

The Shrine of Heaven: The Organization of Curial Ceremony inside the Sistine Chapel in Late Quattrocento Rome

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Abstract. The following paper proposes an interpretation of the first pictorial program inside the Sistine Chapel on the basis of the development of Curial Ceremony. With the construction of a new chapel inside the Vatican Apostolic Palace, which effectively replaced the previous *cappella magna*, an ambitious program in stratifying the *Caeremoniale Romanae Curiae* according to Pope Sixtus IV's administration of the Roman Church through the construction and affirmation of papal ecclesiastical supremacy.

Keywords: Sixtus IV; Della Rovere; Curial Ceremony; Sandro Botticelli; Pietro Perugino; Pazzi Conspiracy; *potestas papalis*

[es] El Santuario del Cielo: La organización de la ceremonia curial en el interior de la Capilla Sixtina a finales del Quattrocento en Roma

Resumen. El siguiente trabajo propone una interpretación del primer programa pictórico en el interior de la Capilla Sixtina a partir del desarrollo de la Ceremonia Curial. Con la construcción de una nueva capilla dentro del Palacio Apostólico del Vaticano, que efectivamente reemplazó a la *cappella magna* anterior, un ambicioso programa de estratificación de la *Caeremoniale Romanae Curiae* según la administración del Papa Sixto IV de la Iglesia Romana a través de la construcción y afirmación de la supremacía eclesiástica papal.

Palabras clave: Sixto IV; Della Rovere; ceremonia curial; Sandro Botticelli; Pietro Perugino; conspiración Pazzi; *potestas papalis*.

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*For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God,
an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.
2 Corinthians 5:1*

*Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations;
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.
Isaiah 58:12*

1. Introduction

The construction of the Sistine Chapel was conceived as a substitution of the *cappella magna* inside the Apostolic Palace, whose architectural structures can be traced back to Urban V's pontificate in the fourteenth century, when the *cappella magna* had been used as a liturgical space in 1368 for the solemn celebration of St. Bridget of Sweden's canonization.

The still visible brick walls of the Sistine suggest that its structures were founded on the basis of the outer walls of the older and much smaller chapel. By constructing the Sistine Chapel on the foundations of the older *cappella magna* its interior irregular structures that conditioned the altar wall as well, where Michelangelo would paint his *Last Judgment*, eventually resulted in replacing a previous system of decoration that had essentially been designed to standardize the

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irregular structures through a fictive pictorial architecture.²

Another feature that confirms the construction of the Cappella Sistina on the foundations of the older *cappella magna* is offered by the papal insignia in the nearby sacristy. The emblem shows that of Pope Innocent VIII and therefore suggests that the completion of the sacristy occurred only after Pope Sixtus IV's death in 1484. Between the pontificates of Alexander VI and Julius II the sacristy was then altered numerous times. However, a later drawing by the architect Ottavio Mascarino from the Accademia di San Luca, which was made in association with Pope Gregory XIII's interventions in 1580, still designated the adjoining space as "Sixtus IV's Sacristy" (*Sacristia di Sisto IIII*).³ Furthermore, a small wall divided the original space from the staircase that Pope Sixtus V commissioned to be constructed in the later sixteenth century, facilitating a more convenient access to St. Peter's Basilica from the Apostolic Palace. In the narrow dividing strip of the original division of the wall, which would later be removed to allow a reconstruction of the cross vault by Innocent VIII, frescoes of wall paintings from the fifteenth century were found among the coat of arms of Innocent VIII placed in the center as well as installed on one of the marble foundation pillars. The coat of arms therefore allowed a dating of the sacristy after 1484, the year of Pope Sixtus IV's death. It also appears that Pope Alexander VI seems to have had plans to mark his interventions in the sacristy by adding his coat of arms showing the bull of the Borgias on the dividing wall between this space and the Sistine Chapel.⁴ This painted papal heraldry in the decoration of the sacristy furthermore indicates that this space was conceived as a liturgical proclamation of the *cappella magna* as a papal chapel. The sacristy appears therefore to have

been conceptualized as the starting place, where the newly elected pontiff strategically proclaimed his program for the administration of ecclesiastical government and the Roman Curia in respect to that of his immediate predecessor within the ceremonial arrangement of the Apostolic Palace. For instance, Pope Julius II manifested his decision in redecorating the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel by destroying the coat of arms of Alexander VI. Surprisingly, the sacristy was, as it appears, never used for the ritual preparation for celebrating the liturgical office in the *cappella magna*, but instead served as a repository for the liturgical vessels and relics used for the solemn celebrations.

The Sistine Sacristy was, however, not the only space that was added to the *cappella magna* during the Della Rovere pontificate. On the ground floor, directly beneath the chapel, several rooms for the Masters of Ceremonies and their assistants were also arranged. These spaces are also mentioned in Aurelio Brandolini's famous panegyric that praised Pope Sixtus IV's accomplishments, eventually indicating an increased significance of Curial Ceremony and its inclusion within the overall fabric of Sistine ecclesiastical government. Bandolini's poem therefore asserts an analogy between Rome's urban topography and the constellation of the stars in the skies, by which he proclaims Sixtus IV's *renovatio urbis* to resemble an "edification of the Heavens," ultimately transforming the Sistine Chapel into "Paradise" (*paradiso*) itself.⁵ Eventually, the Sistine Chapel was therefore to represent an architectural organism within the larger setting of the papal interventions into Rome's urban fabric. Its decoration, as the following arguments will explore, was thus conceived as a manifestation of Sixtus IV's consolidation of papal ecclesiastical government, which the Della Rovere Pope had already initiated with the construction of the Ponte Sisto on the occasion of the Holy Year of 1475, and during which the city of Rome witnessed

² The new structures were employed on the height of the windows. Regarding the architecture of the Sistine Chapel see Pier Nicola Pagliara, "Nuovi documenti sulla costruzione della Cappella Sistina," in *La Cappella Sistina – La volta restaurata: Il trionfo del colore*, ed. Por Carlo Pietrangeli (Novara: Istituto geografico De Agostini, 1992), 256-65; John Shearman, "La costruzione della Cappella Sistina," in *La Cappella Sistina – I primi restauri: La scoperta del colore*, ed. por Marcella Boroli et al. (Novara: Istituto Geografico De Agostini, 1986), 22-87; Pier Nicola Pagliara, "The Sistine Chapel: Its Medieval Precedents and Reconstruction," in *The Fifteenth Century Frescoes in the Sistine Chapel*, ed. por Francesco Buranelli e Allen Duston, *Recent Resorations of the Vatican Museums*, vol. 4 (Città del Vaticano: Edizioni Musei Vaticani, 2003), 77-86, at 79-80. Recently Tobias Daniels was able to assign the architecture to Giovannino di Pietro de' Dolci: Tobias Daniels, "The Sistine Chapel: New Sources on its Building History and the Question of its Architect". *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana* 43 (2020): 81-98, at 85-88.

³ The drawing was published by Jack Wasserman, *Ottavio Mascarino and His Drawings in the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca* (Roma: Libreria Internazionale, 1966), no. 160.

