

BERNARDO AND VIERI GUADAGNI AND THE THREE POPES

Bernardo (1367-1434) and Vieri (1369-1426) Guadagni were two brothers, sons of Vieri Guadagni. Vieri Guadagni senior died very young, in 1368, a few months before Vieri Junior's birth. Bernardo and Vieri were two years apart and had no other siblings because of their father's premature death. Bernardo and Vieri both married, Bernardo three times, because he remained a widower twice, and Vieri two times, he was a widower once. Bernardo had seven children, and Vieri ten. We all descend, Guadagni, Torrigiani and Guadagni offshoots (like me), from one of Vieri's sons, Simone.

Bernardo and Vieri both held very important positions in the government of Florence and in the command of its army. Historian Passerini states that few citizens were employed by the Republic as much as Vieri was. He continuously had important offices and died gloriously for his city while storming the enemy fortress of Castelnuovo, close to Arezzo. At 57 years old, he charged bravely at the head of his soldiers, encouraging them to follow him up the enemy walls, until a bombard ball hit him, causing his death.

His death was considered a public misfortune by the Republic of Florence. The city councils ordered that a most stately funeral be organized and paid for by the city, and that all the government officials accompany his bier to his tomb, in the Guadagni chapel of S. Martino in the church of Santissima Annunziata.

Among the many public charges they occupied, both brothers were elected Gonfalonier of Justice (President of the Republic of Florence), Bernardo twice, and Vieri once. While Bernardo was Gonfalonier for the second time, he was able to have the powerful rival Cosimo de' Medici, arrested, imprisoned and sent in exile for five years.

In the meantime, between the years 1378 and 1414, there was the "Great Western Schism" in the Catholic Church, where for a while there were two popes, each one asserting to be the legitimate one, and then three. Both Guadagni brothers had contacts, directly or indirectly, with some of these popes.

In 1305, a French Pope from Lyon, Clement V, had been elected. He feared going to Rome because he heard that a strong anti-French feeling, due also to the long antagonism between his predecessor Pope Boniface VIII, and the King of France Philip IV, was predominant there. However he did not want to look like the puppet of the French King. So he moved to Avignon, a French town who, at that time, belonged to the Holy Roman Empire, only a few miles from the French border. And he remained there all his life. Slowly all the Roman Curia,

including the Cardinals, of whom a majority was French, joined him there. At his death, another French pope was elected, and the papacy remained in Avignon.

Let us remember that when the Guadagni Family moved to France, to flee the anger of Cosimo de' Medici returning from the exile that Bernardo Guadagni condemned him to, Avignon was their second favorite French town, after Lyon. There are two beautiful large Guadagni Palaces there, one in Rue Doree' ("Golden Street") thus called in honor of the great Guadagni wealth, and many Guadagni castles all around the city. For over a century, the Guadagni were also the rulers of a little independent country, called the "Duchy of Gadagne", named after them, a few miles from Avignon. I had the privilege of visiting the two beautiful palaces in Avignon, several of their castles, and of lodging for a week-end in the castle of the Dukes of Gadagne, personally invited by its actual owner.

However, some of the French popes felt bad that the "Bishop of Rome", as the Pope is called, had abandoned Rome. So in 1378, French Pope Gregory XI returned to Rome. But Rome was so violent and disorderly, after having been without a ruler for so many years, that the Pope gave up and decided to return to Avignon. However he suddenly fell ill and died while still in Rome.

The cardinals then decided to elect a pope in Rome. At this, the Roman mob became excited but also violent and loud: "We want an Italian Pope, they yelled, enough with the French...!" So an Italian pope, Urban VI, (1378-1389) was elected. Everybody thought Pope Urban VI, who had long been in the Church Administration, was just going to take care of business. Instead, immediately, Urban VI showed himself whimsical, haughty, suspicious and sometimes even choleric in his relations with the cardinals who had elected him. Worried about it, many cardinals said that the election of Urban VI was invalid, because influenced by the threatening Roman mob, and elected a Swiss Pope, Clement VII (1378-1394), who returned to Avignon. Pope Urban at Rome excommunicated Clement, and Pope Clement, from Avignon returned the favor.

Thus began the Great Schism. There were now two popes, two Colleges of Cardinals, two entire religious governments. They appointed rival bishops, collected double taxes, issued conflicting penances, and excommunicated one another's supporters. Each time a pope died, the cardinals of his city, Rome or Avignon, elected a new pope and the schism continued.

The pious of Christendom were shocked and dismayed, but most everyone was forced to choose sides. France and her allies (Scotland, most of Spain, and various German princes) supported the Avignon pope. England, Flanders, Portugal, the Holy Roman Emperor, Bohemia, Hungary and most German princes supported the Rome pope. Italy was divided, as ever, with the cities changing sides frequently.

