



## Papacy

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The papacy is the monarchy by which the Roman Catholic Church is governed. The head of the Church is called *papa*--that is, father--in Latin because he is believed to be the spiritual parent of all the faithful. The Pope is entrusted with absolute authority over all aspects of the Catholic Church, including temporal as well as spiritual matters.

Like his immediate predecessor John Paul II, the current pope, Benedict XVI, fiercely denounces homosexual acts. Both John Paul and Benedict have claimed that their declarations on homosexuality accord with papal pronouncements over the course of many centuries. However, no popes prior to John Paul condemned same-sex love with the vigor and consistency that he and Benedict have.

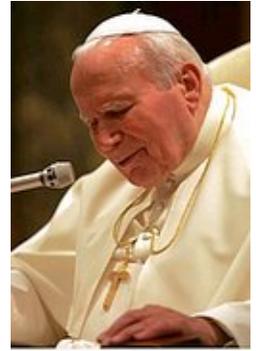
It was only in the twelfth century that popes began to encourage systematic enforcement of prohibitions against homosexual acts. Even after that time, the papacy often revealed, in practice, a more tolerant attitude toward sexual "deviance" than did secular authorities and the general membership of the Church. Among the popes, there are a few who can be described in modern terminology as being notably "gay friendly." In addition, at least four pontiffs seem to have enjoyed the physical, as well as spiritual, love of other men.

### The Origins and Scope of the Institution

According to Roman Catholic interpretation of certain Biblical passages (such as John 21: 15-17), Jesus Christ appointed Saint Peter the first Pope. All subsequent popes participate in the Apostolic Succession from Peter, which forms the basis of their claims to spiritual authority. Among the titles given to the pope is Bishop of Rome; the seat of his authority as bishop is Saint John Lateran, not Saint Peter's. By around 300, the Bishop of Rome had succeeded in gaining ascendancy over other ecclesiastical leaders; his supreme spiritual authority was acknowledged in a series of pronouncements of Church Councils in the first few centuries of the Christian era.

The process for choosing popes has varied greatly during history. Throughout the first millennium of the Church, the Holy Roman Emperor played an important role in the selection, and other secular authorities sometimes claimed the right to participate in the process. A decree of 1059 established that the pope was to be elected only by cardinals, but final approval of their choice was given to various secular authorities until 1139. In 1274, a Church Council established the current procedures for selection by a two-thirds vote of the Conclave of Cardinals, required to assemble in Rome ten days after the death of a pontiff.

Popes were not regarded as infallible until 1870, when a Church Council made official dogma the belief that all of their pronouncements on spiritual matters were without error. Also in 1870, the Pope surrendered control of the secular government of most of the territory of the Papal States. At the height of its political



Pope John Paul II (top) and his successor Benedict XVI (above) have vigorously condemned homosexual acts. Image of Pope Benedict XVI was created by Wikimedia Commons contributor blues\_brother and appears under the GNU Free Documentation License 1.2.

power in the mid-sixteenth century, the papacy controlled most of central Italy (approximately 44,000 square kilometers) and some smaller territories outside the Italian peninsula.

Until 1929, popes refused to recognize the incorporation of Rome into the unified Italian nation and declared themselves "voluntary prisoners" within the walls of the Vatican. The Lateran Treaty, signed on February 11, 1929 by Pope Pius XI and dictator Benito Mussolini, established Vatican City (a territory of about 109 acres) as an independent, sovereign political state within Rome.

Women are not allowed to assume the office of the papacy. However, from the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries, several treatises claimed that a woman, popularly called Pope Joan, had governed the Church. According to these sources, she disguised herself as a man and ruled as John VIII, for slightly more than 25 months, from 855 to 858; she was supposed to have died in the process of giving birth during a procession through the streets of Rome.

The accounts of Pope Joan were widely accepted during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and were even endorsed by the ecumenical Council of Constance, 1414-18. However, since the sixteenth century, the Catholic Church has maintained that this pope never existed.

### **Recent Papal Pronouncements on Homosexuality**

Elected on April 19, 2005, Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger, b. April 16, 1927) already has established the demonization of homosexual relations as one of the primary themes of his papacy. Acting under his direction, the Pontifical Council on the Family issued on April 22, a mere three days after his ascendancy, a condemnation of the legalization of same-sex marriage in Spain as "inhuman" and "profoundly iniquitous." This official statement threatened to excommunicate any Spanish government employees who fulfilled the provisions of the law legitimizing same-sex marriages.