⁴ See Ernst Steinmann, *Die Sixtinische Kapelle*, 2 vols. (München: Bruckmann, 1901-1905), 1: 134, 140-41; Johannes Wilde, "The Decoration of the Sistine Chapel". *Proceedings of the British Academy* 44 (1958): 61-81, at 63-64; Arnold Nesselrath, "The Painters of Lorenzo the Magnificent in the Chapel of Pope Sixtus IV in Rome," in Buranelli/Duston 2003, 39-76, at 40-44.

⁵ Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV), Vat. lat. 5008, fol. 59v: *Protinus hic celsam iussit se tollere molem, / Quam sibi caelestes aedificasse putes*. See also Giuseppe de Luca, "Un umanista fiorentino e la Roma rinnovata da Sisto IV". *La Rinascita* 1 (1938): 74-90; Eugène Müntz, *Les arts à la cour des papes pendant le XV^e et le XVI^e siècle*, 3 vols. (Paris: Leroux, 1878-1882), 3: 135-36. This program of aligning Rome's urban space according to contemporary perceptions of a Heavenly City, such as that of the Heavenly Jerusalem, had already started around the middle of the Quattrocento, when Pope Nicholas V's interventions into Rome's urban image manifested a program that reanimated the Eternal City according to the liturgical directives set forth by Curial Ceremony, which the papal biographer Giannozzo Manetti also recorded. Moreover, Cardinal Jean Jouffroy would later even emphasize that the Sistine program, carried out during the Della Rovere pontificate, the "earth truly corresponded to the Heavens in beauty and magnificence." Regarding the developments during Nicholas V's pontificate, see esp. Charles L. Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 46-47; John W. O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome. Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, c. 1450-1521* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1979), 46-47; Marc Dykmans, "Le cérémonial de Nicolas V". *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 63 (1968): 365-78, 785-825.

an “invasion of pilgrims” that would substantially influence the curial administration of Rome and the Apostolic Palace.⁶

The following contribution aims to present a reading of the pictorial program in the Sistine Chapel according to the important influence of Pope Sixtus IV's large program of a *restauratio urbis* that corresponded to the alteration introduced into the liturgical textures of the *Caeremoniale Romanae Curiae* during the Della Rovere pontificate in the late Quattrocento. These remarkable modifications of the ritual elements within the architecture of Curial Ceremony ultimately established the directives according to which a pictorial language could be designed to satisfy the conditions of the lateral walls in the *cappella magna*. Except for Carol Lewine's study, which explored the crucial relationship between the narrative episodes on the lateral walls and the ritual elements of Roman liturgy, the fundamental significance of Curial Ceremony regarding a substantial effect it carried for conceptualizing pictorial programs in the development of monumental wall painting in Rome nevertheless still remains largely disregarded.⁷ A major reason for this lack of considering the ritual prescriptions for celebrating the Roman liturgy concerning the first decoration campaigns conducted in Pope Sixtus IV's new *cappella magna* was that Curial Ceremony began to demonstrate its full aesthetic manifestations, specifically also in connection with the Sistine Chapel, only during the late Cinquecento, especially after Michelangelo unveiled his *Last Judgment* in 1542. Étienne Dupérac's engraving from 1578 that Antoine Lafréry included in his *Speculum romanae magnificentiae* demonstrates this vital union between liturgical celebrations and the pictorial framework within the Sistine Chapel which would be achieved under Pope Gregory XIII (Fig. 1).

The inscription below the depiction of a papal mass celebrated in the Sistine Chapel informs the beholder that the engraving provides an “accurate depiction” (*accurata delineatio*) of celebrating the divine mass. Dupérac's engraving presents a precisely orchestrated celebration of the Roman rite that is reserved for the solemnities of the papal mass. But this theatrical choreography could only be achieved after the Roman Curia had significantly started to revise the *Caeremoniale Romanae Curiae*, which the former Masters of Ceremonies, foremost Agostino Patrizi Piccolomini, Johannes Burchard and Paris de

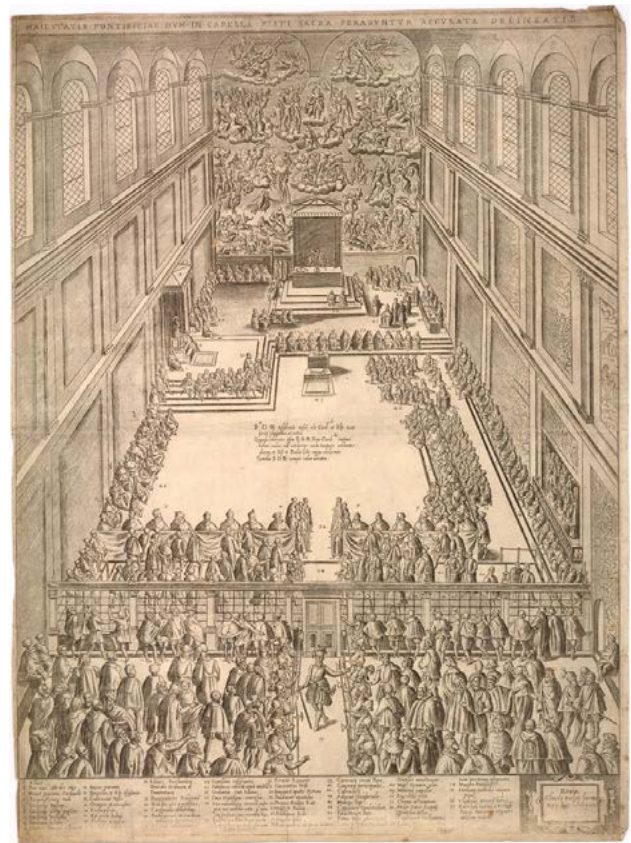


Fig. 1. Etienne Dupérac/Ambrogio Brambilla, *View of the Interior of the Cappella Sistina with a Mass being celebrated*, engraving, 1582, 540 x 400 mm, Departement of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, London (Call number: 1981,U.3262)

Grassis, had broadly solidified before.⁸ In this paper I will therefore argue that Curial Ceremony and its development in the late fifteenth century became extensively reliant on the liturgical outfitting of the Apostolic Palace. Sixtus IV's chapel eventually constituted the nexus of a key transformation that had been realized within the Roman Curia, which is why I will also propose a reading of the iconographic program in the Sistine Chapel by closely outlining the crucial changes that had occurred and that had been expressed in the ritual prescriptions designed for the ritual execution of liturgical celebrations according to the prescriptions of Curial Ceremony. Ultimately, as this paper will also argue, the Sistine fresco cycle presents a structural organization of the *Caeremoniale Romanae Curiae*. The pictorial narrative corresponds to essential elements of the Roman rite that became inextricably linked with an urban liturgy, and which in turn also influenced the further development

⁶ For the construction history as well as the significance of the Ponte Sisto concerning the celebrations of the *anno santo* of 1475, see most recently Minou Schraven, “Founding Rome Anew: Pope Sixtus IV and the Foundation of Ponte Sisto, 1473,” in *Foundation, Dedication and Consecration in Early Modern Europe*, ed. por Maarten Delbeke e Minou Schraven (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 129-151.

