

= Papal conclave , 1492 =

The papal conclave of 1492 (6 ? 11 August 1492) was convened after the death of Pope Innocent VIII (25 July 1492) . It was the first conclave to be held in the Sistine Chapel .

Cardinal Rodrigo Borja was elected unanimously on the 4th ballot as Pope Alexander VI . The election is notorious for allegations that Borja bought the votes of his electors , promising them lucrative appointments and other material gifts ? a practice known as simony . Concerns about this conclave led Pope Julius II to create stronger rules against simony in 1503 .

= = Cardinal electors = =

Of the 23 cardinals participating in the conclave , fourteen had been elevated by Pope Sixtus IV . The Cardinals of Sixtus IV , known as the " Sistine Cardinals " and led by Giuliano della Rovere , had controlled the conclave of 1484 , electing one of their own , Giambattista Cibo as Pope Innocent VIII . Since 1431 the composition of the College of Cardinals had been radically transformed , increasing the number of cardinal @-@ nephews (from 3 to 10) , crown @-@ cardinals (from 2 to 8) , and representatives of powerful Roman noble families (from 2 to 4) . With the exception of three curial officials and one pastor , the cardinals were " secularly @-@ minded princes largely unconcerned with the spiritual life of either the Latin church or its members . "

At the time of Innocent VIII 's death , the names of Cardinals Gherardo and Sanseverino (both created in pectore) , had not been published , thus making them ineligible to participate in the conclave ; however , both were published as an act of the College in sede vacante , Gherardo having been pushed by Orsini and Sanseverino by Sforza . Gherardo was assigned the title of Santi Nereo e Achilleo , which it was believed Innocent VIII had intended for him ; Sanseverino was given the poor and undesirable diaconate of San Teodoro to ensure that the future pontiff would confirm his assignment .

According to the account of bishop ambassador Giovanni Andrea Boccaccio , at least seven cardinals considered themselves papabile , having dismantled the furnishings of their palaces as a precaution against the traditional pillaging of the pope @-@ elect 's residence by the Roman populace : da Costa , di Campofregoso , Michiel , Piccolomini , Domenico della Rovere , Savelli , and Zeno .

= = = Absent Cardinals = = =

There is no evidence that the 4 absent cardinals made an attempt to reach Rome for the conclave .

= = Procedures = =

As dictated by the prescriptions Ubi periculum and Ne Romani , the conclave should have begun on 4 August , ten days after the death of Innocent VIII ; however , the conclave was delayed to await the slow arrival of the aged Gherardo , bearing a letter from Venice 's Council of Ten urging his acceptance into the College . The cardinals had decided as early as their first meeting on 24 July to use the Sistine Chapel for the balloting and assembly of the conclave .

Johann Burchard , the German papal master of ceremonies , who presided over the conclave , as well as the previous one in 1484 , kept an extensive diary , noting that each cardinal was provided :

The Mass of the Holy Spirit (celebrated by Giuliano della Rovere rather than Borja who as Dean would traditionally have been the celebrant) and then a speech by Bernardino Lopez de Carvajal , a Spaniard and the ambassador to Ferdinand and Isabella , on the " evils afflicting the Church " preceded the beginning of the conclave on 6 August 1492 . Another Spaniard , Gonzalo Fernandez de Heredia , archbishop of Tarragona , was appointed prefect of the Vatican . Two important offices during sede vacante were filled with compatriots of Cardinal Borja , and it is believed that they both were chosen by Borja in his capacity as Dean to strengthen his position before the conclave .

The remainder of 6 August was consumed by the drafting and subscription to the conclave

capitulation , which ? although not extant ? is known to have restricted the number of new cardinals which could be created by the new pope .

= = Vote count = =

The first ballot (" scrutiny ") , held on 8 August was said to have resulted in nine votes for Carafa , seven for Borja , Costa , and Michiel , and five for Giuliano della Rovere , with Sforza notably receiving zero votes .

The second ballot produced nine for Carafa , eight for Borja , seven for Michiel , and five for Giuliano della Rovere .

According to the Florentine Ambassador , one of the guards of the conclave , as of 10 August there had been three unsuccessful ballots , favoring Costa and Carafa , but in no way indicating Borja might be chosen . According to Sigismondo de ' Conti , papal secretary and chronicler , the vote was unanimous on the fourth ballot , taken early in the morning on 11 August although Borja had only 15 votes prior to the accessus ; other accounts say Borja received all the votes except for his own , which he gave to Carafa .