In taking this action, Benedict was affirming policies that he helped to formulate during the reign of his predecessor John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła, 1920-2005; elected Pope, October 16, 1978). Appointed Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1981, Ratzinger wrote *On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, a Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which was issued with papal endorsement on October 1, 1986. The longest and harshest critique of homosexuality to date, this Letter characterized the propensity to love others of the same sex as a "strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil."

Further, this document demanded that all the faithful oppose any civil legislation that would grant civil rights (including freedom from job discrimination) to homosexual persons. Individuals inclined to homosexuality ideally would live in isolation, imitating Christ's example by willingly accepting suffering. Because of their supposedly inherent propensity to sin, homosexuals were to be discouraged from meeting one another except in situations in which the evil of their "affliction" was emphasized.

In addition, the letter maintained that the proliferation of homosexuality "may seriously threaten the lives and well-being of a large number of people." Generally, the latter assertion has been interpreted as an allusion to AIDS, but this remark may refer also to the proliferation of violence and breakdown of social order, which, according to the letter, would inevitably result from legalization of homosexual acts. The letter on homosexual persons develops ideas presented more briefly in the *Declaration on Certain Questions of Sexual Ethics*, issued by the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith on December 29, 1975.

Beginning in the 1990s, John Paul II condemned homosexuality with increasing frequency. On July 31, 1999, he ordered the Americans Father Robert Nugent and Sister Jeannine Gramick to halt their pastoral work in the gay and lesbian communities because they did not emphasize sufficiently "the intrinsic evil of homosexual acts and the objective disorder of the homosexual inclination."

After 1994, when the European Parliament encouraged member states to legalize same-sex unions, John Paul spoke frequently about the "attack on the family" allegedly posed by gay marriage. On August 1, 2003, he issued a letter to all Catholic bishops requiring that educational programs in all Catholic schools and churches make it clear that all gay unions are an "attack upon God."

### **Papal Encyclicals on Sexuality, Issued during the Modern Era**

Since the late nineteenth century, the papacy has been preoccupied with sexual matters. A series of encyclicals, issued since 1880, articulated a distinctive Catholic system of sexual ethics. According to these encyclicals, any physical expressions of love outside of (and, under some circumstances, within) Catholic marriage are condemned. None of these documents explicitly name homosexual acts, although they may be implied, for example in the "basest evils," discussed by Pius X.

In the first of these encyclicals, *On Christian Marriage*, issued on February 10, 1880, Pope Leo XIII asserted that civil disorder and widespread crime would result from the replacement of the sacrament of marriage by a civil union, which could be terminated by divorce. Further, he maintained that carnal lust could have no role in Catholic marriages.

In the encyclical *On Chaste Marriage*, issued on December 31, 1930, Pius XI affirmed more strongly the dangers posed by lust. Thus, he asserted that sex, even within the context of marriage, should never be utilized as a source of pleasure, and he condemned nonreproductive sex as a manifestation of a grave moral disorder. *On Holy Virginity*, issued on May 25, 1954 by Pius XII, placed virginity above marriage and emphasized the negative aspects of all sexuality, affirming that sexual intercourse should take place only within marriage with the explicit goal of procreation.

Among the documents issued by Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et spes* (Joy and Hope, December 7, 1965) presented a somewhat more positive view of sex, describing it as a source of joy and consolation within a monogamous, consecrated Catholic marriage.

In *On the Regulation of Birth* (July 25, 1968), Paul VI presented a "mixed" message about sexuality. He recognized that pleasure derived from sexual acts could contribute to the solidity of the family, and he authorized the "rhythm" method of birth control. Yet, he also prohibited artificial birth control, praised the ideal of chastity, and warned against any sexual acts outside of marriages consecrated by the Catholic Church.

John Paul II and Benedict have reverted to many of the ideas concerning the moral dangers posed by sexuality that were emphasized by modern popes before Vatican II. However, they have focused specifically upon the supposed evils of homosexuality, which had not been explicitly considered in the encyclicals of their predecessors.

### **Historical Background**

During the late antique period, a wave of asceticism spread throughout the Mediterranean area and Western Europe. As a result, homosexual acts, prostitution, and other expressions of sexuality outside of marriage were criminalized. On the basis of evidence assembled by Boswell and other recent historians, it appears that the popes were not leaders in this process and that they sometimes showed more tolerance of sexual "deviance" than other secular and ecclesiastical authorities.