⁷ Carol F. Lewine, *The Sistine Chapel Walls and the Roman Liturgy* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1993). See also Bernhard Schimmelpfennig, “Der Einfluss des avignonesischen Zeremoniells auf den Vatikanpalast seit Nikolaus V.,” in *Functions and Decorations: Art and Ritual at the Vatican Palace in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. por Tristan Weddigen, Sible de Blaauw e Bram Kempers (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 41-45.

⁸ Regarding Dupérac's print see Niels Krogh Rasmussen, “*Maiestas Pontificia*: A liturgical reading of Etienne Dupérac's engraving of the Capella Sixtina from 1578”, *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici* 12 (1983): 109-48; Maria Antonietta Visceglia, “Il cerimoniale come linguaggio politico: Su alcuni conflitti di precedenza alla corte di Roma tra Cinquecento e Seicento,” in *Cérémonial et rituel à Rome*, ed. por M. A. Visceglia e Catherine Brice (Roma: Ecole française de Rome, 1997), 117-96, at 130-33.



Fig. 2. Sandro Botticelli, *The Temptations of Moses*, fresco, ca. 1480-81, Cappella Sistina, Palazzi Apostolici Vaticani, Città del Vaticano ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Youth_of_Moses#/media/File:Eventos_de_la_vida_de_Moisés_\(Sandro_Botticelli\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Youth_of_Moses#/media/File:Eventos_de_la_vida_de_Moisés_(Sandro_Botticelli).jpg))

of Curial Ceremony, specifically for the liturgical times of Lent and Advent, as already demonstrated by Lewine's study.

The following arguments will therefore aim at explaining how the pictorial program of the Sistine Chapel is related to a deliberate effort in establishing the liturgical confines of the *potestas papalis* through the aesthetic conditions of Curial Ceremony as apparently developed during Sixtus IV's pontificate. After the construction of the new *cappella magna* was completed, a campaign to decorate the chapel was developed in union with the curial program of surpassing the contemporary resurgence of conciliarist theology by amplifying the visible potential of the *potestas papalis*. The pictorial program designed for the walls of the Sistine Chapel was thus to complete a deliberate organization of papal ecclesiastical government by providing a necessary aesthetic narrative that complemented the production of scriptural discourses in sustaining papal supremacy against the accusations made by the various supporters, who promoted a general Church council.

2. The Court of Heaven: Sistine Ecclesiastical Government in the Pictorial Program of the new *Cappella Magna*

The second narrative episode that the Florentine painter Sandro Botticelli executed inside the Sistine Chapel displayed *The Temptations of Moses* opposite

his earlier fresco showing the *Temptations of Christ* (Figs. 2 and 3). The accompanying inscription, *TEMPTATIO MOISE LEGIS SCRIPTAM LATORIS*, insinuates a typological comparison with its counterpart. Its inscription explains the content of the depicted scene (*TEMPTATIO IESU CHRISTI LATORIS EVANGELICAE LEGIS*) and suggests a biblical prefiguration of the *Temptations of Christ* by the *Temptations of Moses*. According to a notarial document from 17 January 1482, however, Botticelli executed the latter scene shortly after his first fresco was approved by a committee of two theologians, three painters and the architect responsible for building the new chapel, Giovanni de' Dolci. As recently demonstrated, Botticelli's *Temptations of Christ* was one of those first frescoes that would have resolved the issue of the arrangement of the remaining decoration designed to depict episodes from the Old and New Testaments in typological order.⁹ The background of

⁹ Ulrich Pfisterer, *La Cappella Sistina* (Roma: Campisano, 2014), 18-35. The two notarial acts are reprinted in Leopold D. Ettlinger, *The Sistine Chapel before Michelangelo: Religious imagery and papal primacy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 120-23, at 122: "[...] venerabiles et egregios ac honorabiles viros dominos magistrum Antonium de Pinerolo in sacra pagina magistrum ord. fratrum minorum, Bartholomeum de Bollis canonicum basilice principis apostolorum de Urbe, Laurum de Sancto Johanne de Padua, Johannem Aloysium de Mantua, Ladislaum de Padua depictores et magistrum Johannem Petri de Dulcibus de Florentia Rome habitorem tamquam arbitros et arbitratos ac iudices ad taxandum et iudicandum picturam per dictos Cosmam Alexandrum Dominicum et Petrum



Fig. 3. Sandro Botticelli, *The Temptations of Christ*, fresco, ca. 1480-81, Cappella Sistina, Palazzi Apostolici Vaticani, Città del Vaticano ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temptations_of_Christ_\(Botticelli\)#/media/File:05_Tentaciones_de_Cristo_\(Botticelli\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temptations_of_Christ_(Botticelli)#/media/File:05_Tentaciones_de_Cristo_(Botticelli).jpg))

Botticelli's narrative episode shows Jesus' temptations by the Devil according to the passage in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 4: 1-11), whereas a sacrifice scene unfolds in the center of the pictorial space just in front of a church edifice and which façade closely resembles that of Santo Spirito in Sassia, the fruit of Sixtus IV's construction campaigns. The Hebrew High Priest is clad in a blue and yellow robe and is represented with the features of the Della Rovere Pope, who is about to readmit a purified youth, which is why this part of Botticelli's fresco has often been referred to as the *Purification of the Leper* according to the passage in the Book of Leviticus (Leviticus 14: 1-7), although Botticelli's *Temptations of Christ* appears to have been conceptualized according to a conscious effort in representing a narrative episode that encompasses the first Lenten Sunday as also prescribed by the 1474 printed *Missale Romanum*.¹⁰

Christofori in capella maiori sanctissimi domini nostri pape factam in quatuor primis istoriis finitis cum cortinis cornicibus et pontificibus [...].²

¹⁰ *Missale Romanum Mediolani, 1474*, ed. por R. Lippe, 2 vols. (London: The Henry Bradshaw Society, 1889-1907), 1: 56. Regarding the various interpretations of this particular scene, see esp. Steinmann, *Sixtinische Kapelle* (as in n. 2), 1: 236, 245-47; John Shearman, *Raphael's Cartoons in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen and the Tapestries for the Sistine Chapel* (London: Phaidon, 1972), 49. Ettlinger 1967, 81, however, links the scene with the passage in Hebrews 9: 11-14, and Lewine 1993, 34, suggests an association with 2 Maccabees 1: 18-23. Regarding the incorporation of Santo Spirito in Sassia in Botticelli's *Temptations of Christ*, see most recently Carla

The depiction of the *Temptations of Moses* on the opposite wall compartment, on the other hand, demonstrates some youthful exploits of Moses during his sojourn in Egypt and Midian as explained in Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses*. In comparison to its Christological counterpart, the scene showing the temptations of the Jewish leader are portrayed in a landscape setting with an oak tree dominating the central axis of the overall picture space. The particular spatial vicinity between the oak tree and the papal throne in the Sistine Chapel furthermore establishes a direct association between the Della Rovere Pope, his place within the sacred space of the *cappella magna* and the ceremonial administration of the Roman liturgy on the high solemnities designed to be celebrated in the new chapel of the Apostolic Palace by adopting the official papal *stemma* as the principal element in Sandro Botticelli's pictorial construction, hereby linking Pope Sixtus IV directly with the mosaic episodes depicted on the south wall of the Cappella Sistina. Together with Moses' encounter at the well with his future wife Zipporah, as recounted in the passage from Exodus (Exodus 2: 16-17), the prominence of

Kayvanian, *Hospitals and Urbanism in Rome, 1200-1500* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 345-52. Concerning the Sistine restorations of the church edifice as well as the enlargement of the hospital wing, see Eunice D. Howe, *The Hospital of Santo Spirito and Pope Sixtus IV*, Phd diss., University of Maryland, Baltimore (New York: Garland, 1978), 93, 114-15, with an indication to the payment records dating from 1480, thus about the same time as work on decorating the Sistine Chapel walls began.



