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## “Saper la mente della soa Beatitudine”: Pope Paul II and the ambassadorial community in Rome (1464–71)

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*Cet article examine la pratique des ambassadeurs envoyés par les états italiens à la cour du pape Paul II (1464–71), en se concentrant en particulier sur la façon dont ils ont assumé leur rôle d’informateur. Puisque Paul était un pape instable, impénétrable et souvent inaccessible, les ambassadeurs ont souvent été dans l’obligation d’obtenir des informations au sujet du pape et de ses intentions de manière indirecte. En s’appuyant largement sur la correspondance diplomatique romaine durant le pontificat de Paul, cet article montre comment les ambassadeurs se sont construit des réseaux de contacts au sein même de la cour papale afin de s’assurer un apport continu d’informations utiles et ce, en temps voulu. Ces réseaux comptaient donc des membres de toute la communauté évoluant autour de la papauté, incluant des cardinaux bien placés, des fonctionnaires ecclésiastiques, d’autres ambassadeurs, des agents politiques, aussi bien que plusieurs informateurs des hiérarchies inférieures. Rome était, en effet, un marché de l’information, si bien que les ambassadeurs devaient utiliser toutes leurs compétences pour entrer en possession des informations les meilleures et les plus précieuses.*

Ambassadors at the papal court in the fifteenth century, charged with gauging and reporting the actions, mood, and intent of the pontiff, faced a host of challenges. Popes learned the game of deliberately limiting access to themselves, parrying inquiries and attention with a succession of complicit ecclesiastical officials or cardinals. They also variably and intentionally restricted and opened up access to consistorial meetings according to their own political whims. This meant that ambassadors keen on “knowing the mind of the pope” (*saper la mente della soa beatitudine*), as one ambassador put it, were forced to canvass other members of the papal court and the broader Roman community to acquire the information desired by their employers. This essay explores the particular tribulations that faced ambassadors in carrying out such tasks, focusing on the understudied pontificate of the Venetian Paul II (b. 1417, r. 1464–1471). It depicts the distinctive social and political topography of the papal court as a series of concentric spheres emanating from the pope at the centre, with a large number of individuals in various offices

at incremental levels of remove from the pope himself. The successive layers were inhabited by cardinals, curial officials, resident ambassadors, short-term envoys, and an innumerable body of ecclesiastics, Roman nobles, financiers, merchants, literati, servants, and hangers-on who served as conduits for information and indirect avenues for accessing the intentions of the pope. It should be stressed that these spheres were far from uniform, fluctuating in size, shape, and content, and the divisions between them permeable.<sup>1</sup>

The focus here on Paul II allows the examination of a number of difficult challenges for resident ambassadors. Paul was an inscrutable and notoriously prickly personality whose famously poor reputation in humanist circles was echoed in the observations of ambassadors and other statesmen. Quick to take offence, and obsessed with the prestige of both himself and the papacy, Paul passed unloved and unmourned. Here we address the question of what ambassadors were to do when faced with such a difficult pope.

A considerable body of scholarship has demonstrated that the gathering of information was the primary task of the resident embassies that gradually became the default form of diplomatic representation between the major Italian states in the second half of the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup> The Roman court by this time was the most important court in Europe, a centre for both diplomatic and ecclesiastical politicking. Letters and visitors arrived from all over Europe and the Mediterranean and provided a panorama of the world outside of Rome. The ambassadors stationed there were expected, according to the instructions of the Duke of Milan to his envoys in Rome, to act with “ears strained and eyes peeled to ascertain everything ... and inform us about it all.”<sup>3</sup> Every individual sent to Rome as a resident ambassador during Paul’s pontificate sought to elicit a response similar to the one offered by the Duke of Modena, Borso d’Este, to his ambassador there in 1468, Jacopo Trotti: “You write of so many things that we can almost say that we are in Rome ourselves, so distinctly and neatly do you write about them ... we commend you for your writing because you have given us so much context that we cannot believe it, for you describe them such that we touch them and hear them as if we were present.”<sup>4</sup> Jacopo Trotti was one (according to another observer) “from whom you hear the raw and the cooked (*el cocto et el crudo*) about happenings both inside and outside Italy.”<sup>5</sup> Resident ambassadors stationed at Rome were thus expected to pursue the personal, knowing, as much as was possible, the mind of the pope; but also the global, providing a view of a far broader scene linked to Rome through multifarious connections.

While keeping this second, global view in mind, this essay will focus on the first of these charges: knowing the mind of the Pope Paul II, and, if at all possible, influencing it. It should be emphasized that this was not simply a function of securing audiences with the pope, or observing and interacting with the pope in public meetings of the Consistory. It also meant calling upon other inhabitants of the social space of the Roman court, a space inhabited by a wide spectrum of influential and knowledgeable individuals other than the pope himself. This was especially imperative given the inaccessibility, unpredictability, and indecision of this particular pope. A good resident ambassador's dispatch was an account of all that he had learned from his interactions not only with the pope, but with cardinals, ambassadors, and others.<sup>6</sup> He was to engage in numerous daily conversations with dozens of individuals, and from those interactions know the mind of the pope and piece together a composite picture of events in Rome and beyond.

IN 1438 THE HUMANIST Lapo da Castiglionchio, at that time in the household of Cardinal Condulmer, wrote a dialogue entitled *On the Benefits of the Curia*. The work, finished while Lapo was at the Council of Ferrara, depicts an imagined dialogue between the author and his friend Angelo da Recanate. Angelo urges Lapo to leave Rome as a locale unfit for a humanist, but Lapo feels compelled to convince his interlocutor otherwise. Lapo embarks on a systematic examination of the benefits of residing at the Curia, in so doing describing in detail many features of life there. At one point, he offers the following:

When Homer wanted to portray the prudent man in the person of Ulysses, he wrote as follows: "Having been cast onto various shores, he came to know the cities and customs of many peoples;" (*Odyssey*, 1.3–4) that is, Homer denoted the same things [mentioned earlier] by the length of wandering and variety of places and men. I never thought that for the sake of pursuing this most precious thing [i.e. this virtue], anyone—like Ulysses—had to seek out Calyps, Circes, the Phaeacians, the Laestrygonians, the Sirens, the Cyclops, and Hades. After all, what he gained by long wandering and with extreme danger to his life—well, the Roman Curia will offer you all of it in abundance. There, together, you would find a multitude of things, a variety of men, and a great number of inducements. For among Christians almost nothing of great importance is done on which the pope is not consulted or in which his authority is not in some way involved. Whether it is a deliberation concerning war, peace, or striking treaties, or marriages among the greatest kings and princes of the world, or even if it concerns some controversy that occurs among these great leaders, all things are deferred to the pope, and they are all discussed in the Curia as if it were a kind of public forum. This is why it is inevitable that whoever is involved

in such frequent contact with men and affairs sees many things, hears many things, learns many things, and also himself does many things. He takes advantage of the talk, conversation, and social interaction of many men—and these are men who are not common or unlearned—and he knows the customs and manners of living of many and forms acquaintanceships and friendships besides. From all these things, he is granted the power of approving and disapproving what he wishes, of choosing and rejecting, of letting go and taking back, as well as the power of correcting and emending. The result is that even if he is by nature somewhat dim-witted—and as long as he is not negligent—after being worn down and broken in for a while in the Curia, he often conquers men of the highest cleverness.<sup>7</sup>

Lapo's depiction of the Roman Curia as a beehive of activity and as a locale that necessarily instructs its residents through their experiences there would have been familiar to fifteenth-century ambassadors stationed in Rome. They might not have shared Lapo's high praise for those present at the papal court, nor his assessment of the Ulyssean benefits accorded by the Curia, but his depiction of a community where one "sees many things, hears many things, [and] learns many things" would have rung true to any resident ambassador in Rome. So too would have been Lapo's placement of the pope at the centre of all these goings-on. For such resident ambassadors, the pope himself was inevitably the hub of their own activities and attention, the focal point of political and ecclesiastical decision-making.

Getting access to this central figure was made more important by gradual changes in the office of the papacy and the Curia in the second half of the fifteenth century. Throughout the Middle Ages, the papacy and its actions had been governed by the individual who occupied it: his provenance and allegiances, his priorities, and perhaps most importantly, his personality. The fifteenth century, however, saw a transformation that Walter Ullman highlighted in his history of the medieval papacy: "it was the personalities of the popes which counted and set the tone ... It was no longer the impersonal office with its powers that was determinative, but the personal character of the individual pope, his 'humanity'—precisely the axiom which papal ideology from the mid-fifth century onwards had strenuously and successfully denied." Ullman described it as a "reversal of pope and papacy."<sup>8</sup> This move toward the personal paralleled the increased focus of the popes on political matters rather than the spiritual and sacerdotal and, to a degree, on local rather than universal concerns. Popes increasingly functioned as temporal princes, expending considerable time and resources to reassert control over wayward papal vassals and vicariates and filling curial offices and the College of Cardinals mostly with politically well-connected Italians. The latter was an important part of the process by which the Curia was "Italianized," a tendency that would only intensify in the sixteenth century.<sup>9</sup>

The political culture of the Roman Curia had long been unique, unlike that of any other court in Italy, or anywhere else in Europe for that matter. At any given time, there was a highly complex mix of personnel present there, a combination of the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Roman Church, ambassadors and envoys from all over Europe and beyond, and an incalculable number of hangers-on and miscellaneous individuals. The papal household alone numbered well into the hundreds.<sup>10</sup> The court itself was a beehive of politicking, horse-trading, and advocacy. A recent treatment of papal Rome in the early modern period has called the city a “political laboratory.”<sup>11</sup> “Rome was an open space, a meeting point for family ascents, a financial centre capable of mobilizing intense economic resources and a place of political decisions that interacted with the other centres of European politics.”<sup>12</sup> Given the remarkable diversity of people, contacts, and comings and goings at the papal court in the fifteenth century, it should come as no surprise that the reports of ambassadors resident there are astonishingly rich documents, full of insights into the workings of the Church, the personalities of pontiffs and prominent churchmen, and a bewildering array of social and political practices. They are, without question, the best testimony we have to life in papal Rome in the Renaissance. One of the Duke of Milan’s ambassadors wrote in 1457: “at the court of Rome there are always envoys and ambassadors from the lords of the world, who evidently have nothing better to do than keep an eye on what papers are crossing the table.”<sup>13</sup> What Maiolino Biascioni, a Venetian historian-gazetteer and author of *l’Albergo*, said for Rome in the seventeenth century, applies equally to the Rome of Paul II: “Rome, as you know, is the place where all the news in the world is found.”<sup>14</sup>

Getting as close as possible to the fulcrum of decision-making, whether it be the prince or the most influential members of a republican oligarchy, was among the primary aims of the resident ambassador in the fifteenth century. It was here that a resident could best carry out his most important charge of gathering information. It was no different in Rome: Nicodemo Tranchedini, a long-serving ambassador of the Duke of Milan, remarked that an ambassador seeking answers was best off going to the pope himself, adding, “I do not know anywhere better to go for water than to the fountain.”<sup>15</sup> Renaissance popes were frequently inscrutable or inaccessible for diplomats, but certain facets of Paul’s personality and mode of rule meant that water from this fountain was often unattainable or unreliable. This reality made ancillary sources of information more important. Ambassadors thus sought to draw upon a large range of contacts and sources amid the complex social topography of the Curia.

