

# JULIUS II (POPE 1503 – 1513) <sup>B.1443</sup><sub>D.1513</sub> [www.luminarium.org/encyclopedia/julius2.htm](http://www.luminarium.org/encyclopedia/julius2.htm)



Raphael. Portrait of Julius II. c.1512.  
National Gallery of London.

The warrior pope who commissioned Michelangelo to paint the Sistine Chapel ceiling, Raphael to paint the Stanze di Raffaello in the Vatican, and Bramante to begin the new St. Peter's Basilica.

Born Giuliano della Rovere, in 1443, in Liguria, Italy. Son of a noble but poor family, he was tutored by his uncle, Francesco della Rovere, of the Franciscan order. After his uncle's election to the papacy as [Pope Sixtus IV](#) in 1471, he received many posts and preferments. In December, 1471, he was created Cardinal Priest of San Pietro in Vincoli in Rome. Thereafter, he received many benefices and held several sees, from which he collected a sizeable income.

After the death of Sixtus IV in 1484, Giuliano, who had little chance of becoming Pope himself, had a hand in bribing electors to elevate a Cardinal Cibo to the papacy as [Innocent VIII](#). Cibo, of weak character, and gravely indebted to Cardinal della Rovere, was but a puppet to him for the next eight years. When Innocent VIII died in 1492, Giuliano aspired to become Pope, but the cardinals resented him for the power he had held, and chose instead Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia. Borgia, who ascended to the papacy as [Alexander VI](#), was a personal enemy to Giuliano. Fearful of his safety, Giuliano stayed away from Rome during his papacy, mostly in France and Northern Italy, until Alexander's death in 1503.

As his successor, the cardinals elected Pius III who, already sick and feeble, died only 26 days after his ascendancy. This time, Giuliano della Rovere intended finally to be Pope. He bribed the cardinals both with money and with promises of preferment, and was elected in October 1503 as Julius II.

Julius, who was of warlike bent, first proceeded to extend the papacy's temporal power. He directed his attention to extending the Papal States, and went to war with powerful Venice. He was able to restore to the Papal States most of the territories in Romagna, and also Perugia and Bologna, but in 1509, had to eventually join the [League of Cambrai](#) to get military support against Venice. The Republic of Venice lost the battle of Agnadello in May 1509, and had to make concessions to the Pope, including the return of Rimini and Faenza.

Next, Julius set his sights for freeing the whole of Italy from the French. To this effect, he formed the [Holy League](#) (1510-11), which included the Venice, Spain, England, the Swiss Cantons, and the Holy Roman Empire. The Swiss won over the French in Novarra (1513), but it was a short-lived victory. Julius II, whose health had been failing for some time, died peacefully on February 21, 1513. The Holy League dissolved, and the French

victory at Marignano (1515) reestablished French rule in Lombardy.

Although Julius ran the Pontifical States first and foremost as a Prince would, he never neglected his duties as a leader of the church. He issued a bull against simony at papal elections, made various monastic reforms, founded a school for ecclesiastical chant, and convened the Fifth Lateran Council, for the eradication of corruption and schisms from the church and the Roman Curia.

Yet perhaps his most lasting legacy was as a patron of the arts. It was Julius who hired, some would say bullied, Michelangelo, a reluctant sculptor, to repaint the ceiling in the Sistine Chapel. Julius, who commissioned four exquisitely painted rooms from Raphael (now known as Stanze di Raffaello, in the Vatican). And, it was Julius who hired Bramante to construct an impressive new basilica in place of old St. Peter's. Julius, who himself laid the cornerstone, had wished to be buried there, and had even commissioned an imposing [tomb](#) from Michelangelo. However, he never lived to see St. Peter's Basilica finished, nor was he laid to rest there. The tomb of Julius II now resides in the church where a young Giuliano della Rovere first became Cardinal—in San Pietro in Vincoli, on the hills above the Coliseum.