In this huge European crisis, Bernardo and Vieri tried to do their best for the good of the Republic of Florence, for whose government they worked. In 1404, the new Roman Pope was Innocent VII, while the Avignon pope was Benedict XIII.

On January 25, 1405, with Jacopo Salviati, Bishop of Fiesole, Tommaso Sacchetti, and Lorenzo Ridolfi, Vieri was sent as ambassador to Pope Innocent VII. Innocent VII, born Cosimo de' Migliorati, was from a simple family of Sulmona, Abruzzi. He had been elected pope only a few months earlier, on October 17, 1404. Vieri was supposed to swear obedience to the Pontiff; exhort the Pope to allow the ambassadors of the Avignon Pope Benedict XIII to come to Rome and deal with him and thus bring peace to the Church; and finally to lament the fact that the Treasurer of Romagna, who was subject to the Pope, was protecting the Counts of Bagno and the Ubertini, old enemies of Florence. Vieri also asked the Pontiff not to oppose the just punishment that the city of Florence wanted to inflict on Bagno and Ubertini, who were considered "petty tyrants".

Vieri was 35 years old at that time, the Pope was 66. The idea of Vieri to allow the ambassadors of the French Pope into Rome was that hopefully an agreement could be reached by the two popes thus ending the schism that was dividing Christendom. However Pope Innocent VII had a strong Ghibelline party in Rome, against him, and he needed the help of the powerful King of Naples, Ladislaus, to protect him. And Ladislaus had no intentions to allow an agreement with the French Pope who favored his French cousin as a possible King of Naples instead of him. So, gently but firmly, the Pope refused Vieri's request.

When Vieri realized the Pope refused his first request because of fear of the reaction of King Ladislaus, he thought: "This young King of Naples (he was 8 years younger than Vieri) is ambitious and wants to have a political influence in Central Italy. I fear our paths will cross again..."

Eventually Pope Innocent VII died suddenly in Rome on November 6, 1406, after only two years of pontificate. He died so suddenly that there were rumors of foul play. A big mistake of his was to elevate his highly unsuitable nephew, Ludovico Migliorati, to the cardinalate. Ludovico was a famous mercenary general. In August 1405, Cardinal Ludovico waylaid eleven members of the obstreperous Roman partisans on their return from a conference with the Pope, and had them assassinated in his own house and their bodies thrown from the windows of the hospital of Santo Spirito into the street. There was an uproar. Pope, court and cardinals, including Ludovico, had to flee Rome. Only the army of the King of Naples, Ladislaus, was able to have them return to Rome. His successor was Pope Gregory XII (1406-1415).

In 1409, Cardinals from both sides decided to try and arrange a General Council in Pisa, to unify the papacy. In January 1409, Vieri was assigned to accompany Iacopo Gianfigliuzzi and Forese Sacchetti, as



Pope Clement V



Pope Urban VI



Pope Innocent VII



Antipope
Alexander V

ambassadors to the Marquis of Ferrara and other feudal lords of Lombardy to make arrangements for the Council that was to be held in Pisa. The Council was supposed to depose Pope Gregory XII and elect a successor, because Gregory XII did not seem to want to put an end to the schism that was dividing the church, in spite of the promises he had made when he was elected.

This matter caused a new war with King Ladislaus of Naples. In 1407, trying to taking advantage of the feebler personality of Pope Gregory XII, Ladislaus had invaded the Papal States. In 1408, he besieged Ostia, a Papal City close to Rome, to prevent a success of the French party in the schism between Gregory XII and the French Pope Benedict XIII. After a short siege, he captured the city by bribing the Papal commander, and he entered Rome on April 25th 1408.

Florence wanted Bologna as an ally against Ladislaus. Therefore they sent Vieri to Bologna, to offer help to Cardinal Baldassarre Cossa, legate of that city. In May 1408, Cardinal Cossa was one of the seven cardinals who deserted Pope Gregory XII, and in agreement with the cardinals of French Pope Benedict XIII, convened the Council of Pisa. Vieri also had to tell all the towns on the border of the Bolognese territory to send troops to Cardinal Cossa if the latter requested them.

When it was decided to wage all-out war with King Ladislaus, Vieri was recalled from Cutigliano, where he was captain of the mountains of the territory of Pistoia. With Iacopo Salviati, he was sent as Counselor and Commissary General of the army to Malatesta da Pesaro, Commander in Chief of the Florentine army. The campaign went well for the Republic of Florence. Not only did the Florentine army recapture Orvieto and Viterbo and most of the Roman territory for the Church, but they were also able to conquer Rome from the hands of Ladislaus. When the army of Malatesta entered the Eternal City, its inhabitants would have liked to have seen only the emblems of the Pope, i.e. the Papal Holy Keys, at the head of the army. However, upon Vieri's insistence, the Florentine soldiers came marching in behind the Red Lily flag of Florence.