Like all monarchical courts, the Curia revolved around the prince, with the pope at the centre. Jacques Heers has described the social situation of the papal court as an ensemble, with the members of the community unified by their dependence on the pope.<sup>16</sup> As one departed from the centre, the layers represented the increased distances of remove from, and influence on, the pontiff. The ambassador sought to inhabit, as much as possible, regions close to the centre, but there was a recognition that individuals closer to the periphery might nonetheless prove influential or useful.

PIETRO BARBO WAS born in 1417, into one of the Venetian Republic's patrician families. The Barbo were a small but influential and well-connected clan, which derived significant income from important ecclesiastical benefices. Initially, at least, the young Barbo was intended for a career in commerce. Instead, under the guidance of his uncle, Pope Eugenius IV (r. 1431–1447), he embarked on a career in the church. With the active support of Eugenius, he became archdeacon of Bologna and then bishop, sequentially, of Cervia and of Vicenza. He was elevated to cardinal-deacon of Santa Maria Nuova in 1440 at age 23. Under Pope Nicholas V (r. 1447–1455), he became the cardinal of San Marco. He observed four papal administrations, enjoying varying degrees of influence and generally looking out for the interests of his native Venice at the Curia. At the time of his own election as Pope in 1464, he had already been a cardinal for some 24 years.<sup>17</sup>

Paul II is perhaps the least studied of the post-Constance fifteenth-century popes, certainly in comparison to those between whom he was sandwiched: Pius II (r. 1458–1464), the most interesting man ever to be pope; and Sixtus IV (r. 1471–1484), patron of humanists and avid architect of the papal monarchy. Certainly Paul was widely disliked by contemporaries, as a man whose attitudes, ambitions, and personality traits made him unpopular in many circles. History's view of Paul II as pope has been shaped in important ways by the many unkind words about him penned by the humanist historian Bartolomeo Sacchi (1421–1481), better known as Platina, who was a member of the Roman Academy accused of fomenting a conspiracy against the pope in 1468.<sup>18</sup> He was arrested and cruelly tortured in the Castello Sant'Angelo, and Platina's bitterness is evident throughout his account of Paul's pontificate in his *Lives of the Popes* (completed in 1474 or 1475), written as a *pièce de revanche*. Platina paints a picture of a haughty, vindictive, and vainglorious pope who brooked absolutely no dissent. "I am pope, and I may do as I please," he reports the pope declaring.<sup>19</sup> Platina's Paul was obsessed with luxury and ceremony

but penurious with his patronage. Platina resented the pope's refusal to return the money that he had paid for an office that Paul had taken away from him on his accession to the papacy—an office Platina assumed would assure him a comfortable future.<sup>20</sup> He was, according to Platina, morose and peevish, yet overly talkative and changeable. Most damningly for the humanist Platina, Paul was “a great enemy and despiser of human learning.”<sup>21</sup> Other humanists echoed Platina's assessment—Francesco Filelfo (1398–1481), after Paul's death, wrote to Pope Sixtus IV of Paul's “incontinence, avarice and ambition.”<sup>22</sup>

Platina's screed against the pope who had imprisoned, humiliated, and tortured him should not be taken at face value as a portrayal of this fifteenth-century pontiff. It is important to remember, as Vladimiro Zabughin has written, that “Platina depicts a frightful picture of hypocrites and hypocrisy. He wishes at all costs to depict a duel between himself and the pope as his personal enemy.”<sup>23</sup> Considerable scholarship has suggested that Paul was not nearly the enemy of learning that Platina made him out to be, even if he did not patronize humanists to the extent both his predecessor and successor did.<sup>24</sup> Despite these caveats, Paul II ended up as perhaps the most unpopular pope of the Renaissance period.

The roots of Paul's unpopularity among ambassadors in Rome were actually considerably more prosaic than the hyperbole of Platina would suggest. Three factors above all others led to friction between the pope and the diplomatic community in Rome. First, Paul was obsessed with the reassertion of papal sovereignty over the many papal vassals and vicariates, and resisted sternly their attempts to align themselves with, or seek the protection of, the major Italian powers. As Paul's priorities were primarily political and territorial, it was inevitable that he would butt heads with his Italian neighbors. The aspirations and actions of the Holy See were largely “Italianized” and his attempts to reassert papal temporal control, especially in the Romagna and Marches, were perceived as threatening by all other major Italian states, even, and perhaps especially, by Venice.

Second, Paul's highly autocratic conception of the papal monarchy created tensions. He marginalized the role of cardinals in decision-making, and clearly believed that his will should be followed without question, an attitude that perturbed many of his interlocutors. Neither of these tendencies was new or unique to Paul, of course, but their prominence during his papacy was distressing to many in Rome.

Third, it is clear that the personality and personal habits of this pope were the source of considerable consternation in the ambassadorial community. The dispatches of ambassadors of various Italian states resident in Rome during Paul's pontificate indicate that not all of Platina's invective was exaggeration. Many of the

unpleasant personality traits Platina emphasized were precisely those ambassadors in Rome repeatedly complained about. Let us now examine how these three factors impacted the ambassadorial community.

Throughout his pontificate, Paul was deeply concerned with the extension and consolidation of his temporal realm, where he sought to restore direct control over the territories of the papal state. As Ian Robertson has emphasized: “a fundamental premise of his temporal government seems to have been a conviction that every opportunity should be exploited to bring back all the territories of the Papal States under the direct government of the church.”<sup>25</sup> According to the Milanese envoy Giovanni Bianchi, Paul’s goal was to “subject all the lands of the church that are not at the moment subjugated by him.”<sup>26</sup> Paul expended a great deal of energy, starting early in his pontificate, in seeking to re-assert papal dominion over the important papal vicariate of Bologna, which jealously guarded its freedoms. The Cardinal of Spoleto, Bernardo Eruli, told Jacopo Trotti that it was common knowledge that the appetite of the pope “was to make himself lord of all of the Romagna.”<sup>27</sup> The recapture of Rimini, when Sigismondo Malatesta’s illegitimate son Roberto seized the town despite an agreement that it would return to direct papal control upon his father’s death, became an obsession for Paul, so much so that he (in the words of the Duke of Milan), forgot his duties as a good pastor.<sup>28</sup> Apart from a concerted effort, supported by papal troops, that led to the return of Cesena to direct papal control in 1465, Paul’s endeavours to reassert papal sovereignty over these territories were largely unsuccessful, to the great annoyance and frustration of this pope.<sup>29</sup>

The pope also sought to reassert his role as the feudal lord of the king of Naples. As a vassal of the papacy, the king depended on papal approval for his investiture as monarch. Ferrante had bought the support of the preceding pope Pius II expensively and Paul did not hesitate to call in his chips, expecting the king of Naples to demonstrate obedience to the will of the papacy. In the event, Ferrante showed himself unwilling to restore vicariates such as Mondavio to papal control and also sought to loosen feudal ties between the pope and fiefs in the Regno such as Pontecorvo, the Duchy of Sora, and Terracina.<sup>30</sup> Ferrante also actively opposed Paul’s efforts to return Roberto Malatesta and Rimini to papal obedience. Jacopo Trotti commented on how much Ferrante’s insubordination irked the pope: “I confess and believe that he [Ferrante] is not doing as many things as the Holy Father says he is, but I do say that the king has injured him to the heart and has shown him no respect at all, which is the greatest injury that one can inflict on a Lord as prideful, pompous and ambitious as is our pope.”<sup>31</sup> In response to these slights, the pope engaged in the dangerous game of openly encouraging John of Anjou to pursue his claim on

the Kingdom of Naples—so much so that one ambassador labeled the pope “the first brother and friend of duke John.” The possibility of an Angevin intervention in Naples was a threat wielded by Paul throughout his papacy.

Paul’s ambitions for the extension of papal authority, in all its forms, were much remarked upon by ambassadors in Rome. The Milanese ambassador Giovanni Bianchi reported that “it is the opinion of many here, even of some cardinals, that every plan, act and care of the pope seeks and tends to make and keep him the judge of things in Italy and by consequence outside of Italy.” There was evidence, Giovanni suggested, that Paul sought to be the *dominus dominantum*.<sup>32</sup> Another Milanese resident at the papal court, Agostino Rossi, seconded Giovanni’s assessment, saying that the pope wanted to be the one to whom all allegiance was directed; he wanted to impose laws on everyone, in both the spiritual and temporal realms.<sup>33</sup> The pope, he said simply, “wants to be obeyed.”<sup>34</sup>

Such talk, it must be pointed out, was typical in the fifteenth century, when the papacy largely acted as just another player in the state system of the Italian peninsula—and thus the political and territorial ambitions of the papacy could be spoken of in the same fashion as were those of the king of Naples or the Republic of Venice. Paul was not the only pope accused of seeking to dominate Italian politics: the efforts of the Renaissance papacy to “fare grande la chiesa” led many to sympathize with the words attributed to Lorenzo de’ Medici: “to me it would be better to have three of four popes, instead of just one.”<sup>35</sup> Still, there is no denying that the considerable emphasis placed by Paul on reasserting papal authority, in the temporal and spiritual realms, ruffled feathers.

This emphasis fed into Paul’s exalted view of the papal monarchy, which many felt shaded into autocracy. Paul’s rule reflected the general trend of the age, whereby “not only with regard to administration, but also—and even more—to politics and diplomacy, the later fifteenth century saw ecclesiastical government being increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small palace committee, consisting of the pope and a few close advisers.”<sup>36</sup> The reconstruction of papal monarchical authority, in which the College of Cardinals became largely vestigial to decision-making in Rome, inevitably led to tensions and clashes, between the pope and the cardinalate and between the pope and the Roman ambassadorial corps. Paul’s well-developed sense of his own importance was fully consonant with such changes; he was a jealous protector of papal power and privilege.