Fig. 4. Pietro Perugino, *The Baptism of Christ*, fresco, ca. 1480-81, Cappella Sistina, Palazzi Apostolici Vaticani, Città del Vaticano ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptism_of_Christ_\(Perugino,_Rome\)#/media/File:Pietro_Perugino_-_Baptism_of_Christ_-_Sistine_Chapel_-_cat13a.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptism_of_Christ_(Perugino,_Rome)#/media/File:Pietro_Perugino_-_Baptism_of_Christ_-_Sistine_Chapel_-_cat13a.jpg))

Botticelli's *Temptations of Moses* is emphasized by the union that is established between the oak tree as the emblem of the papal family of the Della Rovere and the figurative meaning of the *Ecclesia* itself, represented by Moses' wife Zipporah.¹¹ The spatial segment in the Sistine Chapel established by Sandro Botticelli's two temptation episodes appears to have been created by a deliberate incorporation of the papal throne and its essential position within the liturgical significance of the *cappella magna* in respect to Pope Sixtus IV's arrangement of the Apostolic Palace and Old St. Peter's Basilica. By its location, the papal throne inside the Sistine Chapel demarks the dividing line between the celebrations of the liturgical office performed at the altar of the chapel that are centered in emphasizing the Eucharistic miracle of Christ's sacrifice, and which are complemented by Pietro Perugino's narrative episode of the *Baptism of Christ* on the north and his *Circumcision of Moses' Son* on the south wall (Fig. 4), both of them underlining the significance of the distinction between members of a particular religious community.¹²

The construction of a new *cappella magna* that replaced the old and much smaller architecture appears to have been envisaged to fulfill the demands of a fundamental enlargement of the Roman Curia after Sixtus IV's papal election on 9 August 1471 and its subsequent transformation into a Sistine Court that was concurrent with the program of establishing a ruling dynasty by the Della Rovere family within ecclesiastical government. As Lisa Passaglia Bauman has recently suggested, the Sistine pontificate promoted a specific image of the Della Rovere and the family's self-interests, which has been preserved in the church of Santa Maria del Popolo, although much of the work was executed for various members of the family only after Sixtus IV's death. The most significant contribution that the Della Rovere Pope made to securing a dynastic imprint of his family's appearance in late Quattrocento Rome was the establishment of a chapel that was endowed with an annual celebration of Mass by Sixtus IV himself on a feast day in the liturgical calendar that commemorated the Nativity of the Virgin Mary.¹³

¹¹ See Jean Daniélou, *Sacramentum Futuri: Études sur les origines de la typologie biblique* (Paris: Beauchesne et ses fils, 1950), 123-24; Lewine 1993, 37. The prominence of the meeting between Moses and Zipporah has first been observed by Etlinger 1967, 39.

¹² Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), 63-69, regarding the meaning of baptism as a replacement of circumcision as elaborated by St. Paul: "In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by

human hands. Your whole self, ruled by the flesh, was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead." (Colossians 2: 11-12) The scene of the *Circumcision* was later destroyed in favor of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*.

¹³ For the construction of a family dynasty by the Della Rovere family after Sixtus IV's papal election, see Egmont Lee, *Sixtus IV and men*

Cardinal Domenico della Rovere, Pope Sixtus IV's nephew who started the construction of the Palazzo dei Penitenzieri in the Vatican Borgo in 1480, immediately acquired the chapel after its completion in 1477, and commissioned a frescoed altarpiece showing *The Virgin at the Nativity with St. Jerome* on the central wall. That the altarpiece was likely executed before Pinturicchio decorated the Chapel of the Nativity in 1488 is suggested by Domenico's commissioning of a tomb monument for his brother Cristoforo della Rovere who died in 1478. Furthermore, the *grotteschi* as well as the marble frames around the altarpiece and the tomb monument constructed for the deceased brother seem to confirm an earlier dating.¹⁴ Moreover, the prominence of the church edifice of Santa Maria del Popolo and its position along the Via Flaminia that lead foreign pilgrims to one of the entrances to the city was reinforced by two lengthy façade inscriptions that detailed the indulgences Pope Sixtus IV granted to pilgrims who visited the renovated church and which suggested that the edifice had been built to "prepare the way for the Kingdom of Heaven." But the inscription that reproduced the text of Sixtus IV's constitution, *Ineffabilia gloriosae Virginis*, from 7 September 1472 also granted the same plenary indulgence when the church was being visited on the other feast days dedicated to the Virgin Mary, such as the Purification, Annunciation, As-

sumption, Visitation, and the Virgin's Immaculate Conception.¹⁵ The inclusion of a recently canonized liturgical feast day that celebrated the Immaculate Conception indicates that the embellishment of the Della Rovere Chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo was likely stimulated by a chapel space that Pope Sixtus IV himself had endowed in Old St. Peter's Basilica, and in which an altarpiece had been installed that depicted the *Immaculate Conception*.¹⁶

The Sistine Choir Chapel in St. Peter's Basilica was part of a larger campaign of restorations that also included the refurbishing of the Chapel of St. Petronilla as well as the monastery of Santo Stefano Maggiore allocated on the west to the basilica, which would later be dissipated by Pope Julius II's and Bramante's plans of rebuilding the Constantinian church edifice.¹⁷ By constructing an isolated choir

of letters (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1978), 33. After having rebuilt the church that Sixtus IV transferred from the control of the Observant Congregation of Rome-Perugia to the most important as well as influential Augustinian Observant Congregation of Lombardy, the Della Rovere Pope usurped the authority of the Augustinian order. On the papal chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo that was constructed between 1472 and 1477, see Enzo Bentivoglio/Simonetta Valtieri, *Santa Maria del Popolo* (Roma: Bardi, 1976), 20, 35; Katherine J. Walsh, "The Observance: Sources for a History of the Observant Reform Movement in the Order of Augustinian Friars in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries". *Rivista di storia della chiesa in Italia* 31 (1977): 40-67, at 64-65. Jacopo Gherardi recorded in his Roman diary that Sixtus IV prayed every Saturday as well as at major political moments in his papacy inside the Chapel of the Nativity: [...] *qui sabato eventit, pro sua consuetudine religiosa pontifex ad templum Marie Virginis de Populo profectus est, quod cum tam frequenter agat, tam minime notandum videtur; sed hac sola causa scribendum censui, quod eo die non sella pensili consueta, sed mula sua alba est vectus. Ita prospera utitur valitudine, quamvis septuagenarium dicant et ultra*. As quoted in Jacopo Gherardi, *Diario Romano*, ed. por E. Carusi (Città di Castello: Lapi, 1911), 79. On the later decoration of the chapel with scenes from the life of St. Jerome by Pinturicchio, see esp. Claudia La Malfa, "The Chapel of San Girolamo in Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome: New Evidence for the Discovery of the Domus Aurea". *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 63 (2000): 259-70; Claudia La Malfa, "La cappella di San Girolamo in Santa Maria del Popolo: Pinturicchio e la Domus Aurea". *Art e dossier* 21 (2006): 22-27; Lisa Passaglia Bauman, "Piety and Public Consumption: Domenico, Girolamo, and Julius II Della Rovere at Santa Maria del Popolo," in *Patronage and dynasty: The rise of the Della Rovere in Renaissance Italy*, ed. por Ian Verstegen (Kirkville: Truman State University Press, 2007), 39-62.