Cardinal Cossa, from a noble but impoverished Neapolitan family, embraced in his youth a military career, but later forsook it for the service of the Church. He was worldly-minded, ambitious, crafty, unscrupulous, and immoral, a good soldier but no churchman. He played an important part however in the Council of Pisa. The Council deposed both Pope Gregory XII of Rome and Pope Benedict XIII of Avignon. Cardinal Cossa conducted the election of the new Pope, Alexander V. Alexander V, born Pietro Philarghi, grew up as a homeless beggar-boy in the Greek island of Creta, in the Eastern Mediterranean. However a discerning Capuchin friar gave him a good education, and he became a Franciscan. Later on he studied in Oxford and Paris, wrote and travelled, was several times Bishop of different cities. Because of his poor birth he was not tied to Kingly or noble families and was everybody's friend. So he was elected Pope. However Gregory XII and Benedict XIII did not give up their papacy so there were now three popes. Pope Alexander V remained in Bologna, under the protection of Cardinal Cossa because he was afraid of King Ladislaus who still had control of Rome.

In February 1410, after Malatesta and Vieri had recaptured Rome from Ladislaus, Vieri's brother, Bernardo Guadagni, was sent to Bologna as ambassador to Pope Alexander V. He was to tell the Pope that it would be wise for him to return to Rome, which mostly through Florentine efforts, had been reconquered from Ladislaus, King of Naples. Moreover this move would smother any hopes of success entertained by the partisans of Gregory XII, Alexander's rival for the Roman papal throne. Alexander V however was detained in Bologna by Cardinal Cossa and after only ten months of papacy he died there on May 3, 1410. Some people accused Cardinal Cossa of having poisoned him, but the accusations were soon discredited.

Supported by the King of France, who disliked the French Pope Benedict XIII, and by the City of Florence, Cardinal Cossa succeeded Pope Alexander V as Pope John XXIII. He was ordained a priest on May 24, 1410, and consecrated and crowned Pope on the following day

On April 11, 1411, with Iacopo Gianfigliuzzi, Michele Castellani and Gino Capponi, Bernardo Guadagni was elected to accompany Pope John XXIII from Bologna to Rome, throughout the Florentine territory.

In 1411, Vieri was sent as ambassador by the government of Florence to Carlo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini, to exhort him to make peace with Pope John XXIII, to recognize the Pontiff's authority and to stop molesting the territory of Bologna. This mission did not obtain the desired results. Malatesta pretended too much in return. However, Vieri was able to convince Malatesta to make peace with the Lord of Faenza.

In 1411, Pope John XXIII proclaimed a crusade against King Ladislaus, who was always supporting Pope Gregory XII, and authorized the sale of Religious indulgences to finance it. However, on June 14, 1412, a peace was signed between Pope John XXIII and Ladislaus. The Pope paid Ladislaus 75,000 florins and officially recognized him as King of Naples, instead of his French cousin. In exchange King Ladislaus stopped protecting Pope Gregory XII, expelled him from the Kingdom of Naples and moved him to Rimini.

However Pope John did not want to fulfill the financial requirements of the treaty. So in mid-May 1413, King Ladislaus marched northwards again. On June 8 his troops conquered and sacked Rome, and then conquered Northern Latium and Umbria. From there he was ready to attack Florence.

In June 1413, Bernardo Guadagni, along with Filippo Corsini, Iacopo Gianfigliuzzi and Michele Castellani, was sent to meet Pope John XXIII in Siena. The Pope had been driven from Rome by Ladislaus' army. Bernardo was supposed to express sympathy for his misfortune and to

offer the aid of the Republic of Florence in reinstating John XXIII to power. On the other hand, he was required to tell the Pope that he would not be allowed to enter Florence. The city did not want to incur the wrath of the King of Naples for letting the Supreme Pontiff enter its walls.

This cautious but ungenerous behavior was not sufficient to avoid King Ladislaus' anger. The King of Naples accused the Florentines of having given hospitality to the Pope in the villa of the Bishops of Florence near Montughi.