A rich, Venetian noble, about whom the chronicler Gaspare da Verona opined that he was the handsomest man to serve as pope,<sup>37</sup> Paul displayed some of the haughtiness that was often attributed to Venetian patricians in the fifteenth century.

Platina's picture of a pontiff in love with money and yet parsimonious in parcelling it out, while no doubt exaggerated, finds echoes in the dispatches of friendly and unfriendly ambassadors alike. Pius, in his *Commentaries*, on several occasions remarked on Pietro Barbo's love for worldly things as cardinal.<sup>38</sup> The Venetian ambassador Bernardo Giustiniani, despite being the representative of an allied state, denounced the "intolerable pomp" of Paul II and sneered that "the pope spends all day counting and sorting his money and polishing pearls rather than on *pater nosters*."<sup>39</sup>

Respect for the dignity of the Throne of St Peter was paramount for Paul, and observers did not hesitate to point out the dictatorial aspects of the pontiff's rule.<sup>40</sup> Paul was deliberate in his attempts to extend the papal monarchy restored by Martin v. After Pius II's issuing of the *Execrabilis* in 1460, the pontificate of Paul II was marked by pro-papal juridical theorizing, a process that accelerated even more under Paul's successor, Sixtus IV.<sup>41</sup> Again following the example of Pius, Paul rarely consulted the community of cardinals in decision-making and instead relied on a limited group of close advisers, which might include a small number of "cardinal prefects" who were part of the *familia* of the Apostolic Palace. Ambassadors also complained that the pope did not sufficiently take into account the preferences and desires of their princes when he was deciding how to fill offices and dispense benefices. These matters were of great importance to resident ambassadors in Rome, who lobbied the pope to consider candidates favourable to their employers. Agostino Rossi wrote on this matter that Paul never took into account the views of the emperor, king, or any princes and lords.<sup>42</sup>

Paul was also very attentive to the more symbolic elements of his power. He wore an extravagant tiara that was much talked about in Rome and commissioned a great many representations of himself on medals and coins. "Paul II was firmly persuaded that the pope ought to appear in a style befitting the highest position on earth."<sup>43</sup> Such was the self-regard of the pope, one resident of the Roman court noted, that "with this pope one must use honey rather than vinegar."<sup>44</sup>

But just as nettlesome for ambassadors in Rome as these political and institutional factors were Paul's personality and habits. There was much that was enigmatic about Paul's character, and his personality vexed and frustrated ambassadors, cardinals, and others who interacted with him at the papal court.<sup>45</sup> These personal idiosyncrasies inevitably had political repercussions. One way in which the self-regard of the pope was reflected was his deliberately cultivated inaccessibility. A pope "who does not give audiences to living people," a newly arrived ambassador remarked about Paul.<sup>46</sup> Gaining audiences with the pope was a constant source of frustration for ambassadors, who prized such opportunities to press their concerns.

Paul held fewer consistories and granted fewer personal audiences than had been customary in Rome. “It has now become three times as difficult to have an audience as it was under Pope Pius,” an envoy from Breslau remarked.<sup>47</sup> The complaints could be heard within a few weeks of his coronation as pope. The Mantuan ambassador Giovan Pietro Arrivabene remarked on Paul’s attitude towards audiences: “Already many have begun to complain about this pope, who is universally unpleasant and inhuman to everyone and, among other things, very difficult with audiences.” Arrivabene stressed that the cardinals were especially displeased with the pope’s expectation that they should come and go at the pope’s pleasure, describing him as arrogant and disdainful. The ambassador speculated that within a few months none of the cardinals would have any authority left.<sup>48</sup>

The strange hours that Paul kept as pope also occasioned complaint. He managed to change the entire timeframe of the papal court. Paul was a night owl, rising late in the day, dining late, and conducting business well into the nighttime hours. Bleary-eyed ambassadors lamented such habits, and complaints were voiced that consistories and audiences occurred during the evening meal hours, leaving stomachs growling. A German ambassador once remarked that “His Holiness no longer gives audiences by day and as mine was the first, I sat in the pope’s chamber until 3 o’clock in the morning.”<sup>49</sup> Ambassadors had to become accustomed to being summoned late into the night.<sup>50</sup> Under Paul, consistories might begin well after sundown and go until the early morning.<sup>51</sup> Such nocturnal habits garnered him the nickname *cicindela*, the glow worm; it was not meant kindly.<sup>52</sup> Jacopo Trotti called the pontiff a man who turns night into day.<sup>53</sup>

Not only were audiences with the pope too infrequent for the liking of ambassadors in Rome, but what they heard from the pope at such gatherings was rarely satisfactory. When the pope did grant audiences or hold consistories, the complaint was invariably that they went on too long, largely as a result of the pope himself talking. The Milanese ambassador Otto da Caretto, commenting less than two weeks into Paul’s pontificate, wrote that “the habit of His Holiness is to go on for a very long time in his speech and without much order, such that it is very difficult to report on his discussions in an orderly way.”<sup>54</sup> Agostino Rossi in 1466 wrote of a four-hour interview with the pope composed of “varied, long and numerous discussions about Italian matters.”<sup>55</sup> Nicodemo Tranchedini called it the “usual way” for the pope to go on at length about a subject.<sup>56</sup> A meeting with the ambassadors of the league of Florence, Milan, and Naples in 1467 went on for seven hours through the night, lasting so long that the next morning the Venetian ambassadors were convinced that some secret contract had been negotiated!<sup>57</sup> Consistories were often

just as long and could be especially taxing for ambassadors during the heat of Roman summers. Jacopo d'Arezzo, an envoy of Marquis Ludovico Gonzaga, wrote that he had spent so long in the consistory in such stifling heat that he was in no shape to seek secret information.<sup>58</sup> On more than one occasion Jacopo Trotti found himself kneeling at the feet of the pope, growing steadily more miserable, his knees aching as the pope launched into yet another lengthy pronouncement—he felt he would die a thousand times from the heat.<sup>59</sup>

The loquaciousness of the pope was wedded to a tendency to launch into hyperbole. Paul II might take a great deal of time to come to reach decisions, but the pope was unsparing with those who disagreed with his choices. *Qui mecum non est, contra me est*, is how Jacopo Trotti described the rule of Rome under this pope.<sup>60</sup> He took great umbrage at resistance to the absolute nature of papal authority. In August 1467, the pope declared that he would sooner “become Jew or Turk” than see the city of Forlì fall under Venetian protection.<sup>61</sup>

Ambassadors of Milan and Naples were often at the receiving end of the pope's tongue-lashings, as their princes pursued policies that aroused Paul's ire. In public and private, the pope vented his spleen against King Ferrante of Naples, whom he called “that thieving bastard king.”<sup>62</sup> In October 1469, Paul attacked Ferrante in a barrage of resentment reported by the Milanese ambassador, Nicodemo Tranchedini. The pope not only declared that it was impossible to trust Ferrante on account of his malevolent nature, but he also claimed to know that King Alfonso was not really Ferrante's father, and that Pope Calixtus had, some years ago, informed him of the real identity of the king's parents.<sup>63</sup> In September 1467, upset at the Duke of Milan's intransigence over financial exactions from ecclesiastics in the Milanese, Paul raged against the Milanese and Neapolitan ambassadors. “I have never seen him so upset or disturbed,” Agostino Rossi observed.<sup>64</sup> The next few months saw the Milanese ambassador regularly at the receiving end of diatribes from Paul—the ambassador's dispatches read as if written by a man under siege. Paul claimed that Agostino had written “a thousand lies” in his dispatches to the Duke of Milan.<sup>65</sup> This situation reached its nadir in November, when the pope threatened to lock Agostino up in the Castello Sant'Angelo.<sup>66</sup>

Things were no better for poor Lorenzo da Pesaro, who filled in as Milanese ambassador when Agostino was absent from Rome in 1468. Lorenzo faced the fulminations of the pope in response to Galeazzo Maria Sforza's refusal to join a general peace without the participation of the king of France. The pope declared the Duke a traitor and called him crazy. Lorenzo hardly dared to write back to Galeazzo with this news and a fellow ambassador remarked that if he were in Lorenzo's position

he would try not to be seen by anyone. “In truth, everyone feels compassion for this poor Messer Lorenzo,” Jacopo Trotti sympathetically observed.<sup>67</sup> When faced with such episodes of spleen venting by the pope, ambassadors acted as filters, seeking to interpret the real meaning and intent of the pontiff’s words. “Do not get upset about anything that the pope says to me against you ... for he says and does much worse to others,” Jacopo Trotti cautioned Borso d’Este.<sup>68</sup>

Ambassadors also wondered whether they could trust the pope’s words. Faced with a garrulous yet indecisive pontiff, ambassadors in Rome found it difficult to gauge the pope’s intentions. The pope rarely made decisions quickly, and he regularly changed his mind, or at least changed his declared intentions. “I do not know what he will do, because he does not take care of things quickly, and does not come readily to conclusions,” wrote Jacopo Trotti in 1467.<sup>69</sup> Agostino Rossi echoed such an assessment a year earlier, when commenting on Paul’s attitude toward various states joining a general league: “it seems to be a beautiful game [of his] to stay indifferent and neutral like this, not showing himself to be here or there, only in order to be master of all and to be able to bash one against the other.”<sup>70</sup> He echoed these sentiments just over a year later: “I do not know what to say except that I am amazed by the great variation and mutation of this pope: one moment he condemns the Venetians, the next he commends them; first he makes jokes about the demands of Bartolomeo Colleoni, and now he wants to satisfy them; he stresses that he wants to favor justice and your side, and now it appears to me he is more likely to do the opposite.”<sup>71</sup> Agostino, in 1468, described himself as having to navigate a fluctuating sea, where the tide was constantly coming in and out. He made clear the source of this undulant water: “It is true, my Lord, that our Holy Father has strange and varied opinions.”<sup>72</sup> Other ambassadors also remarked on how frustrating this changeability was. Jacopo Trotti ended one of his letters with an admonition to Borso d’Este: “As before, I tell you that one cannot put a great deal of trust in what the pope says at this moment, as there are twelve hours in a day.”<sup>73</sup> There was nothing that frustrated a resident ambassador more than such variability, as it made it difficult to report reliable information, and to conjecture about the likely course of events. Similar observations were made by Machiavelli when commenting on the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian in 1509, a man, Machiavelli wrote, who “will often undo in the evening what he has done in the morning”:

