

The Fifth Lateran Council

1512-1517

The Renaissance brought resurgence in art, architecture, poetry, and literature with some of the world's greatest artists creating their works. There was also a growing immorality permeating society that turned away from discipline or absolutes. The popes of the early Renaissance (1450-1520) did not escape being influenced and became overly concerned with restoring splendor and prestige to the papacy rather than its moral force. Simony, immorality, and nepotism were not uncommon. Popes commonly appointed relatives to the Cardinal College such that five of the Renaissance popes would be relatives of previous popes, leading to an Italian dominance of the college that would last the next 450 years. In this environment, French King Charles VII issued an edict (called a Pragmatic Sanction) that restricted the pope's governance to name bishops, abbots, and other church officials, asserting that such officials should be elected by those over whom the official has power. Charles also endorsed tenets of the Basle Council regarding the supremacy of the Council over the Pope and the regular holding of general councils. It was obvious that reform was needed and that would be the task of the *Fifth Lateran Council*.

Pope Julius II



Julius opposed simony, stating that papal elections including simony were nullified. **He** also led papal armies to protect the Papal States. **He** patronized the arts, hiring Michaelangelo to paint the Sistine Chapel's ceiling and laid the cornerstone for the new St. Peter's Basilica. In 1511, five Cardinals, with French support, held an illegal council in Pisa to depose **Julius**

who countered by calling the *Fifth Lateran Council*.

Elected in 1513 without simony due to **Julius'** ban, **Leo** was most noted for sale of indulgences to build St. Peter's Basilica. **His** entanglement in political affairs and giving himself to **his** pleasures kept **him** from being aware of the gravity of the most serious of all crises facing the church. **He** thus failed to properly guide her, neglecting to grasp fully the duties of **his** high office.

Raphael's painting of Leo X with cardinals Medici & Rossi



Pope Julius and the *Fifth Lateran Council* did their jobs:

- The Council in Pisa → Nullified and condemned its participants.
- Bohemian followers of Hus → Set up procedures to allow and to encourage their return to the Church.
- The 'Pragmatic Sanction' → Condemned the edict of French King Charles VII.
- Heresies → All Publications would require a bishop's approval.
- Instituted Reform with detailed statements of conduct such as: → Set procedures to appoint upright leaders.
→ Chastised cardinals to live chaste, sober, and uprightly.
→ Admonished bishops and clerics to dress modestly.

“a reform program (was presented to the Council) that ruthlessly criticized the ignorance of clergy, papal absorption in politics, and bureaucratic centralization. It called for a whole range of constructive solutions: adequate training for the clergy, revision of Canon Law, and convoking of general councils every five years. It prefigured in a remarkable way the actual reforms of Trent; but its vision was too lofty for ... Leo X... (who) had no awareness of the volcano under his feet and little sense of responsibility for the salvation of souls.” * Failing to institute the reforms of the *Fifth Lateran Council* opened the door for the Protestant Reformation.

* Thomas Bokenkotter, “A Concise History of the Catholic Church” 2004, Doubleday Publishing