Thus, the ecclesiastical writer Tertullian (about 160-225) harshly criticized Pope Callistus I (d. 223) for his failure to condemn sodomy. The Council of Elvira, an influential council of Iberian Catholic leaders meeting on the site of the modern Spanish city of Granada in 305-06, formulated the first official Church prohibitions of same-sex sexual intercourse; the council recommended that men who engaged in sexual activities with boys should be excommunicated.

The Roman Emperor Valerian established the penalty of death for homosexual acts. The Code of the Emperor Justinian (529) also defined sodomy as a capital crime but recommended that the death penalty be enforced only when torture and other devices failed to inspire penitence and abandonment of these acts. Most medieval penitential books and other religious manuals, produced after approximately 529, support these secular legal codes and endorse harsh penalties for homosexual acts. However, the most severe punishments were seldom enforced during the first millennium.

Saint Peter Damian (1007-1072) is among those who condemned supposed papal leniency to "sins against nature," including masturbation, homosexual orgies, and heterosexual anal sex. In the treatise *Book of Gomorrah*, which he presented to the Council of Rome (1048-51), Damian urged that all who were implicated in homosexual acts be executed. However, Pope Leo IX rejected some of Damian's proposals, insisting that all should be given the opportunity to redeem themselves through penitence and that children should never be subjected to the death penalty.

Boswell has discovered that, during the first six centuries of the Church, several popes authorized liturgical manuals that included ceremonies for same-sex, as well as heterosexual, marriages. A few manuals incorporating same-sex marriages appear to date from as late as the twelfth century, and there are indications that same-sex marriage ceremonies, recorded in these books, were performed secretly in Rome as late as the sixteenth century.

According to Boswell, Christian same-sex marriages may have evolved out of earlier friendship ceremonies, and they may have been retained partly because Christian marriage initially was regarded primarily as an expression of passionate "spiritual friendship." The fourth-century biographies of a male couple, Saints Poyeuct and Nearchos, are among the early Christian sources that celebrate the committed love experienced within consecrated same-sex marriages.

In the early Christian era, monks seem to have frequently participated in same-sex marriage ceremonies; however, by around 580, various ecclesiastical authorities, including some popes, acted to establish regulations prohibiting monks from pledging friendship in this way.

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in order to strengthen both the spiritual and political authority of the Catholic Church in the face of accusations of moral laxness, popes and other officials sought to impose strict chastity on clergy. This effort encompassed both homosexual and heterosexual acts. Thus, for instance, in 1203, Pope Innocent III instituted an investigation into clerical sodomy in Mâcon, and, in 1231, Pope Gregory IX ordered a crackdown on both homosexual and heterosexual acts by priests in Germany.

However, despite such highly publicized attacks upon sodomy practiced by the clergy and a sometimes harsh rhetoric, the papacy generally revealed in practice a relatively tolerant attitude to sexual "deviation." Within the Papal States, penalties against sodomy were enforced less rigorously than in many other territories. By the fifteenth century, Rome had developed a vibrant subculture of men who enjoyed sexual relationships with other men. (The situation of women in Rome is less well documented.)

Thus, throughout the early modern era, men found refuge in Rome from the harsh punishment of sodomy, which was more "routine" in northern Europe and which was also vigorously prosecuted in Spain and Portugal during the Inquisition of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Although popes at least acquiesced in the prosecutions under the Inquisition, the persecution of sodomites probably resulted from local animus and zeal rather than from directives from Rome. Protestant reformers consistently condemned papal toleration of homosexual acts.

### **"Gay friendly" Popes**

A few Popes displayed notable tolerance for homosexual acts. "Lax" enforcement of policies against sodomy

seems to have been motivated by a desire to protect specific family members or important political allies. Unfortunately, on the basis of present research, it is uncertain to what extent papal leniency extended to the entire population. Because this topic has not yet been investigated thoroughly, it seems possible that additional pontiffs deserve mention under this category.

Paul III (Alessandro Farnese, 1468-1549; reigned 1534-49) protected his son, Pier Luigi Farnese (1503-47), whom he legitimized after his election to the papacy. Recently discovered documents lend credibility to widespread rumors about Pier Luigi's homosexual acts. For instance, in a letter of October 17, 1535, Paul III chastised his son for having taken his male lovers with him on an official mission to the Holy Roman Empire. Documents in Vatican archives support the assertions of a letter, written by the Florentine ambassador at the papal court on January 14, 1540, which maintained that Pier Luigi had ordered the Roman police to track down a young man who spurned his advances.