This makes legations to him difficult, because the most important duty of the envoy, whether sent by a prince or a republic, is to conjecture the future through negotiations and incidents. After all, the envoy who conjectures wisely and conveys his conjectures well to his government will assure his government the advantage,

allowing it to take measures at an appropriate time. When the envoy conjectures well, this honors the envoy and his government, but if he conjectures badly he and his government are dishonored.<sup>74</sup>

In the case of Paul II, such indecision and changeability not only discomfited ambassadors, it had political repercussions, as Walter Tommasoli recognizes in his assessment of Paul's papacy: "[the pontificate] was listless and confused, which reflected the indecisive nature of a pope who was at the same time a centralizer of power."<sup>75</sup>

For the purposes of the ambassadors, therefore, the words of the pope were overabundant and too likely to change according to audience and circumstance; his very credibility was questionable. The nature of the fifteenth-century court was such that there was always suspicion that a prince was deliberately speaking in a manner that was incomplete, misleading, or downright false; it was one of the tasks of the resident ambassadors to gauge and assess the veracity of such words. Ambassadors emphasized very regularly the disingenuous mode of speech and suspicious nature of this pope. The Archbishop of Milan, Stefano Nardini, said of him shortly after Paul's election: "in truth this pope is of a very suspicious nature and while he makes easy use of generous words towards you [Duke Francesco Sforza of Milan], I do not yet know how well one can trust him."<sup>76</sup> "I have begun to take this opinion of His Holiness," Otto da Caretto wrote nearly two months after Paul's election, "that he has quite a skill of providing beautiful words that are without effect."<sup>77</sup> Lorenzo da Pesaro, also writing to the Duke of Milan, echoed these words: "It is certain that His Holiness speaks very well, but his words differ from the facts."<sup>78</sup> It would be hard to conjure up a more delicate means of saying that the pope lied.

RESIDENT AMBASSADORS IN Renaissance Rome spent a good deal of their time pressing the flesh with cardinals, especially given the hurdles placed before them by Pope Paul II. In fifteenth-century Italy, this group of men was an increasingly politicized group that represented a cross-section of Italian politics. Cardinals were officers of the Roman church but also semi-official representatives of their home states. Some became cardinal-protectors, a term used loosely and infrequently throughout the fifteenth century, where they were closely associated with the interests of their home state.<sup>79</sup> Some served essentially as resident ambassadors in their own right. An example of such a figure was Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga, the son of Marquis Ludovico Gonzaga of Mantua. Elevated to the cardinalate by Pius II, Francesco was ambivalent about what he could expect from Paul II, observing

that the pope did not have a “good stomach for the Gonzaga.”<sup>80</sup> Although assisted by a series of envoys sent to Rome, Cardinal Gonzaga acted as the *de facto* Mantuan ambassador. Similarly, the French cardinals present in Rome—Jean Jouffroy, Jean Balue, Alain de Coëtivy, and especially Guillaume d’Estouteville—fulfilled many of the roles of resident ambassador for the king of France, and were actively sought out by other ambassadors for news from France and the perspective of the French king. This was especially the case because the king of France did not regularly keep an ambassador resident in Rome.

Rivalries within the cardinalate mirrored those of the larger Italian political scene, as cardinals jostled for position within the church, but also for political and ecclesiastical advantage for their own lords. The advent of a new pope might radically overturn the political position of a cardinal, turning favour into disfavour. Many of the cardinals who had been closest to Pius II, known as the *Pieschi*, found themselves sidelined by Paul—most notable here were Niccolò Fortiguerra (often called *Teano* in dispatches), Bartolomeo Roverella (usually called *Ravenna*), Bernardo Eroli (*Spoletto*, or *Spoletano*), Francesco Gonzaga (*Mantua*), and Jacopo Ammannati-Piccolomini (*Pavia*). While the first four of these ultimately established tolerable relationships with the pope, Ammannati would remain one of the new pope’s most consistent and ardent critics.<sup>81</sup> He regularly offered aid and ideas to friendly ambassadors, in particular those of Milan and Florence.<sup>82</sup>

At the beginning of Paul’s pontificate, many ambassadors expressed fears that this Venetian pope would populate the ranks of the curial offices with Venetians; Agostino Rossi feared that the new pope would become the “chaplain” of Venice,<sup>83</sup> while on occasion the court would ring with warnings that the Venetians were “becoming popes.”<sup>84</sup> In fact, while a number of Venetians assumed prominent roles, they did not dominate the papal court. Nor did the administration of Paul II prove particularly favourable toward the interests of the Venetian government. Paul did end up elevating three Venetian relatives (Marco Barbo, Giovanni Battista Zeno, and Giovanni Michiel) to the cardinalate, but there was no Venetian takeover, as many had dreaded. In fact, instances of tension and disagreement with Venice proved to be far more common under Paul than was concord; Venetian ambassadors at the Curia were often deeply unhappy and among those most critical of the pope.<sup>85</sup> The acrimony was particularly acute with the advent of the Rimini crisis, in which papal expectations of political and military support from Venice against Roberto Malatesta went unfulfilled. The Venetians proved totally uninterested in contributing to an effort to consolidate papal control over a territory on Venice’s front doorstep, especially at a time when they were under intense pressure from the

Turks in the eastern Mediterranean. The Florentine ambassador Otto Niccolini's description of the relationship between the pope and Venice in April 1470 applied to the rest of Paul's pontificate: "in secret, there is little love, in fact there is quite a bit of rancor."<sup>86</sup>

It is evident that under Paul II the number of cardinals whom the pope could count as friends was small. Unsurprisingly, one of this group was his own nephew, Marco Barbo, who was made the cardinal of San Marco in 1467. Marco had been Bishop of Vicenza and master of Paul's household when Paul was still a cardinal. Jacopo Trotti described him as "the right eye of the pope" just after he became cardinal.<sup>87</sup> Once cardinal, Marco Barbo's profile in Rome was further enhanced. Gaspare of Verona, who wrote a largely laudatory account of Paul's papacy, wrote of the cardinal's role alongside the pope: "Paul II is very well pleased to have added him to the number of cardinals and to have confided difficult tasks to him, and he constantly gives him more responsibilities of such a kind. He is certainly very well endowed for important affairs ... loyal and devoted to the supreme pontiff Paul II."<sup>88</sup>

The relationship between the pope and a large portion of the College of Cardinals was strained from the very beginning of Paul's reign. The pope wasted no time in rejecting the capitulations which the College of Cardinals had agreed upon prior to electing him—these included arrangements for a church council within three years, the fixing of the size of the College at 24 cardinals, and planning for war against the Turks.<sup>89</sup> He had legal documents drawn up to show that these stipulations did not apply to him as pope, forcing several reluctant cardinals to consent to the revisions. He predictably rebuffed any calls for a church council, recognizing in them the inherent threat to his authority. He also suspended the financial arrangements for the Crusade, so beloved of Pius II. The mutual suspicion that resulted did not fully dissipate in the years that followed: cardinals resented Paul's exalted conception of papal monarchical rule, and his desire to reassert papal control over papal vassals and vicariates often threatened the interests of their native states.

In practice, the social and political circles that built up around individual cardinals meant that Rome was a city of many courts, not just one centred on the pope. Giorgio Chittolini has stressed that we should think of the Roman court in the broadest terms, encompassing the papal court, the Curia, and the households of the cardinals.<sup>90</sup> Some of the more prominent cardinals operated what amounted to chanceries of their own, with dozens of letters coming in and going out every day. Some of these letters might contain information of considerable interest to

ambassadors resident in Rome, and their dispatches are full of references to letters shown to them by individual cardinals or their secretaries.

One of the chief tasks of any resident ambassador in Rome was to establish a reliable network of cardinal “friends,” who would provide information from consistories or other curial meetings to which access was limited; lobby and provide access to influential personnel at the Roman court; and even advocate sympathetic positions to the pope on the ambassador’s behalf. The references in ambassadorial dispatches to *cardinali amici*, *cardinali nostri*, and *cardinali partesani* are legion.

The Este of Ferrara, for example, did not have a cardinal in Rome during the pontificate of Paul II, and thus their ambassadors sought to establish useful relationships with cardinals resident in Rome for their influence, connections, and access to information. Cardinals at Rome were referred to by a range of monikers by the Estense ambassador Jacopo Trotti. *Il Greco*, or *Niceno*, was Cardinal Bessarion Trapezentius, *Rohanno* was the French cardinal Guillaume d’Estouteville, *Sancto Angelo* was Juan Carvajal, and *San Marco* was Marco Barbo. These connections became valuable not only because they might provide insight into the deliberations inside the meetings of the Consistory and the viewpoints of the pope, but also because they supplied news from a range of locales. Estouteville filled in the ambassador on the latest information from France (providing the Estense ambassador with the “very freshest letters from France”<sup>91</sup>); Barbo discussed the latest debates inside the Venetian Senate; Bessarion updated him with harrowing news of the threat offered by the Turks in the East. Jacopo regarded certain cardinals as particularly well disposed to the interests of Ferrara, most notably Juan Carvajal, whom he referred to as *nostro homo qui*.<sup>92</sup> Carvajal, unfortunately for Jacopo, had a poor relationship with the pope.