¹⁴ See Lara Langer, "The *maniera moderna* of Andrea Sansovino's cardinal tombs at Santa Maria del Popolo". *The Sculpture Journal* 28 (2019): 75-201; Philipp Zitzlsperger, "Die Ursachen der Sansovinograbbmäler in S. Maria del Popolo (Rom)," in *Tod und Verklärung: Grabmalakultur in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. por Arne Karsten e Philipp Zitzlsperger (Köln: Böhlau, 2004), 91-113.

¹⁵ See "Ein Indulgenzbrief Sixtus' des Vierten". *Frankfurter Bücherfreund: Mitteilungen aus dem Antiquariate* 5 (1907): 33-36. Regarding the dissemination of the papal bull through various prints throughout Europe, see Anne Dunlop, "Pinturicchio and the Pilgrims: Devotion and the Past at Santa Maria Del Popolo". *Papers of the British School at Rome* 71 (2003): 259-85, at 268.

¹⁶ The chapel was pillaged during the Sack of Rome in 1527. The restorations from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries introduced several new arrangements, since in 1609 the Canons of St. Peter's Basilica abandoned this *patrocinium* in favor of a larger and newer chapel space at the same spot. Concerning these interventions and alterations see esp. Maria Giulia Aurigemma, "Osservazioni sulla Cappella dell'Immacolata Concezione in S. Pietro," in *Sisto IV: Le arti a Roma nel Primo Rinascimento*, ed. por Fabio Benzi (Roma: Edizioni dell'Associazione Culturale Shakespeare and Company, 2000), 458-74, at 461, 466, 468; Christoph Luitpold Frommel, *Baldassare Peruzzi als Maler und Zeichner*, München: Schroll, 1968, 74-75. Jacopo Grimaldi made a sketch of the earlier chapel that also shows Perugino's *Nativity* in BAV, Barb. lat. 2377, fol. 197v.

¹⁷ Regarding the Sistine interventions in Old St. Peter's Basilica, which also concentrated on the renovation of the windows and the roofs of the church, see the later description of the basilica in Fra Mariano da Firenze, *Itinerarium Urbis Romae*, ed. por Enrico Bulletti (Roma: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1931), 78. The restoration of the neglected church of Santo Stefano Maggiore that was incorporated within the organism of the Constantinian edifice of Old St. Peter's was likely carried out in occasion of the Jubilee Year 1475, and where the Della Rovere Pope set up the aethiopian monks, who are documented since 1487. See the description in Tiberio Alfarano, *De Basilicae Vaticanae antiquissima et nova structura*, ed. por Michele Cerrati (Roma: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1914), 38: *Post hoc Monasterium aliud etiam multo maius Monasterium erat cuius aliqua adhuc monimenta conspiciuntur, videlicet sancti Stephani maioris quod ante omnes Adrianum primum Papam legitimus instaurasse, in quo etiam Archipresbyterum, qui reliquis quinque Monasterijs circa Basilicam existentibus praeeset instituerat. In hoc etiam Monasterio Gregorius primus Horphanotrophium erexit, in quo cantores habitarent, qui in Beati Petri Basilica noctu dieque iugiter psallerent; denique vetustate collapsum Sixtus Papa quartus restauravit; ibique Aethiopum Monachorum sive Sacerdotum Monasterium institutum est*. According to Francesco Maria Torrigio, *Le sacre grotte vaticane: Nelle quali si tratta di Corpi Santi, Sepolchri de' Pont., Imperatori, Rè, ... E d'altre cose memorabili si dentro Roma, come fuori* (Roma: Vitale Mascardi, 1639), 327, Sixtus IV also commissioned the decoration of a choir screen inside the monastery. Concerning the Sistine interventions in the French *ius patronatus* of the Chapel of St. Petronilla, see Alfarano, *De Basilicae Vaticanae*, 135-36; Giacomo Grimaldi, *Descrizione della basilica vaticana antica di S. Pietro in Vaticano: Codice Barberini Latino 2733*, ed. por Reto Niggel (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1972), 92; as well as the documented papal constitution in

chapel as well as a space that would incorporate the library of the Chapter of Canons on the south of the nave, Sixtus IV considerably increased the significance of this part of Old St. Peter's Basilica that was made functionally accessible for the Canons of St. Peter's by statically consolidating the southern flank of the nave. The new Choir Chapel of the chapter appears to have been constructed between 1477 and 1478 and consecrated in 1479 in dedication to the Immaculate Conception as well as to Saints Francis and Anthony of Padua. The altar of the Cappella dell'Immacolata was endowed with precious relics as well as with indulgences on various liturgical feast days. Alongside the north, east and west walls of the chapel were three rows of choir stalls, with those seats at the back were elevated to allow an unhindered view of the altar and its altarpiece showing the *Immaculate Conception* beneath a fresco painted by Perugino showing a *Sacra Conversazione* with the Virgin Mary in the center and framed by a wreath of cherubs. The figures of Saints Peter and Francis, who stood behind a kneeling figure of Pope Sixtus IV on the left, and Saints Paul and Anthony of Padua on the right, completed the decoration of the semi-dome of the apse. According to the description of Sixtus IV's Chapel of the Immaculate Conception in Old St. Peter's Basilica presented by the later Canon Tiberio Alfarano in the sixteenth century, the *Sacellum Sixti IV* manifested the Franciscan heritage of the Della Rovere Pope, ultimately presenting the new Choir Chapel as a Franciscan sanctuary within St. Peter's Basilica.¹⁸ Moreover, by selecting this particular part of the basilica where the papal tomb, executed by Antonio Pollaiuolo, was to be installed, Pope Sixtus IV anticipated to establish a papal chapel inside the

Constantinian church edifice commemorating Rome's primary Apostle that eventually demonstrated the architectural expression of converting the Roman Curia into a court of papal ecclesiastical government which outlines were to be drawn by a liturgical enhancement of the veneration towards the Virgin Mother Mary and the mystery of her Immaculate Conception.¹⁹

3. An Iconography of Urban Ceremony

The foundation of the Sistine Chapel inside the Apostolic Palace was equally motivated by an enhancement of the prominence that this specific feast day in the liturgical calendar took during Sixtus IV's pontificate. Nevertheless, such an articulation of the Immaculate Conception was likely only reserved for the altar area with its later destroyed altarpiece that Perugino made for the new *cappella magna*, presenting the *Assumption of the Virgin* according to a similar pictorial construction as the depiction in the semi-dome of the Cappella dell'Immacolata in St. Peter's Basilica (Fig. 5). The narrative program on the walls of the Cappella Sistina, however, exhibit an interlacing between Christological and Mosaic episodes that unambiguously appear to generate a liturgical progress regarding the position within the sacred space and its specific distance to the altar as well as to the papal throne. While scholars have so far upheld a typological reading of the pictorial program in the Sistine Chapel, such typological interpretations have failed to give a reasonable cause for the inclusion of select episodes from the life of Moses on the south wall of the chapel.