Near the beginning of his reign, Paul III made his son the head of the papal military forces. In 1537, there was widespread scandal following the siege of Fano, when Pier Luigi Farnese was supposed to have raped the bishop of the city, Cosimo Gheri (1513-37), and several other clerics. Nevertheless, Paul III continued to bestow honors on his son throughout the rest of his reign. Thus, in 1545, he separated Piacenza and Parma from the Papal States and converted them into a hereditary duchy for his son.

The case of Carlo Carafa (1517-1566) reveals that popes did not always extend to their relations the sort of toleration that Pier Luigi Farnese received. Shortly after his election, Paul IV (Giovanni Pietro Carrafa, 1476-1559; reigned 1555-59) appointed Carlo Carafa as Cardinal Nephew, an official post, equivalent to Secretary of State (until abolished in 1692). Thus, Carafa played an important role in the complex political maneuverings of the Papal States with other European powers.

Throughout much of his reign, Paul IV denied the widespread rumors about Carlo's homosexual liaisons, but, finally convinced of their accuracy, he exiled him from Rome in January 1559. Returning to Rome shortly after his uncle's death, Carafa was immediately arrested for a range of crimes, including not only sodomy but also murder and promotion of Protestantism. His execution in 1566 was considered at the time to have been motivated primarily by such political factors as his anti-Spanish policies, rather than by his homosexual liaisons.

Shortly after his election, Paul V (Camillo Borghese, 1550-1621; reigned 1605-21) exiled Stefano Pignatelli (1578-1623) from Rome in response to rumors about Pignatelli's homosexual relationship with his Cardinal Nephew, Scipione Caffarelli Borghese (1576/9-1633). However, Paul V quickly relented and allowed Pignatelli to return to Rome, supposedly because his nephew was so deeply distressed by the enforced separation. Subsequently, Pignatelli lived for various extended periods in the Borghese Palace; Scipione gave him various ecclesiastical honors and even arranged for him to be appointed Cardinal shortly before his uncle's death.

Paul V indulged his nephew's lifestyle in other ways. For example, on July 31, 1607, he ordered 105 pictures confiscated from the artist Cavaliere d'Arpino (for tax arrears) and delivered to his nephew. Among the pictures that Scipione acquired through this seizure were two important early explicitly homoerotic works by Caravaggio (both 1593, still in Galleria Borghese): a probable self-portrait, usually called *Sick Bacchus* and *A Boy with a Basket of Fruit*.

At his nephew's urging, Paul also gave important commissions to Caravaggio (1571-1610), who boldly fused homoeroticism with spirituality in his altarpieces. The pope allowed Scipione to appropriate for his collection the *Madonna and Child with St. Anne*, a large altarpiece commissioned in 1605 for a chapel in Saint Peter's. However, Paul publicly expressed his intention of placing Caravaggio in charge of the decoration of this recently completed church building. This plan was never put into effect because Caravaggio fled Rome shortly after murdering Rannuccio Tommasoni on May 28, 1606. Yet, it is tempting to speculate what the basilica might be like had it been filled with narrative paintings created from a queer

perspective.

In 1655, Pope Alexander VII (Fabio Chigi, 1599-1667; reigned, 1655-67) wholeheartedly welcomed Christina, Queen of Sweden (1626-89), to Rome. Shortly after her abdication, Christina converted to Catholicism and resolved to move to the spiritual capital of her new faith. Throughout his reign, Alexander praised her conversion and otherwise paid homage to Christina in public ceremonies.

Nevertheless, her "indecorous" behavior restricted his efforts to exploit her as an inspirational model of pious behavior. Christina seems to have enjoyed the many rumors circulating about her sexual affairs with both women and men. Furthermore, she decorated her Roman residence, the Palazzo Riario, with erotic paintings of female nudes. Yet, despite her breaches of pervasive social conventions, Christina as a famous Protestant convert was granted protection and even occasional financial support by the papacy.