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia , the election of Rodrigo Borja was " almost entirely due to " Giambattisti Orsini .

= = Allegations of simony = =

The Venetian envoy to Milan informed his confrère in Ferrara : " that by simony and a thousand villanies and indecencies the papacy has been sold , which is a disgraceful and detestable business " , adding that he expected Spain and France to withhold their support from the new pontiff . After the conclave , a ubiquitous epigram within Rome was : " Alexander sells the Keys , the Altar , Christ Himself ? he has a right to for he bought them . "

On 10 August after the third ballot , Ascanio Sforza allegedly came to believe his own ambitions of being elected pope were impossible and became susceptible to Borja 's offer : the office of Vice @-@ Chancellor and the associated Palazzo Borgia , the Castle of Nepi , the bishopric of Erlau (with annual revenue of 10 @,@ 000 ducats) and other benefices . Sforza was also reputed to have received four mule @-@ loads of silver (some sources say gold) , which Borja ordered to be delivered immediately after the deal was struck . The price of the other Cardinals was as follows : Orsini , the fortified towns of Monticelli and Soriano , the legation of the Marches , and the bishopric of Cartagena (with annual revenue of 5 @,@ 000 ducats) ; Colonna , the abbey of Subiaco and its environs (with annual revenue of 3 @,@ 000 ducats) ; Savelli , Civita Castellana and the bishopric of Majorca ; Pallavicini , the bishopric of Pampeluna (Pamplona) ; Michiel , the suburbicarian see of Porto ; Riario , Spanish benefices with annual income of 4 @,@ 000 ducats and the return of a house in the Piazza Navona (which Sforza had occupied) to the children of Count Girolamo . Sanseverino 's compensation included Rodrigo Borgia 's house in Milan . Cardinals Sclafenati and Domenico della Rovere were to receive abbacies and / or benefices . Cardinals Andicino della Porta and Conti followed Sforza , whom they had originally supported .

The aforementioned Cardinals plus Borja 's own vote numbered 14 , one short of the required two @-@ third majority . However , Cardinals Carafa , Costa , Piccolomini , Cibò , and Zeno , followed by Medici , were unwilling to be bribed . Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere , followed by Basso , was intractably opposed to Borja 's election . Thus , the ninety @-@ six @-@ year @-@ old Gherardo , the Cardinal Patriarch of Venice , who was paid only 5 @,@ 000 ducats , constituted the deciding vote .

According to Professor Picotti , who extensively researched the conclave and came to the conclusion that simony had occurred , no accounts of papal income and expenditure exist in the registers of Introitus et Exitus for August 1492 , and debts from the Apostolic Camera to Cardinals Campofregoso , Domenico della Rovere , Sanseverino , and Orsini appeared soon afterwards . The Spannocchi bank , which housed much of Borja 's wealth , was said to have nearly crashed after the conclave due to the velocity of transactions .

Some sources say that Charles VIII of France had bankrolled 200 @,@ 000 ducats (plus 100 @,@ 000 ducats from the Doge of Genoa) for the election of Giuliano della Rovere , although several otherwise bribable cardinals were hostile to French interference .

Other historians regard politics as a stronger factor within the conclave than pure simony , with the personal rivalry between Giuliano della Rovere and Ascanio Sforza (who had met to discuss the upcoming conclave in Castel Gandolfo even before Innocent VII had died) substituting for the ancient struggle between Naples and Milan , with the intractability between the two parties making Borja a viable candidate .

= = Aftermath = =

When Giuliano della Rovere was elected Pope Julius II in 1503 , he issued a bull annulling any papal election brought about by simony , and defrocking and excommunicating any cardinal who sold his vote . Although the twenty @-@ six day reign of Pope Pius III intervened between Alexander VI and Julius II , the alleged unscrupulousness of the Borgia pope was still firmly in the institutional memory of the Roman Curia . While Cardinal during the reign of Alexander VI , Julius II had been assailed politically and often militarily outside the sturdy wall of his Castle of Ostia .

= = Media = =

The conclave is fictionalized in the 2011 premiere episode of the Showtime series " The Borgias " , with Jeremy Irons as Borja and Colm Feore as della Rovere , and also in the Borgia series of the same year , with John Doman as Rodrigo Borgia , Dejan Cukic as Giuliano Della Rovere , John Bradley as Giovanni De Medici and Predrag Bjelac as Francesco Piccolomini .