Since Ettliger's magisterial study, the pictorial program inside the Sistine Chapel was narrowly interpreted as concentrating upon one key feature, namely that of papal primacy. Consequently, this debate over the importance of the pope's spiritual and temporal powers in the pictorial program paved the way for introducing new, though at sometimes even speculative, interpretations of the cycle particularly concerning Pope Sixtus IV's conflicts with Lorenzo de' Medici that culminated in the Pazzi conspiracy of 1478, which were also the topic of a *literary war* that soon broke out between Rome and Florence over the hegemony of a correct exegesis of this crucial event. Sandro Botticelli's *Punishment of Korah*, included as the fifth episode in the cycle facing Perugino's *Gift of the Keys*, has primarily been construed as presenting a pictorial commentary regarding the papal as well as

Collectionis bullarum brevium aliquorumque diplomatum sacrosanctae basilicae vaticanis, ed. por Hannibal Albanus, 3 vols. (Roma: Jo. Maria Salvioni, 1750), 2: 259.

¹⁸ Alfarano, *De Basilicae Vaticanae*, 78-81: *Hisce sacellis proxima adhuc superest porta sive magnus arcus, per quem habetur accessus ad magnum nobilissimumque oratorium iuxta et extra Basilicae lateres protensum a Sixto quarto extractum, Beataeque Mariae Virginis et Sanctis Francisco et Antonio Patavino dedicatum et consecratum magnificentissimeque dotatum atque exornatum; in quo lignea sedilia triplicis ordinis pro tribus generibus Basilicae clericorum Deo ibi psallentium idem Pontifex stabilivit; binos quoque Beneficiatos et totidem Clericos perpetuo praeter numerum aliorum Beneficiatorum et Clericorum instituit, quos etiam Sixtinus perpetuo nuncupari mandavit. Denique intra altere dicti oratorij multas reliquias sanctorum condidit, videlicet de Velo Beatae Mariae Virginis, de Spatula sancti Stephani protomartyris, de Costa sancti Laurentij martyris, de Ossibus spinae sancti Sixti II papae et martyris, de Costa sancti Sebastiani martyris, de Sanguine qui fluxit ex latere beati Francisci stigmatizati, de Capillis, de cilicio, de tunica, de habitu eiusdem in quo mortuus est, et de Cute capitis sancti Antonij de Padua. Concessit praeterea indulgentiam plenariam omnibus visitantibus dictum oratorium a primis vespere usque in totam diem Conceptionis Beatae Mariae et festivitatum sanctorum Francisci et Antonij praedictorum. Prohibuitque ne qua mulier possit aliquando intrare oratorium ipsum nisi in festivitatis praedictis sub poena excommunicationis.* See also Grimaldi, *Descrizione*, 162, 260; Torrigio, *Le sacre grotte*, 29. Concerning the papal indulgences dispensed at the altar of the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, see esp. *Collectionis bullarum*, 2: 220-22. For a recent assessment of the chapel see Aurigemma 2000, 462-63, 466-67.

¹⁹ This strategic program of stratifying the papal Curia by altering the administration of Roman ecclesiastical government into a structured as well as consolidated Roman ecclesiastical court, was also at the center of Sixtus IV's and Bartolomeo Platina's endeavors in organizing the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. See most recently on these fundamental aspects Filip Malesevic, "Florentiner Maler im Dienst kuraler Gelehrsamkeit: Die Ghirlandaio-Werkstatt in der Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Sixtus' IV." *Römische Quartalschrift für Christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* 116 (2021): 201-24.



Fig. 5. Pietro Perugino, *Assumption of the Virgin*, drawing (metalpoint, pen, wash, with white heightening), ca. 1481, 272 x 210 mm, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna

curial affairs surrounding the Pazzi conspiracy (Figs. 6 and 7).²⁰ However, the position of two episodes, which demonstrate a crucial importance regarding the Della Rovere's papacy and its organization of eccle-

²⁰ The most reliable interpretations of reading select episodes of the Sistine frescoes in light of the Pazzi conspiracy are the studies presented by Tobias Daniels, "The Sistine Chapel and the Image of Sixtus IV: Considerations in the light of the Pazzi conspiracy," in *Congiure e conflitti: L'affermazione della signoria Pontificia su Roma nel Rinascimento. Politica, economia e cultura*, ed. por Maria Chiabò (Roma: Roma nel Rinascimento, 2014), 275-99; Tobias Daniels (ed.), *La congiura dei Pazzi: I documenti del conflitto fra Lorenzo de' Medici e Sisto IV. Le bolle di scomunica, la "Florentina Synodus", e la "Dissentio" insorta tra la Santità del Papa e i Fiorentini* (Firenze: Edifir, 2013), 29-44, on the "literary war" between Florence and the Roman Curia; and Marcello Simonetta, *L'enigma Montefeltro: Intrighi di corte dalla Congiura dei Pazzi alla Cappella Sistina* (Milano: BUR Rizzoli, 2008), 233-58. A more speculative approach was presented by Wolfram Rossner/Tobias Roth, "Szenen einer Verschwörung: Sandro Botticellis Minerva und Kentaur im Kontext der Congiura dei Pazzi". *Wolfenbüttler Renaissance-Mitteilungen* 38 (2017): 115-43, although specifically addressing Sandro Botticelli's oeuvre. For a critical assesement of this proposal, see most recently Pfisterer 2014, 37-38, who pointed out that the text of the inscription on the ruins of the triumphal arch in Botticelli's fresco correspond directly to Pope Sixtus IV's constitution *Grave gerimus* from 16 July 1482, by which the Dominican Archbishop of Krajina, Andrija Jamometić, was excommunicated. See on this episode Tobias Daniels, "Die italienischen Mächte und der Basler Konzilsversuch des Andreas Jamometić". *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, kanonistische Abteilung* 100 (2014): 339-67; Jürgen Petersohn, *Kaiserlicher Gesandter und Kuriensbischof: Andreas Jamometić am Hof Papst Sixtus' IV. (1478-1481) – Aufschlüsse aus neuen Quellen* (Hannover: Hahn, 2004), 104-29.

siastical government, are located in a segment of the Sistine Chapel that is divided by the choir screen and which is therefore reserved to the spectating laity and not the curial clergy attending the papal service officiated inside the *cappella magna*. Moreover, Botticelli's *Punishment of Korah* and the dating of its execution after the first episodes on the lateral walls of the chapel in the vicinity of the altar rather suggests the Florentine painter's aims at outperforming his direct competitor in the Sistine workshop of the chapel, Pietro Perugino, within the changing atmosphere of pictorial production in late Quattrocento Rome, in an effort to be included in the arrangement of the Sistine Curia as his fellow Florentine painter, Domenico Ghirlandaio, had achieved, when having been commissioned to decorate the reading rooms of the Biblioteca Vaticana prior to his engagement in the Sistine Chapel. It thus appears that by the time the *Punishment of Korah* and the *Gift of the Keys* were painted, the development of the pictorial program inside the Cappella Sistina of the Apostolic Palace advanced in consolidating the internal completion between the painters in respect to Pietro Perugino's own position with the specter of papal as well as curial patronage. Both episodes indeed demonstrate an extraordinary dominance of appropriating architecture for the overall construction of the pictorial narratives. Although this key feature in Botticelli's *Punishment of Korah* as well as in Perugino's *Gift of the Keys* has been commented repeatedly, the pictorial functions of employing architectural structures that manifest a deliberate reference to Roman urban architecture have so far remained disregarded concerning the explicit significance of the new *cappella magna* in a collective effort of reorganizing Curial Ceremony in general across select ritual elements of the Roman liturgy.