### **Queer Popes**

There is sufficient documentary evidence to suggest that at least four popes probably enjoyed close physical relationships with other men. As is the case with many historical figures, most of the available sources characterize homosexual liaisons in a very negative fashion and intend their assertions to discredit their subjects. However, in all four cases, statements are presented in various types of documents, including diaries and letters of papal courtiers and of other ecclesiastics based in Rome and reports by ambassadors from Catholic countries.

Both within Catholic and Protestant circles, there were widely spread rumors about the homosexual liaisons of Sixtus IV (Francesco Della Rovere, 1414-84; reigned 1471-84); many of these were recorded by the chronicler Stefano Infessura (c. 1440-1500). Among the young men whom Sixtus is supposed to have favored is Giovanni Sclafenato (d. 1497), whom he appointed Cardinal and bishop of Parma. The inscription on Sclafenato's tomb in Parma Cathedral--declaring that he was appointed Cardinal because of "his loyalty, industry, and other gifts of the spirit and the body"--lends support to allegations that his physical endowments helped to inspire the favors that the Pope extended to him.

Despite the scandalous rumors spread about his personal conduct, Sixtus was an effective leader, and he succeeded both in strengthening the temporal power of the Catholic Church and in halting temporarily the advances of Protestantism. He is responsible for establishing as dogma several fundamental aspects of Catholic belief, including the sanctity of Christ before the Resurrection.

Today, he is perhaps best remembered as an outstanding patron of the arts; he was responsible for initiating the physical rehabilitation of the city of Rome, which was continued by pontiffs in the early sixteenth century. He undertook the construction of the Sistine Chapel (1471-80) and the decoration of its walls (1481-2) with frescoes of biblical scenes by leading artists of the day, including Pietro Perugino, Sandro Botticelli, Domenico Ghirlandaio, and Cosimo Rosselli.

Rumors that Pope Julius II (Giuliano Della Rovere, 1443-1513; reigned 1503-13) was involved in numerous homosexual liaisons are reported both in Protestant polemical tracts and in official reports submitted by ambassadors from friendly Catholic powers. Although the Protestant sources must be regarded as inherently biased, the frequency of these accounts suggests that they may be accurate. Julius's enthusiastic patronage of Michelangelo's homoerotic depictions of the male figure also indicates that he may have fully appreciated the physical beauties of men.

Appointed Cardinal in 1471 by his uncle, Sixtus IV, Della Rovere revealed great diplomatic skill in his negotiations with various European powers. As Pope, Julius acted as a very effective general for the papal armies, and, by 1508, he recaptured the Italian region of Romagna for the Papal States. Through his patronage of various artistic projects, Julius hoped that Catholic Rome would regain and even surpass the splendor of the city at the height of the Roman Empire.

As part of his renovation of the fabric of the city, Julius ordered in 1506 that the Early Christian Basilica of Saint Peter's be demolished and replaced by a new structure, designed by Donato Bramante (1444-1516), who was the first Renaissance architect to create structures with the sense of weight and strong physical presence of ancient Roman monuments. Bramante's Tempietto (1502, Rome) had been the first Renaissance structure to employ ancient architectural orders in a correct fashion. For Saint Peter's, Bramante envisioned an immense centralized structure with a Greek cross plan. Among the elements based on ancient prototypes was the saucer dome, inspired by the Pantheon, Rome (118-25).

When he undertook the construction of the New Saint Peter's, Julius resolved that his tomb would be placed directly underneath the central dome. Michelangelo (1475-1564) envisioned a monumental funerary structure with three stories, decorated with forty-seven life-size statues. Constant changes in plans, required first by Julius and subsequently by his heirs as well as by successive popes who did not want his monument to detract from theirs, were among the many factors that inhibited the realization of the original plans. However, Michelangelo had begun by 1513 the heroic, muscular figure of *Moses*, which was incorporated into the truncated version of the monument assembled in San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome, in 1545. Of uncertain meaning, sensuous nude figures, the *Rebellious Captive* and *Dying Captive* (1513-19, both Louvre, Paris), also were created for the tomb.

By the end of 1506, Julius compelled Michelangelo to undertake the Sistine Ceiling, even though the artist did not believe that he had sufficient talent to complete this project. Over the next two years, the final program for the ceiling was developed through often heated negotiations between the Pope and the artist. The nine narrative scenes down the center of the ceiling narrate the history of creation, the fall of the human race through original sin, and the establishment of a Covenant between God and the Chosen People, led by Noah. These panels are displayed in a fictive stone framework, which seems to have the weight of Bramante's actual structures. The figures became increasingly large in size, heroic in musculature, and dynamic in movement as work progressed from the chronologically later scenes of Noah toward the initial stages of Creation. Located approximately in the middle of the ceiling, the *Creation of Adam* visualizes a balance between human potential and divine power.

