

La Grazia [12A]

2025 Italy 133 mins

UK released **20 March 26**

Director **Paolo Sorrentino**

Screenplay **Paolo Sorrentino**

Cinematography **Daria D'Antonio**

Music **Nick Donnelly** (additional music)

Cast **Toni Servillo** (President Mariano De Santis) ; **Anna Ferzetti** (Dorotea De Santis) ; **Massimo Venturiello** (Minister of Justice Ugo Romani); **Orlando Cinque** (Colonel Massimo Labaro)

Following on from the muddled mythology of *Parthenope*, the Italian auteur Paolo Sorrentino gets his groove back with this compelling political drama.

At first glance *La Grazia* looks almost defiantly modest: a quiet portrait of a man approaching the end of power. The great Toni Servillo, having previously headlined Sorrentino's playful biopics of Giulio Andreotti and Silvio Berlusconi, once more assumes the duties of head of state. He brings a granite composure to Mariano De Santis, a fictional no-nonsense president of the Italian republic without a trace of bunga bunga. Nicknamed "Reinforced Concrete" by his friends, De Santis is a figure of almost comical rectitude: a former jurist whose personality seems carved from the same elegant slabs of marble as the palaces he inhabits.

Six months out from retirement, De Santis is widely credited with steering Italy through a series of political crises triggered by an erratic prime minister. Public plaudits are plentiful. But his final days in office are overshadowed by ethical and political crises.

Two prisoners have petitioned him for clemency, one a man jailed for the mercy killing of his terminally ill wife, the other a woman who murdered her abusive husband. Simultaneously, a contentious euthanasia bill lands on his desk, placing his Catholic conscience – not to mention

cordial relations with Rufin Doh Zeyenouin's pope – in conflict with the reformist instincts of his daughter Dorotea (Anna Ferzetti), a razor-sharp legal mind and his closest political confidante. Sorrentino frames these dilemmas in an unusually restrained register. The baroque flourishes of *Il Divo* and *Loro* make way for the chamber claustrophobia of *12 Angry Men*. Reversals and rehearsed arguments are confined to echoing corridors. Daria D'Antonio's camera lurks in cavernous state rooms where conversations occur at a hush, often between just two people dwarfed by Torinese grandeur. Servillo, who deservedly won the Volpi Cup for best actor at Venice film festival in 2025, gives one of his most controlled performances. His character accumulates through the smallest movements. Underneath his statesmanlike composure is unresolved grief for a wife who once betrayed him, a determination to identify her former lover, and a habit of secretly listening to Italian rap. (The Italian hip-hop star Guè appears as himself.) Sorrentino supplies the occasional surreal house-style flourish – a drifting tear observed in zero gravity – but mostly the director leans into the quiet complexities of Servillo's turn.

Tara Brady, *The Irish Times*, 20 March 2026

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