Milanese ambassadors in Rome, as we have seen, often found themselves at odds with the pope, given the frequently contentious relationship between the Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza and Paul II. Because the pontiff kept these ambassadors at arm’s length, they were forced to rely on friendly cardinals for information and access, usually Guillaume d’Estouteville (whom Antonio da Bracello referred to as *nostro compare*<sup>93</sup>), Francesco Gonzaga, Angelo Capranica, and Jacopo Ammannati.<sup>94</sup> These men were *Pieschi* and Paul II systematically sought to exclude them, Gonzaga aside, from positions of influence in the Curia; there was considerable tension between these men and the *Pauleschi*, the cardinals appointed by Paul himself.<sup>95</sup> When Jean Balue, the Bishop of Angers, was elevated to the cardinalate by Paul II in September 1467, Agostino Rossi wrote hopefully that he would prove a great asset to the Milanese cause in the College of Cardinals.<sup>96</sup>

OTHER THAN THE CARDINALS, of course, there were a large number of other ecclesiastics. The papal court was teeming with bishops, archbishops, notaries, papal secretaries, and chancery officials—members of a vast service bureaucracy hovering around the Holy See. In one regard, such officials could be more valuable than cardinals as sources of information and influence, as they were not of such high-profile and they could be consulted with more discretion. At the beginning of every pontificate, resident ambassadors took stock of those appointed to prominent and influential positions by the pope. There was a scurry to identify those who were likely to look favourably upon the interests of the state or prince that the ambassador was representing. We can see this in the dispatch of Otto da Caretto, the Milanese representative in Rome at the outset of Paul's reign, to Duke Francesco Sforza, in which he listed dozens of appointees to curial offices, administrative positions (such as castellans and podestà) in the papal states, and condottieri hired—a detailed plan of the papacy's new administrative staff.<sup>97</sup>

Among the most important of such officials in Paul's Rome was Leonardo di Piero Dati, a Florentine canon and Bishop of Massa who became the preferred secretary of the pope. As early as a month after Paul's election, ambassadors were noting his favoured position alongside the pope.<sup>98</sup> As a Florentine, he often offered his services to Florentine ambassadors, although Lorenzo de' Medici mistrusted him intensely, calling him "a mortal enemy of the house of Medici."<sup>99</sup>

Similarly, the Milanese ambassadors drew repeatedly on the service of the archbishop of Milan, Stefano Nardini, a well-connected churchman who enjoyed the favour of Paul II. Nardini, "ha buon loco" alongside the pope, according to Otto da Caretto.<sup>100</sup> Nardini regularly wrote letters to the Duke of Milan that complemented those of the Milanese ambassadors. In November 1466, Agostino Rossi was under considerable pressure from Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza, not known for his patience, to secure the open bishopric of Albenga for the duke's favored candidate. The pope, however, insisted on awarding it to the Bishop of Savona, who had served the pontiff for some 30 years, but who was a member of the Fregoso family, traditionally hostile to the Sforza. In several audiences with the pope, Agostino reminded the pope of promises to satisfy Milanese concerns, but the pope was unreceptive. Faced with such indisposition, Agostino took his case to the *prelati di casa* (his description of those close to the pope), which included Stefano Nardini, Marco Barbo (at that time, the Bishop of Vicenza and not yet cardinal), and the Bishop of Tirasona. He then tried his luck with several cardinals: *Teano* (Niccolò Fortiguerra), *Pavia* (Jacopo Ammannati-Piccolomini), and *Mantua* (Francesco Gonzaga). All reiterated that it would be impossible to budge the pope from his position, as it indeed proved to be.<sup>101</sup>

The presence of envoys from all over Italy and Europe made Rome a window on the wider world. Ambassadors in Rome, when they were not in audiences or seeking information from cardinals and other curial officials, could often be found interacting with one another. Waiting and biding time took up a large portion of the day of resident ambassadors anywhere in fifteenth-century Italy—indeed, boredom was one of the occupational hazards of the resident ambassador. But in Paul II's Rome, as we have seen, this took on an altogether new dimension; the waiting could be endless. Ambassadors regularly agonized over waiting hours for audiences that often never materialized. But ambassadors also sought to make use of such periods of waiting, interacting with each other in their constant search for information. Here they would press the flesh, share gossip, and exchange letters in the hope of ascertaining useful information they could then pass on in their letters home. There were always large numbers of people waiting around in the hopes of seeing the pope or securing papal favour or funding. To provide but a single example, Agostino Rossi and Lorenzo da Pesaro in January 1467 wrote of their conversations on one day with Hungarian ambassadors hoping to secure a subsidy for their struggle against the Ottomans; with the Grand Master of the Knights of St John seeking relief from the order's debt; with the Albanian captain Scanderbeg seeking military assistance; and with condottieri hoping for new contracts—all while waiting for an audience with the pope.<sup>102</sup>

Ambassadors also visited each other's residences, where they might better exchange letters or converse in private. Jacopo Trotti regularly visited the Venetian house in Rome, where he learned of letters coming from Venice and beyond.<sup>103</sup> Ambassadors' residences were clustered in the heart of the city, thus providing meeting places outside the more official milieus like the papal palaces. In February 1468, the ambassadors of Milan, Florence, and Naples all gathered at the Rome residence of the Neapolitan ambassador, Garcia Betes, to read letters freshly arrived from Florence and hear news from Naples, including a letter directed to the College of Cardinals by Ferrante.<sup>104</sup>

The ambassadors of allied or friendly states were most likely to work together or share information. In some cases, allied ambassadors would pen joint dispatches, as, for example, did the ambassadors of the alliance between Florence, Milan, and Naples. These letters would be signed *oratori della lega*, referring to the *lega particolare* between these three states, and would supplement the letters of individual ambassadors in a sign of solidarity.<sup>105</sup> Instructions to Milanese ambassadors sometimes directed them to work as much as possible in unison with the envoys of their coalition partners, in order to present a unified front to the pope.<sup>106</sup> These ambassadors

also regularly presented themselves as a group to the pope for audiences, or sought out the pope or his closest cardinals to present a joint proposal from the members of the league. Similarly, during the papacy of Paul II, the ambassadors of Ferrara habitually worked in tandem with their counterparts from Venice.

Ambassadors also made reference to a host of connections at the papal court that remained unnamed—sources that provided ambassadors with information but which, usually deliberately, were left without precise identification. Resident ambassadors from all states referred cryptically to their sources in Rome. On occasion they might be identified by provenance, such as *venetiano* or *genovosino*<sup>107</sup> or by their status, such as *ecclesiastico*, *courtier* or *soldato*. More frequently the labels preserved an even more obscure anonymity. There were *amici*, *uomini buoni e de bone fide*, *persona de autorità*<sup>108</sup>, *persona digna*<sup>109</sup>, *uno amico mio*<sup>110</sup>, *uno notabile homo*<sup>111</sup> with whom they established relationships at the Roman court. These vague appellations left the flesh and blood individuals in the shadows. It is quite possible that some of these individuals were paid informants, although evidence of such arrangements almost never appears in the dispatches. Giovanni Bianchi was typical among ambassadors when he regularly learned about what happened in secret papal consistories from an unnamed cardinal—he would only describe him in his dispatches as *un reverendissimo cardinale partesano de la Vostra Excellentia*.<sup>112</sup> But the language might even be more discreet than a reference to a particular individual. As at other courts, ambassadors in Rome wrote of receiving information *da buon luogo*<sup>113</sup> or *per bona via*<sup>114</sup>, phrases that periphrastically could describe nearly anyone or anywhere. Such unnamed sources and connections were an important tool in gathering information and gaining insight into the intentions of the pope. Perhaps it was Nicodemo Tranchedini who put it most succinctly when he informed the Duke of Milan that he expected Paul, in 1471, to name new cardinals, as he had talked to someone who “knew quite a lot about the mind of the pope.”<sup>115</sup>

THIS EXAMINATION OF the experiences of resident ambassadors in Rome under Pope Paul II testifies to important features both of diplomatic representation and of the make-up of the papal court in the second half of the fifteenth century. Resident ambassadors at the Curia, as was the case for ambassadors stationed in Milan, Venice, and other courts that saw heavy traffic of visitors and news from abroad, were valued largely for their capacity to gather and report information. In Rome, of course, residents were also tasked with the complicated and time-consuming business of politicking with the pope, and those who might influence the pope, over

ecclesiastical appointments. In pursuing both tasks, direct or indirect access to the pope was paramount—hence the great importance placed on cultivating a range of sources and connections that spanned the population of the Curia.

In Rome there was a broad and varied market for the commodity of information. As in a commodity market, there were grades of product, which were more or less difficult to extract. Like market-savvy entrepreneurs, competent resident ambassadors sought to use every resource at their disposal to secure good product. The complex nature of the papal court, with its unique polyvalent structure, mixture of personnel and nationalities and dual secular and ecclesiastical identities, provided any number of avenues for such information gathering. The most important information concerned the outlook and intentions of the pope, of course, and ambassadors were rarely able to avail themselves directly of the pope's outlook. Often they were furnished only with fragmentary or carefully filtered information from the pope and his immediate circle. Given the challenges thrown up by Paul II, resident ambassadors were forced to be flexible, creative, and dogged in their efforts to know the mind of the pope.

The travails of ambassadors resident in Paul II's Rome also tell us much about the increasingly mundane and local preoccupations of the fifteenth-century papacy. Paul II, in a fashion characteristic of Renaissance popes, expended a very large portion of his time and efforts on secular and local, territorial concerns. While the regular flow of visitors from across western Christendom provided reminders of the universal claims and responsibilities of papal authority, the scope of Paul II's vision was on a day-to-day basis considerably more confined. In regards to affairs in France, for example, Paul as pope spent a disproportionate amount of time cultivating the political ambitions of John of Anjou toward the Kingdom of Naples. In this fashion, the papal court, despite its unique profile and dimensions (which shaped ambassadors' tasks in important ways), came to resemble closely princely courts elsewhere in Italy. In many areas, Paul II acted in a manner scarcely distinguishable from the Duke of Milan or King of Naples. Even the factional divisions in the cardinalate mirrored the rivalries present among court nobilities at other Italian courts. And while ambassadors did expend many hours on ecclesiastical affairs at the papal court, recommending candidates for curial offices and vacant benefices, their tasks in Rome resembled closely those of ambassadors who served at other Italian courts: carrying out political negotiations, monitoring relations with the prince, and, above all, collecting information. It is therefore not surprising that many of the ambassadors who served as resident ambassadors in Rome also served as ambassadors at other times at other courts; the skills required were very much

the same. It is also telling that very few of the ambassadors assigned to the Curia were churchmen; their concern for the affairs of the church was clearly secondary to their tasks in Rome.<sup>116</sup>

In the politicized papal monarchy of the second half of the fifteenth century, where the character and ambitions of the individual who served as pontiff eclipsed the interests of the institution, it was inevitable that the personal would become political. We have seen that the pretensions and personality of Pope Paul II presented considerable challenges to ambassadors resident at the papal court, forcing them to employ manifold means and avenues to “know the mind of the pope.” It was an experience that produced a great deal of infelicity among this fellowship of diplomats, and produced in their dispatches shockingly candid barbs directed at the pope. It is likely that many of these ambassadors would have agreed with the sentiments expressed by Giovanni Bentivoglio (1443–1508), the lord of the commune in Bologna and one who had numerous run-ins with the late pope, in a letter to Lorenzo de’ Medici, shortly after Giovanni learned of Paul’s death: “I pray to God that He might give us a better pope.”<sup>117</sup>

