian Army. A white flag was hoisted from the dome of St. Peter's Basilica, and the defeated Papal forces were escorted to St. Peter's Square by Italian troops.

To legitimize the city's annexation, Prime Minister Lanza held a plebiscite in Rome on 2 October 1870. Out of 167,548 eligible voters, an overwhelming majority of 133,681 voted in favor of union with Italy, with 1,507 votes against. On 9 October 1870, a royal decree confirmed the incorporation of Rome and surrounding Lazio into the Kingdom of Italy.