The program also includes enthroned figures of sibyls and prophets to the sides of the narrative panels. Sensual nude male figures are seated at the corners of the five smaller narrative panels. The meaning of these nudes is uncertain, but their homoerotic qualities cannot be denied. Insignia of the Pope's family, including oak leaves and acorns, are displayed throughout the ceiling.

Accounts about the homosexual liaisons of Julius's successor, Leo X (Giovanni de' Medici, 1474-1521; reigned 1513-21), are recorded in a variety of different types of contemporary sources, and they were repeated in historical accounts of the papacy published in the later sixteenth century. Having received an outstanding humanistic education, he was appointed Cardinal in 1492 by Innocent VIII. Beginning in 1508, he served Julius II as papal legate; in that capacity, he arranged for papal troops to invade Florence in order to secure the return of the Medici, who had been exiled from the city in 1497.

Unanimously elected Pope, Leo focused his energies upon the patronage of the arts and sciences. He established Greek colleges in Rome and Florence, promoted the study of Hebrew and Arabic writings, and gave strong support to printing. He funded extensive archaeological excavations, which uncovered the monumental antique statue of the river-god *Nile* (Vatican Museums) and other significant works, and he ordered the restoration of several important Early Christian churches, including Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome.

To give the city of Rome a more dignified appearance, Leo widened the streets and restored several public squares, including the Piazza del Popolo. In Florence, he commissioned Michelangelo to design a new façade for San Lorenzo (project design, 1516-19; never realized) and to undertake one of his most significant projects--the building and decoration of the New Sacristy of San Lorenzo, including Medici family

tombs (1519-34).

Julius III (Giovanni Maria Ciocchi Del Monte, 1487-1555) provoked a major scandal when, shortly after his election to the papacy on February 7, 1550, he appointed as Cardinal a young man widely reputed to be his lover: Innocenzo Del Monte (1532-77). According to the numerous accounts of their relationship, Julius was immediately attracted to Innocenzo when he met him (supposedly on the streets of Parma) in 1545 or 1546. Because Innocenzo's father was uncertain, Giovanni Del Monte arranged for Innocenzo to be adopted by his brother, Baldovino Ciocchi del Monte, duke of Camerino.

Julius regarded Innocenzo as one of his closest advisors of his papacy despite the latter's lack of experience in diplomatic affairs. A variety of scandals plagued Innocenzo after Julius's death, and he generally has been portrayed very negatively by historians. Nevertheless, the sincerity of the commitment of Julius and Innocenzo to one another is suggested by the fact that they were buried next to one another in the Del Monte chapel in San Pietro in Montorio, Rome (the church in which Julius II also was buried).

Although his own behavior provoked the mockery of Protestants, Julius III made continuous and successful efforts towards Church reform, ordering the resumption of the Council of Trent and (ironically) initiating a program to ensure that benefices would be granted solely on the basis of merit. He worked to reform and expand the University of Rome, and he was active as a patron of the arts. For example, he gave significant commissions to the musician Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525-94).

Among Julius's numerous artistic undertakings was the decoration of the family chapel in San Pietro in Montorio with statues by Bartolomeo Ammanati (1511-92), a leading follower of Michelangelo. In the outskirts of Rome, he built the luxurious Villa Giulia (1551-53), which is organized as an unusual sequence of structures and courtyards of varying shapes. Much of the original decoration by Giorgio Vasari (1511-74), Giovanni da Udine (1487-1564), and other artists has been lost, but some fragments of homoerotic mythological scenes are preserved. The villa may have been a retreat where Julius III could indulge his love of other men without censure.

In various ways, Sixtus IV, Julius II, Leo X, and Julius III contributed to the strength of the Catholic Church in difficult periods of its history. Their achievements belie the efforts of Benedict XVI and John Paul II to characterize those who engage in homosexual acts as a danger to the stability of the Church and of society as a whole.

A review of the history of the Church suggests that the demonization of homosexuality was not a primary concern of the papacy in previous centuries. Indeed, at least a few popes displayed notable tolerance of homosexuality, which challenges the harsh attitudes of the current papacy.

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