### Notes

1. The imagery of concentricity is significantly preferable to that of a pyramid, which suggests a strictly layered hierarchy, and understates the complexity and fluidity of the papal court’s social topography. Ambassadors often found that their most useful connections might not inhabit the highest levels of such a hierarchy.
2. See, for example: Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956), pp. 51–111; Michael Mallett, “Diplomacy and War in Later Fifteenth-Century Italy,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* LXVII (1981), pp. 267–88; and R. Fubini, “Diplomacy and government in the Italian city-states of the fifteenth century,” in *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Daniela Frigo, trans. A. Belton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 26–48.
3. Instructions from Galeazzo Maria Sforza and Bianca Maria Sforza to Agostino Rossi and Lorenzo da Pesaro, 25 November 1466, Milan, Archivio di Stato di Milano (hereafter ASMi), Archivio Sforzesco (hereafter AS), Potenze Estere (hereafter PE)—Roma, Cart. 61: “con le orrechie tese et con li occhi al penello per intendere tutti li disegni et movimenti et concepti del dicto Bartolomeo et de ogni altro loco de Italia et de quanto sentiremo de tutto aviseremovi.” This translation, and all subsequent translations from archival documents, are my own.
4. Borso d’Este to Jacopo Trotti, 4 April 1468, Benvignanti, Archivio di Stato di Modena (hereafter ASMO), Archivio Segreto Estense (hereafter ASE), Carteggio Ambasciatori (hereafter CA)—Roma, b.1: “[tu] ne scrivi tante cosse che pothamo quasi dire de es-

sere a Roma, tanto distinctamente et ordinamente tu ne le dici e chiarissi.... commendiamote del tuo scrivere perch'el ni ha dato tanto contexto che ni non poteristi crederlo perché tu ne sigilli le cosse che le tochiamo cum mano et che le intendiamo, come se li fossemo presenti.”

5. Calcagnino de Calignini to Borso d'Este, 28 June 1470, Rome, ASMO, ASE, CA—Roma, b.1: “Da Jacomo Trotto qui intende el cocto et el crudo de le occurentie et de Italia et fuor de Italia.” Calcagnino was a scion of a prominent Ferrarese family sent to Rome as an envoy by Duke Borso.
6. See the letter of Borso d'Este to Jacopo Trotti, 29 April 1468, Consandali, ASMO, ASE, CA—Roma, b.1: “Et de quello habia parlato cum te la Santità del Papa, cardinali, et altri ambassatori ne sono piazute summamente et havemo recevute piacere intend-erle.”
7. The translation provided is from C. Celenza, *Renaissance Humanism and the Papal Curia: Lapo da Castiglionicho the Younger's De curiae commodis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), p. 139: “Existimo igitur Aristotelem Homeri poesim legisse atque illum imitatum esse, qui, cum in Ulyxis persona prudentem virum fingere vellet, sic scripsit: “Varias iactatus in oras et mores hominum multorum novit et urbes;” eadem videlicet erroris longitudine et varietate locorum atque hominum notavit. Huius preciosissimae rei consequendae gratia numquam ego cuiquam Calypsen, Circem, Phaeceas, Lystrigones, Syrenas, Ciclopes, inferos ut Ulyxi petendos censuerim. Nam quae ille diuturno errore, summo vitae discrimine consequutus est, haec omnia abunde tibi Romana curia suppenditabit. In ea enim una rerum multitudinem, varietatem hominum, magnitudinem causarum reperias. Nihil enim fere maximum inter Christianos agitur, de quo non consulatur pontifex maximus, in quo non eius interponatur auctoritas. Sive enim de bello sive de pace sive de foederibus ineundis sive de matrimoniiis inter summos orbis reges et principes deliberatur sive aliqua inter eos vertitur controversia, cuncta ad illum deferuntur et in curia ut in publico aliquo foro agitantur. Itaque necesse est eum qui in hac tanta frequentia versetur rerum atque hominum multa videre, multa audire, multa discere, multa etiam ipsum agere, plurimorum item nec vulgarium nec imperitorum hominum colloquio, sermone, et consuetudine uti, plurimorum mores et vitae instituta agnoscere, cum nonnullis etiam familiaritates amicitiasque coniungere. Ex quibus omnibus sibi quod libeat probandi, improbandi, legendi, reiciendi, dimittendi, sumendi, corrigendi, emendandive potestas permittitur, ut, tametsi natura hebetior sit, modo non negligens, paulo tamen diutius tritus in curia et sub actus summo saepe viros ingenio superet.”
8. *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 318.
9. See D. Hay, *The Church in Italy in the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 41–48. See also Barbara Hallman, *Italian Cardinals, Reform and the Church as Property, 1492–1563* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 4–5.

10. According to Charles Stinger, between the pontificates of Pius II (1458–1464) and Leo X (1513–1521), the number of individuals in the papal household quadrupled to over 2000. *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 333.
11. G. Signorotto and M.A. Visceglia, ed., *Court and Politics in Papal Rome 1492–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 1 in the “Introduction.”
12. Signorotto, p. 6.
13. Antonio Guidobono to Francesco Sforza, 8 July 1457, quoted in Elizabeth Mahnke, “The Political Career of a *Condottiere*-Prince: Ludovico Gonzaga 1444–1466,” Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1974, p. 205.
14. *L’Albergo* was published in 1637 (Venice). Cited in M. Infelise, “Roman *Avvisi*: Information and Politics in the Seventeenth Century” in Signorotto, ed., *Court and Politics*, p. 213 (whole essay, pp. 212–228).
15. Nicodemo made this remark when trying to find out whether there was truth to the rumor he had heard from the Cardinal of Naples, Oliviero Carafa, that the pope was arranging the marriage of his nephew to the daughter of the King of Naples, Ferrante. Letter to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 10 July 1471, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 67.
16. J. Heers, *La vie quotidienne à la cour pontificale au temps des Borgia et des Médicis 1420–1520* (Paris: Hachette, 1986), p. 28.
17. On Pietro Barbo’s career as a cardinal, see I. Robertson, “Pietro Barbo: *Zentilhomo de Venecia e Pontifico*,” in *War, Culture and Society in Renaissance Venice. Essays in Honour of John Hale*, ed. D. Chambers, C. Clough, and M. Mallett (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), pp. 151–57 (whole essay pp. 147–172).
18. Massimo Miglio makes this point in *La storiografia pontificia del Quattrocento* (Bologna: Pàtron, 1975), p. 121.
19. Platina, *The Lives of the Popes from the Accession of Gregory VII to the Death of Paul II*, trans. and ed. W. Benham (London: Griffith, Farran, Okeden and Welsh, 1887), p. 278. For an interesting treatment of the publication life of the *Lives*, see S. Bauer, *The Censorship and Fortuna of Platina’s Lives of the Popes in the Sixteenth Century* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006).
20. J. D’Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome. Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), p. 92.
21. D’Amico, p. 296.
22. Miglio, p. 112. “Platina dipinge un quadro spaventole degli ipocriti e dell’ipocrisia ... egli volle ad ogni costo farla rappresentare quale duello tra lui ed il Papa suo nemico personale.”
23. V. Zabughin, *Giulio Pomponio Leto. Saggio Critico*, Volume I (Rome: La vita letteraria, 1909), p. 67.
24. See especially R. Weiss, *Un umanista veneziano. Papa Paolo II. Civiltà Veneziana-Saggi*, 4 (Rome: Istituto per la Collaborazione Culturale, 1958), pp. 9–32. For more specifically on the so-called conspiracy, see A.J. Dunston, “Pope Paul II and the Humanists,” *The Journal of Religious History* 7 (1973), pp. 287–306 and P. Medioli

- Masotti, "L'Accademia Romana e la congiura del 1468," *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 25 (1982), pp. 189–204. The near-contemporary biographer Gaspare da Verona also sought to counter the accusations of the Roman Academicians that Paul was an enemy of learning. Gaspare wrote: "He is praised to the skies by all mortal men as the founder, reformer, and benefactor of institutions of learning; indeed, his good name knows no bounds, and all men praise him with great acclamations." A. Andrews, "The 'Lost' Fifth Book of Gaspare da Verona," *Studies in the Renaissance* 17 (1970), p. 41 (whole article, pp. 7–45).
25. Robertson, "Pietro Barbo," p. 149.
  26. On Bologna, see I. Robertson, *Tyranny under the Mantle of St. Peter: Pope Paul II and Bologna* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), especially pp. 5–22 and 139–44. Giovanni Bianchi to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 27 January 1468, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 64: "de subiugarsi tutte le terre de la chiesa, che immediate non gli sono sottoposte."
  27. Jacopo Trotti to Borso d'Este, 21 September 1467, Rome, ASMO, ASE, CA—Roma, B.1: "Insignoriarse de tuta Romagna." Jacopo wrote this observation in code.
  28. Galeazzo Maria Sforza to Pietro Archangelo and Gerardo Cerutti, 8 May 1469, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 66.
  29. I. Robertson, "The Return of Cesena to the Direct Dominion of the Church after the Death of Malatesta Novello," *Studi Romagnoli* 16 (1965), pp. 123–61.
  30. R. Fubini, *Italia Quattrocentesca* (Florence: F. Angeli, 1994), p. 269.
  31. Jacopo Trotti to Borso d'Este, 14 April 1469, Rome, ASMO, ASE, CA—Roma, B.1: "Confesso e credo ch'el non facia tante cosse quanto sua Beatitudine dice, ma dico ch'el Re l'ha ingiurato sino nel cuore et mostrato non il stimare niente, che è la magior ingiuria che si possa fare a un Signore glorioso, pomposo, et ambizioso come è il nostro Papa."
  32. Giovanni Bianchi to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 27 January 1468, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 64: "È opinione de parecchi qua, etiam de capelli rossi, che ogni studio, opera et diligentia del papa miri et tendi ad farsi et mantenersi iudice dele appellatione in Italia et per consequens fuori d'Italia. Et ch'el se persuade gli debba reussire per havergli fin qui dato assai bon principio et per havere reputatione appresso ognuno ch'el sii richissimo et potentissimo. Et che tutto faci per lassare de se questa laude et gloria, cioè che l'habiy possuto disponere et fare et dire ad suo per essere stati ad li loro tempi de li principi che non gli l'hanno voluto consentire."
  33. Agostino Rossi to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 28 January 1468, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 64: "Al mio iudicio la sua Sta sta in questo pensiero de reduer a si tute le terre de la giesia, et tutti li altri vicarij et feudatori suoy. Ita che non habiano dependentia ni cometantia con altri che con essa. Et di l'altra parte non dovea etiam dio che veruna de la potentie ytalice multiplicasse, ni cresessi più che la se sia. Et in quella forma esser sua Beatitudine quella a chi se drizaseno tute cose, et dar leze ad ogniuno in temporale e spirituale."
  34. Letter of 28 August 1465, cited in P. Farenga, "I Romani sono pericoloso popolo' Roma nei carteggi diplomatici" in *Roma Capitale (1447–1527)*, ed. S. Gensini (Rome:

- Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1994), p. 311 (whole essay, pp. 289–315). “Il papa vuol essere obedito.”
35. Quoted in E. Pontieri, *L'età d'equilibrio politico in Italia (1454–1494)* (Naples: Libreria Scientifica Editrice, 1962), p. 272. “Per mia pari fa che la auctorità si distribuischa et se potessi esser senza scandolo sarebbono meglò tre o quatro Papa che uno.”
36. M. Pellegrini, “A turning-point in the history of the factional system in the Sacred College: the power of the Pope and cardinals in the age of Alexander VI,” in Signorotto and Visceglia, ed., p. 22 (whole essay, pp. 8–30). See also P. Richard, “Origines et développement de la Secrétairerie d’Etat apostolique (1417–1823),” *Revue d’Histoire Écclésiastique* 11 (1910), pp. 56–72.
37. Paul apparently considered taking the name Formosus as pope, but decided against it, thinking that the name might be associated with his good looks. The original Pope Formosus was pontiff 891–896. In 897, his body was exhumed by Pope Stephen VI. In what became known as the Cadaver Synod, Formosus’s body was dressed in full vestments, propped up on a throne and subjected to a mock trial. Formosus was posthumously declared unfit for office, his acts and decrees vacated, and his corpse tossed into the Tiber.
- That the former Pietro Barbo chose the name Paul instead, however, is telling. There had not been a Pope Paul since Paul I in the eighth century. That pope was known primarily for his success in consolidating the territorial papal state and for facing up to the Lombard King Desiderius. See T.F.X. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter. The Birth of the Papal State, 680–825* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), esp. pp. 103–112; and D.H. Miller, “Papal-Lombard Relations During the Pontificate of Pope Paul I: The Attainment of an Equilibrium of Power in Italy, 756–767,” *Catholic Historical Review* 55 (1969), pp. 358–76. Pietro Barbo may very well have had the model of this pope in mind while making his onomastic determinations. And, of course, the name Paul referenced the Apostle Paul, who was often characterized as the protector of the church and represented in iconography as a sword. Both of these models may very well say something of Paul II’s designs for his own papacy. I thank Stephen Bartlett for alerting me to the significance of such a choice of names.
38. M. Simonetta and M. Meserve, ed., *Commentaries* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). At Book 1.34.5 (p. 173), Pius calls him “less a master of ceremonies than an expert seeker of worldly preferment.” At Book 2.8.1–6 (pp. 239–241), Pius recounts the great affront taken by the Cardinal when he did not receive the benefice of Santa Maria in Impruneta, a wealthy parish by virtue of the many pilgrims who visited there.
39. Agostino Rossi to Cicco Simonetta, 3 November 1466, Rome, ASMI, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 61: “Ma si bene ch’el non ne fosse ancora più attenti li modi et la pompa intollerabile de tutta questa corte, et maxime che’l Papa tutto’l di sta in numerare et asortire dinari et in filare perle loco di poter nostri.”

Paul’s reputation for hoarding money was already being talked about outside of Rome by the end of 1464. Vincenzo della Scalone, the Mantuan ambassador in Milan,

- reported on 4 December 1464 in a letter to the Marquis Ludovico Gonzaga that he had heard: "La Santità Sua fu dicto che ha principiato de acumulare dinari." M.N. Covini, ed., *Carteggio degli oratori mantovani alla corte sforzesco (1450–1500)*, vol. 6 (Rome: Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali, 1999), p. 529.
40. L. von Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, vol. 4, ed. F.I. Antrobus (London: Kegan Paul, 1910), p. 25.
  41. Pellegrini, p. 9ff.
  42. Agostino Rossi to Galeazzo Maria Sforza and Bianca Maria Sforza, 4 November 1466, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 61.
  43. Pastor, p. 106.
  44. Jacopo Filippo Doivo to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 8 May 1471, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 67. "Con questo pontefice bisogna usare el mele et non lo aceto."
  45. John D'Amico writes of Paul: "He could be testy and was not universally liked. His uncle Eugenius IV had helped him advance in the ecclesiastical establishment and he seems to have developed some of the arrogance of the well placed. Supremely confident of his own views, he brooked no opposition from any quarter." D'Amico, p. 93.
  46. Agostino reporting the words of the newly arrived Lorenzo da Pesaro. Agostino Rossi to Galeazzo Maria Sforza and Bianca Maria Sforza, 4 November 1466, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 61. "Non da audientia a persona viva."
  47. Pastor, p. 26.
  48. Giovan Pietro Arrivabene to Barbara Gonzaga, 3 October 1464, Rome, Archivio di Stato di Mantova (hereafter ASMA), Archivio Gonzaga (hereafter AG), Affari Esteri (hereafter AE)—Roma, b.842. "Gia molti comunicano a duolersi de questo papa, el qual universalmente ad ugnuno è despiacevole et inhumano et tra l'altre cose difficillimo a le audientie."
  49. Pastor, p. 26.
  50. For example see the letter of Jacopo d'Arezzo to Barbara Gonzaga, 18 March 1466, Rome, ASMA, AG, AE—Roma, b.843.
  51. Jacopo d'Arezzo to Barbara, 9 July 1466, Rome, ASMA, AG, AE—Roma, b.843: Jacopo reported on a consistory beginning after dark and extending well into the morning.
  52. Dunston, p. 290.
  53. Jacopo to Borso, 16 December 1467, Rome, ASMO, ASE, CA—Roma, b.1.
  54. Otto da Caretto to Francesco Sforza, 11 September 1464, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 56: "Lo costume di Sua Sta è essere molto longo in suo ragionare et non molto composito, siché li suoy ragionamenti, non si ponno molto ordinatamente referire."
  55. Agostino Rossi to Dukes, 15 November 1466, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 61: "varii, longhi et molti rasonamenti de le cose de Italia."
  56. Nicodemo and Agostino Rossi to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 19 May 1471, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 67. On 27 September 1469, Jacopo Trotti arrived at the Camera di Pappagallo, where many papal audiences took place, and to his surprise was summoned first, even though Cardinal Marco Barbo, the ambassadors of the King of Spain, the Venetian ambassador, the ambassador of Duke John of Anjou, and the

- Bishop of Arly were all present, also waiting to be called upon by the pope. The pope complained of the failure of Venice to mobilize troops and of Roberto Malatesta seizing additional fortresses around Rimini. Jacopo added “as is his custom, he said a lot.” ASMO, ASE, CA—Roma, b.1.
57. Agostino Rossi to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 20 August 1467, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 63.
  58. Jacopo d’Arezzo to Barbara Gonzaga, 21 May 1465, Rome, ASMa, AG, AE—Roma, b.842.
  59. Jacopo Trotti to Borso d’Este, 30 July 1467, Rome, ASMO, ASE, CA—Roma, b.1.
  60. Jacopo Trotti to Borso d’Este, 48 April 1470, ASMO, ASE, CA—Roma, b.1.
  61. Jacopo Trotti to Borso d’Este, 24 August 1467, ASMO, ASE, CA—Roma, b.1.: “Il non delibera per alcun modo mai lassare forli come il sta a presente, sotto la protectione de venetiani; et che più tosto el doventaria zudio et turcho per modo parlare, che mai mai deviare da questa voglia, et patire tanta infamia, tanto charico, et tanta vergogna, che un suo vacario fratricidia et matricidia tristo et cussi gran ribaldo, se gli ribelli et faccia beffe de soa Sanctità, et non lo stimi un ficco per ombra ch’el habia de essere in protectione de venetiani.”
  62. As reported by Jacopo Trotti, 20 July 1467: “questo landrocello bastardo del re.”
  63. Nicodemo Tranchedini to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 31 October 1469, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 66.
  64. Agostino Rossi to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 5 September 1467, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 63. “Non lo vite may ni più alterato ni più turbato.”
  65. Giovanni Bianchi to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 5 January 1468, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 64.
  66. Agostino Rossi to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 19 November 1467, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 63.
  67. Jacopo Trotti to Borso d’Este, 24 May 1468, Rome, ASMO, ASE, CA—Roma, b.1.: “questo meschino de messer Lorenzo, a chi in vero ognomo ha compassione assai.” In fact things got even worse for Lorenzo, as the notoriously mercurial Galeazzo Maria refused to correspond with him, choosing instead to communicate with individual cardinals such as Niccolò Fortiguerra, as well as with the ambassadors of Florence and Naples.
  68. Jacopo to Borso d’Este, 8 September 1467, Rome, ASMO, ASE, CA, Roma, B.1: “non pigliati mai passione de cossa che dica nostro Signore a mi contra de vs ... perché il fa et dice molto peggio contra altri.”
  69. Jacopo to Borso d’Este, 9 August 1467, Rome, ASMO, ASE, CA—Roma, b.1: “Non scio mò ciò che soa Beatudine faria, perché la non fa le cosse sue molto in fretta, et non vene cussi presto a la conclusione.”
  70. Agostino Rossi to Bianca Maria Sforza, 6 December 1466, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 61: “gli pare uno bel zoco de stare così indifferente et neutrale, non mostrando essere di qua ni de là, solo per essere il maestro del tutto et potere sbatere l’uno per l’altro.”