At this point, in August 1413, with Iacopo Gianfigliuzzi and Giovanni Serristori, Vieri was sent as an ambassador to King Ladislaus. He was to reproach the King for having made war against the Pope and for taking the territories of Campagna and Marittima and even the city of Rome away from him, forcing the Pope to flee. The Florentine ambassadors were to ask King Ladislaus to return Rome and the other occupied areas to Pope John XXIII. In return, Florence would become King Ladislaus' ally, and the Church and the city of Siena would join in the alliance. The clever Ladislaus did not refuse such offerings, pretending instead that he was willing to accept them. In return, he asked for some concessions he knew very well he could never have obtained otherwise. One of them was that the Republic of Venice be included in the league.

To that effect, Vieri was sent on an embassy to the senate of Venice, in February 1414. He was to try to convince Venice to join the alliance. He recalled how Florence had asked Pope John XXIII to become a peace mediator between Venice and the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund.

But in the meantime, King Ladislaus changed his mind, assembled a strong army, and marched against Florence. The Florentines were ill prepared to sustain a war against the powerful King of Naples. So they sent Vieri, along with Serristori, to Pope John XXIII, on May 19, 1414. Vieri was to explain to the Pope the danger Florence found itself in and to remind him that this danger was due mostly to the desire of the Republic of Florence to help him. He asked the Pope to satisfy Ladislaus and allow him to obtain the Vicariate of the regions of Campagna and Marittima. The Pope refused. Vieri had a hard time hiding his worries when he left the room. Now what?

Then, the government of Florence decided to make a peace treaty with King Ladislaus that would exclude the Pope. The peace treaty was soon concluded in June 1414, in which the interest of the Pope was not taken into consideration. However, Bernardo Guadagni was chosen to go to Bologna, where the Pope resided after having fled Rome, and recount what had happened to the Pontiff. He was also supposed to offer the apologies of the Republic of Florence for not having tried to help the Pope. Most of all, Florence did not want to have the Pope as an enemy, for the sake of having the King of Naples as a friend.

Antipope John XXIII



King Ladislaus of Naples

Holy Roman Emperor
Sigismund of Germany



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A month later, in July 1414, King Ladislaus suddenly fell ill. He was forced to return to Naples, where he died on August 6, 1414, at only 36 years of age. Rumours that he had been poisoned remain unproven: it is more likely that he fell due to an unceasing sexual activity. It seemed he had many concubines, whom he often changed. Even though he had been married three times, he left no legitimate children. He was succeeded by his sister Joan II of Naples. Bernardo remained two months in Bologna, trying to reconcile Pope John XXIII with Queen Joan.

In that same year, the German King Sigismund (later Holy Roman Emperor), tired of having three Popes with the ensuing confusion, called the Council of Constance, in Germany. The Council deposed the suspicious John XXIII, received the abdication of the gentle and timid Gregory XII, and finally dismissed the obstinate Benedict XIII of Avignon. On November 11, 1417, the assembly of cardinals elected Oddone Colonna, who took the name of Martin V. Thus ended the great schism of the West.

Eventually the Catholic Church has confirmed the legitimacy of the Popes of the Church of Rome, not of the ones of Avignon or of the Council of Pisa. So King Ladislaus of Naples, who supported Pope Gregory XII, was supporting a legitimate Pontiff, while the City of Florence and the Guadagni brothers were protecting the Antipope John XIII. Because the two Avignon Popes during the Schism and John XXIII were not recognized as popes by the Catholic Church, their pope names were later on adopted by other popes. For example, when Cardinal Roncalli, the one who called the Second Vatican Council, was elected Pope on October 28, 1958, he picked for himself the name John XXIII. In the sixteenth century, when elected pope, Cardinal Giulio de' Medici picked for himself the name of one of the Avignon popes, Clement VII. Obviously the official position of the Church was not yet confirmed at the time of the Schism and each Pope claimed to be the legitimate one.

The city of Bologna took advantage of the deposition of John XXIII and, guided by Battista da Cannadolo and helped by Braccio da Montone, rebelled against the Pope and declared its political independence from papal authority. The Florentines were quite pleased about this and, in February 1416, they sent Bernardo Guadagni and Giovanni Arnolfini to congratulate the citizens of Bologna and to offer the Republic of Florence's aid to maintain their regained freedom.

After the election of Pope Martin V, Cossa (ex Antipope John XXIII) submitted to the new pope on June 14, 1419, and was rewarded with a cardinal's hat on June 26. Although given the title of Cardinal Bishop of Tusculum, Cossa called himself "Cardinal of Florence". He died in Florence a few months later, on December 22, 1419. On his deathbed, Cossa asked Vieri Guadagni to be one of the four executors of his will, another one being Giovanni de' Medici, father of Cosimo de' Medici. The Republic of Florence trusted Vieri so fully that all the money left by the deceased clergyman was deposited in the Guadagni Bank.

Thus ended the Guadagni participation in the “Great Western Schism”.