71. Agostino Rossi to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 21 January 1468, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 64: “Per lequal tute cosse nuy altri, non sapemo que sa dire, se non marevigliarse grandmente de tanta varietà et mutatione del papa: che antea sempre habia calumpniato venetiani, et modo li comendi; che sempre se sia factò beffe de le domande de Bartholomeo, e adesso voglia se li debia satisfar; che de preterito anche habia tuta via de voler favorezar la iustitia, e la parte vostra, e me para altramente, monstrando più presto l’opposito.”
72. Agostino Rossi to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 18 January 1468, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 64: “L’è vero, signore mio, che questo nostro sancto patre, a le volte, ha de stranie et varie opinionone. E nuy altri che siano qua, havemo a navigar uno mare molto fluctuanti che va per fluxò et per refluxò.”
73. Jacopo Trotti to Borso d’Este, 25 February 1470, Rome, ASMO, ASE, CA—Roma, B.1.
74. “Discourse on the Affairs of Germany and its Emperor,” in *The Essential Writings of Machiavelli*, ed. and trans. P. Constantine (New York: Modern Library, 2007), p. 374 (whole extract, pp. 373–374).
75. W. Tommasoli, *Momenti e figure della politica dell’equilibrio (Federico da Montefeltro e l’impresa di Rimini)* (Urbino: Argalia Editore, 1968), p. 6. “fiacco e confuso che rispocchiò il modo d’essere d’un papa indeciso nell’azione anche se accentratore del potere.”
76. As reported in a letter of Otto da Caretto to Francesco Sforza, 12 September 1464, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 56: “in vero questo papa di sua natura è molto sospitoso et benché fazi bon mercato de parole molto larghe verso di Vostra Excellentia, non sapemo ancor bene come ello se fidi.”
77. Otto da Caretto to Francesco Sforza, 24 October 1464, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 56: “... yo cominciò a pigliare questa opinione di sua Sta: che habbi questa per una bella arte de dare belle parole senza effectò.”
78. Lorenzo da Pesaro to Francesco Sforza, 27 October 1464, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 56: “Per certo sua Sta parla molto bene ma le parole sono diverse dalli facti.”
79. It was only under Innocent VIII and Alexander VI when protectorships were openly admitted by the popes. See W.E. Wilkie, *The Cardinal Protectors of England: Rome and the Tudors before the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 8–9.
80. These words reported in a letter from Bartolomeo Marasca to Ludovico Gonzaga, 17 October 1464, Rome, ASMa, AG, AE—Roma, b.842. “[N]on ha bono stomacho Gonzhaga.”
81. Ammannati especially resented Paul’s love of luxury and fondness for fine art. He wrote: “Pontifex Paule est tibi ut video: magna aeternitas cupido. Praedicare de te optas sequentia saecula!” Cited in Zabughin, pp. 92–93. Masotti has noted that several of the alleged plotters of the 1468 humanist “conspiracy” against Paul II were familiars of *Pieschi* cardinals: Petreio of Ammannati, Platina of Gonzaga, and Glauco Condulmer of Roverella. Masotti, p. 190.

82. In November 1470, Lorenzo de' Medici sent Gentile Becchi to the Curia, and he drew upon the support of Cardinal Ammanati in negotiating his way around the curial landscape. L. de' Medici, *Lettere*, vol. II, ed. R. Fubini (Florence; Giunti, 1977), p. 237.
83. Agostino Rossi to Francesco Sforza, 22 June 1465, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 57.
84. Jacopo d'Arezzo to Barbara Gonzaga, 9 July 1466, Rome, ASMA, AG, AE—Roma, b.843.
85. Among many examples, Jacopo Trotti wrote on 27 September 1469 that he had asked the pope "che non vesperiasse tanto il ambassatori [of Venice] che havessero a stare malcontenti e de mala voglia." They were upset because the pope was repeatedly criticizing Venice for its failure to aid in the pope's Rimini campaign, and because they believed his threat to call upon John of Anjou to be a "pacia." ASMO, ASE, CA—Roma, B. 1.
86. *Lettere*, vol. II, p. 119. Letter to Lorenzo de' Medici of 7 April 1470: "in secreto è pocho amore, immo ranchore assai." For more on the strained relations between Venice and Paul as pope, see I. Robertson, "Pietro Barbo," pp. 157–71.
87. Jacopo Trotti to Borso d'Este, 19 September 1467, Rome, ASMO, ASE, AE—Roma, b.1: "lo occhio destro del Papa."
88. Andrews, p. 39.
89. On the capitulation, see P. Partner, *The pope's men: the papal civil service in the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 35.
90. G. Chittolini, "Introduction" in G. Sensini, ed., *Roma capitale (1447–1527)* (Rome: Ministero per I beni culturali e ambientali, 1994), p. 2.
91. Jacopo Trotti to Borso d'Este, 24 September 1468, Rome, ASMO, ASE, AE—Roma, b.1. "... littere freschissime da Franza."
92. Jacopo Trotti to Borso d'Este, 27 September 1467, Rome, ASMO, ASE, AE—Roma, b.1.
93. Antonio da Bracello to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 1 March 1471, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 67.
94. See, for example, Lorenzo da Pesaro to Dukes of Milan, 10 December 1466, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 61. Lorenzo and Agostino Rossi spent four hours with the Cardinal of Pavia, who gave them an exhaustive report of all he had heard concerning the machinations of Bartolomeo Colleoni, and the plight of Scanderbeg in his fight against the Turks in Albania (whose plight he described as "desperato").
95. Lorenzo da Pesaro remarked that the cardinals of Rouen and Pavia seemed to be out of papal favour and this meant that their influence was of limited use in securing an audience with the pope. Agostino Rossi and Lorenzo da Pesaro to Dukes, 23 December 1466, Rome. On the tension between the Pieschi and the Pauleschi, see Pastor, p. 124.
96. Agostino Rossi to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 22 September 1467, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 63. The Bishop was one of eight appointed to the cardinalate on 18 September.

97. Otto da Caretto to Francesco Sforza, 9 October 1464, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 56.
98. “Secretary ce sono messer Goro et messer Leonardo Dathi fiorentino, ma in Gororo pocho se impaza.” Otto da Caretto to Francesco Sforza, 9 October 1464, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 56.
99. According to Sacromoro Sacromoro in a letter to Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza of 21 November 1470, Florence, ASMi, AS, PE—Firenze, Cart. 280. “Sempre fo capitale inimico a la caja di Medici.”
100. Otto da Caretto to Francesco Sforza, 9 October 1464, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 56. In this letter, Otto lists for the Duke all of those in the curial community who up to that point had secured offices and enjoyed close communication with the pope. He also lists those who had been appointed as governors in the various cities of the papal states and the chief military commanders whom the pope had appointed.
- In a letter of 28 October, 1464, Stefano Nardini wrote to Francesco Sforza that he had communicated to Otto (whom he described as *servius prudens et fidelis*) the substance of “a very secret and very long” (he speculated that it lasted between three and four hours) conversation he had alone with the pope. Stefano Nardini to Francesco Sforza, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 56.
101. Agostino Rossi to Galeazzo Maria Sforza and Bianca Maria Sforza, 8 November 1466, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 61.
102. Agostino Rossi and Lorenzo da Pesaro to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 16 January 1467, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 61. Lapo da Castiglionchio’s *De curiae commodis* suggests it was this way at the Curia in his own day. He tells us that “Wherever you are in the curia, then, you hear some bit of news. Wherever you turn, you happen on the conversational circles, talks, speeches, and tall tales of men who of their own accord run to meet you as you arrive. They ask you whether you have heard anything. They talk about what they themselves know, even to an unwilling listener, and also extemporaneously make up some things that seem probable. Even if these things are untrue, they nevertheless give pleasure for a little while, under the guise of truth, as long as they are not known to be falsehoods.” (“Ubicunque igitur sis in curia, novi aliquid audias. Quocunque te vertas, in circulos, colloquia, sermones, et confabulationes hominum incidas, qui adveniunt tibi ultro occurrant, qui abs te nunquid audieris percontentur, qui vel invito quae ipsi noverint nunciant, nonnulla etiam ex tempore quae probabilia videantur confingant, quae, tamen si vera non sint, tantisper tamen, dum nesciantur, specie veritatis oblectant.”) Celenza, pp. 174–175.
103. See, for example, Jacopo Trotti’s letter of 8 August 1470, ASMO, ASE, CA—Roma, b.1.
104. Agostino Rossi to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 3 February 1468, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 64.
105. This league should not be confused with the *lega generale* that was first formed in 1455 between all of the major Italian states. On the role of the smaller *leghe particolari*, see N. Rubinstein, “Das politische System Italiens in der zweiten Hälfte des 15.

- Jahrhunderts" in P. Moraw, ed., *'Bundnissysteme' une Außpolitik im späteren Mittelalter* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1988), pp. 105–119.
106. See for example, the instructions of Galeazzo Maria Sforza to Lorenzo di Pesaro, 14 February 1468, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 64.
  107. Jacopo D'Arezzo to Barbara Gonzaga, 9 July 1466, Rome, ASMa, AG, CA—Roma, b.843.
  108. Agostino Rossi to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 20 May 1471, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 67.
  109. Jacopo d'Arezzo to Barbara Gonzaga, 14 March 1466, Rome, ASMa, AG, AE—Roma, b.843.
  110. Jacopo Fillipo Dovono to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 10 May 1471, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 67.
  111. Jacopo d'Arezzo to Barbara Gonzaga, 7 July 1466, Rome, ASMa, AG, AE—Roma, b.843.
  112. Giovanni Bianchi references this source in a letter of 15 February 1468 to Galeazzo Maria Sforza; and Agostino also describes this source in a letter of the same day. ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 64.
  113. Jacopo d'Arezzo to Ludovico Gonzaga, 13 November 1464, Rome, ASMa, AG, AE—Roma, b.843.
  114. Among many other examples, Otto da Caretto to Francesco Sforza, 1 September 1464, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart.56, in which he reports that he had heard 'per bona via' that Paul II wanted to hire Marquis Ludovico Gonzaga as captain general of the papal forces. This proved to be untrue. For more on the use of unnamed sources of information by fifteenth-century ambassadors, see P. Dover, "Good information, bad information and misinformation in fifteenth-century Italian diplomacy," in M. Crane, R. Raiswell, and M. Reeves, eds. *Shell Games. Studies in Scams, Frauds and Deceits (1300–1650)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).
  115. 19 May 1471, Nicodemo to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Rome, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 64. "chi sa assai de la mente del papa."
  116. There were exceptions, such as the Protonotary Rocca, the ambassador of the King of Naples. On Rocca, see P. Dover, "Royal Diplomacy in Renaissance Italy: Ferrante d'Aragona and His Ambassadors," *Mediterranean Studies* 14 (2005).
  117. *Lettere*, Vol I, ed. R. Fubini (Florence: Giunti, 1977), p. 312. "Priego Idio ce ne daga un migliore."