The selection of specific biblical episodes from the Old and New Testament suggests that the pictorial program inside the Sistine Chapel was to manifest an interpolation of the significance of the Roman liturgy as exemplified by the Christological scenes and their explicit relationship with Rome's sacred topography, which was being altered by the papal interventions during the Holy Year of 1475, while the occurrences from the life of Moses depicted on the south wall appear to have been designed to sustain the ritual aspects that conditioned a ceremonial implementation of a revised Roman liturgy that had started with the publication of a Roman Missal in 1474, and which represented a first phase in revising Durandus' *Rationale divinatorum officiorum* by integrating the *Officium Missae*. This appears to have been especially the design for including Domenico Ghirlandaio's *Calling of the First Apostles* as well as Cosimo Rosselli's *Crossing of the Red Sea*, and their respective superscriptions that emphasize the establishment of a "congregation" (*congregatio*) of believers through the first employment of the Mosaic laws, and later through the Law of the Gospels (Figs. 8 and 9). Eventually, the pictorial program in the Sistine Chapel established the aesthetic coordinates within which a full-scale consolidation



Fig. 6. Sandro Botticelli, *The Punishment of the Sons of Korah*, fresco, ca. 1481-82, Cappella Sistina, Palazzi Apostolici Vaticani, Città del Vaticano (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punishment_of_the_Sons_of_Korah#/media/File:Botticelli,_Sandro_-_The_Punishment_of_Korah_and_the_Stoning_of_Moses_and_Aaron_-_1481-82.jpg)



Fig. 7. Pietro Perugino, *The Gift of the Keys*, fresco, ca. 1481-82, Cappella Sistina, Palazzi Apostolici Vaticani, Città del Vaticano ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delivery_of_the_Keys_\(Perugino\)#/media/File:Entrega_de_las_llaves_a_San_Pedro_\(Perugino\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delivery_of_the_Keys_(Perugino)#/media/File:Entrega_de_las_llaves_a_San_Pedro_(Perugino).jpg))



Fig. 8. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *The Calling of the First Apostles*, fresco, ca. 1480-81, Cappella Sistina, Palazzi Apostolici Vaticani, Città del Vaticano (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vocation_of_the_Apostles#/media/File:Ghirlandaio,_Domenico_-_Calling_of_the_Apostles_-_1481.jpg)



Fig. 9. Cosimo Rosselli, *The Crossing of the Red Sea*, fresco, ca. 1481-82, Cappella Sistina, Palazzi Apostolic Vaticani, Città del Vaticano ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Crossing_of_the_Red_Sea_\(Sistine_Chapel\)#/media/File:Cosimo_Rosselli_Attraversamento_del_Mar_Rosso.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Crossing_of_the_Red_Sea_(Sistine_Chapel)#/media/File:Cosimo_Rosselli_Attraversamento_del_Mar_Rosso.jpg))

between the *Caeremoniale Romanae Curiae* and the liturgical properties of the *Ordines romani* could be achieved by the papal Masters of Ceremonies, even only after Sixtus IV's death.²¹

Nevertheless, with the urban interventions carried out for the celebration of the *anno santo* in 1475, the Della Rovere pontificate provided the appropriate setting for attempting a ceremonial adjustment of the traditional Roman liturgy as specified in the *Ordines romani*. Pietro Perugino's *Baptism of Christ*, the first narrative episode on the north wall and among one of the first frescos to be executed in the Cappella Sistina, provides a pictorial calibration of the ritual administration of the sacrament of baptism to Rome's sacred topography by depicting Christ's baptism, performed by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, in the center foreground of the picture space, while the Dove of the Holy Spirit hovers above, forming the vertical axis of the pictorial construction with God the Father appearing in the sky amid flying angels and cherubim. The middle ground of Perugino's fresco is occupied by John the Baptist preaching on the far-left side and by Christ's delivery of his first sermon on the right, while the depiction of John preaching repentance and of him approaching the Jordan to baptize the penitent crowd of people are depicted on the left near the vertical axis of the overall composition. While Perugino's *Baptism of Christ* was subject of several studies investigating the liturgical significance of the sacrament of baptism in general, the backdrop of the fresco, demonstrating a rather fictitious city view that closely resembles Rome's topographical area of the *Forum Romanum* with the Colosseum in the far background and a triumphal arch, presumably the Arch of Constantine recognizable by the marble columns associated with the *fastigium*, in front of a cityscape that is enclosed by the Aurelian Walls and occupied by a church edifice, has so far been largely ignored. Directly behind the scene showing John the Baptist preaching is another city view that discloses a towered structure intently resem-

bling the architecture of Castel Sant'Angelo in its previous architectural form as Emperor Hadrian's Mausoleum behind a church tower. The horizontal alignment of the portrayed edifices and monuments in Perugino's *Baptism of Christ* henceforth insinuates that the pictorial intent in incorporating an idealized cityscape not only provided a visual representation of Rome's most important Early Christian and imperial monuments, but the pictorial construction also included ecclesiastical edifices that are alluded by the two most recognizable bell towers in Quattrocento Roman church architecture, that of Old St. Peter's and the iconic bell towers of the Lateran Basilica. It is therefore plausible to suggest that Perugino's depiction of Rome's urban topography was strategically incorporated as to highlight the visible manifestation of the ceremonial aesthetics that was to be articulated through the papal *possesso*, the solemn celebration enacted upon a pontiff's coronation.²²

The ceremonial of the *possesso*, which involved a formal procession from St. Peter's Basilica to San Giovanni in Laterano, was already known in the eighth century, but the subsequent adjustments of Curial Ceremony following the return of the papal Curia from Avignon to Rome that experienced a considerable amplification during Nicholas V's papacy, intensely required a proper stratification of the ritual elements of the papal coronation according to a visual articulation of the *majestas pontificiae* concerning the affirmation of papal supremacy. Although the ritual prescriptions for the *possesso* regarding the papal coronation prescribed this part of the solemn celebration be executed at the Lateran Basilica, whereupon the newly crowned pontiff would be invested with the papal *triregnum* and be handed over the keys to both the papal basilicas of St. Peter's and San Giovanni in Laterano, Pope Sixtus IV appears to have insisted on being crowned immediately at St. Peter's, as reported by the Roman Stefano Infessura in a passage of his Roman diary:

“A 25 di dicti mensis [August 1471], cioè lo di di santo Bartolomeo, fo coronato papa Sixto in nelle scale di Santo Pietro, et po se ne gi ad Santo Ioanni ad pigliare la possessione, et in nella piazza in Santo Ioanni fo

²¹ The revision of the Roman liturgy according to a thorough readjustment of the Mass would, however, be only completed with the publication of a revised *Ordo missae* at the beginning of the sixteenth century by the Master of Ceremonies Johannes Burchard, whereas his colleague Agostino Patrizi Piccolomini presented a first model for a comprehensive ceremonial in 1488, with the composition of his *Caeremoniale Romanum*. See on these developments after Sixtus IV's pontificate, esp. Jörg Bölling, “Zur Erneuerung der Liturgie in Kurie und Kirche durch das Konzil von Trient (1545 1563): Konzeption – Diskussion – Realisation,” in *Papsttum und Kirchenmusik vom Mittelalter bis zu Benedikt XVI: Positionen – Entwicklungen – Kontexte*, ed. por Klaus Pietschmann, *Analecta musicologica* 47 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2012), 124-45; Jörg Bölling, *Das Papstzeremoniell der Renaissance: Texte – Musik – Performanz* (Frankfurt am Main et al.: Peter Lang, 2006), 25-36. A first draft of Patrizi's *Caeremoniale* is likely represented by the manuscript in BAV, Patetta.1099, fols. 1r-299r, datable to 1483, thus before Patrizi's consecration as Bishop of Pienza the following year, which contains a discourse entitled *De officio sacristae* that elaborated the administration of the sacristy attached to the Sistine Chapel (BAV, Patetta.1099, fols. 261r-99v). For Patrizi's *Caeremoniale*, with the annotations provided by Burchard, see the manuscript in BAV, Vat. lat. 4971, fols. 1r-228v, with the commentary provided by Marc Dykmans, “Mabillon et les interpolations de son *Ordo Romanus XIV*”. *Gregorianum* 47 (1966): 316-42, at 341-42.

²² It is crucial to note that the ceremonial organization of papal *possesso* would increasingly be amplified and adjusted by the Masters of Ceremonies during the following sixteenth century, leading to an aesthetic fabrication of a regularized *Order of Cavalcade* under Pope Sixtus V (1585-90) that ideally represented the stratified composition of the Roman Curia and papal ecclesiastical government. See most recently regarding these developments for the Cinquecento Pascale Rihouet, “Giovanni Guerra's *Order of the Cavalcade* (1589) and the birth of *possesso* prints in Sixtus V's Rome,” in *Eternal ephemera: The papal possesso and its legacies in early modern Rome*, ed. por Jennifer Mara DeSilva (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 165-211; Martine Boiteux, “Il possesso: La presa di potere del Sovrano Pontefice sulla città di Roma,” in *Habemus Papam: Le elezioni pontificie da San Pietro a Benedetto XVI*, ed. por Francesco Buranelli (Roma: De Luca Editori d'Arte, 2006), 131-40; Irene Fosi, “Court and city in the ceremony of the *possesso* in the sixteenth century,” in *Court and Politics in Papal Rome, 1492-1700*, ed. por Gianvittorio Signorotto e Maria Antonietta Visceglia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 31-52.

fatta una rixa perché la gente d'arme si mischiò con Romani, et fonci fatto a sassi molto bene.²³

This fundamental alteration carried an essential visual dimension in respect to the overall solemn procession that took place between St. Peter's Basilica and the Lateran, and during which the coronated pope was presented with the Torah by the leaders of Rome's Jewish community at Monte Giordano.²⁴

4. Conclusions

By having already been invested with the papal tiara and thus by the official solemn dignities of a pontiff, Sixtus IV's commendation of the Mosaic Law as well as its condemnation on the grounds of the refusal by the Jews in recognizing Jesus Christ as the Savior promised by the prophets carried a meticulously calibrated significance in respect to the inclusion of episodes from the *Pentateuch* in the decoration program of the Sistine Chapel, insofar as the Mosaic part of the pictorial narrative was to be explicitly formulated regarding its legal character that sustained the principle of the Roman pontiff as the lawgiver of the New Covenant in the tradition of Holy Scripture, whereas the Christological episodes on the north wall confirmed

the pope in his capacity as Vicar of Christ in the proper administration of the sacraments, which ultimately assured an appropriate continuity in upholding the salvific promise made by Christ through his sacrifice on the cross and reenacted in the liturgical celebration of Mass that was furthermore sustained by the succeeding pontiffs throughout the evolution of the Church.²⁵ The narrative episodes on the south wall of the Sistine Chapel that demonstrate select scenes from the life of Moses contain the fundamental ritual elements by which the Roman pontiff is invested upon his coronation, and which can only be administered in his position as the Vicar of Christ within the organization of ecclesiastical government. Curial Ceremony provided the appropriate aesthetic framework, by which an innovative pictorial language, mirroring the urban conditions for the development of Quattrocento Roman ceremonial culture appropriately, could be manufactured. The pictorial program of the Sistine Chapel inside the Vatican Apostolic Palace thus determines not only a critical shift in the evolution of monumental pictorial production in late Quattrocento Rome, but also establishes a regulated ceremonial boundary that manifests the ritual elements of the *potestas papalis* in respect to the gradual construction of ecclesiastical government.

5. References

5.1. Primary Sources

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²³ Stefano Infessura, *Diario della città di Roma*, ed. por Oreste Tommasini (Roma: Forzani, 1890), 75. See also the passage in a compiled *Diario di Sisto IV* from the seventeenth century in BAV, Urb. Lat. 1641, fols. 2r-36r, at fols. 8v-9v. Bartolomeo Platina's *Life of Sixtus IV* (BAV, Vat. lat. 2044, fols. 229r-37r, at fol. 231r; *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, ed. por Ludovico Antonio Muratori, 26 vols. (Milano: Typographia Societatis Palatinae in Regia Curia, 1734), 3/2: 1053-68, at 1056) erroneously reports of the coronation having been celebrated at the Lateran Basilica: *At vero dum, ut fit, coronam Pontificiam apud Lateranum in magna celebritate ac hominum multitudine suscipit, tantus repente tumultus ortus est, dum pedites ad equitibus in angulo premuntur, ut paulum abfuerit, quin lapidatione obrueretur; ausi enim sunt temerarii quidam in eum quoque lapides conjicere. Sedato autem tumultu celebrata[m]que coronatione, ad rem Ecclesiasticam, Christianamque componendam animum adjicit*. This discrepancy has been noted by Francesco Cancellieri, *Storia de' solenni possessi de' sommi pontefici detti anticamente processioni o processioni dopo la loro coronazione dalla basilica Vaticana alla Lateranense* (Roma: Luigi Lazzarini stampatore della Reverenda Camera Apostolica, 1802), 45. An anonymous *Caeremoniale*, which was likely compiled between pontificates of Nicholas V and Sixtus IV, still prescribed the coronation being celebrated at the Lateran: BAV, Urb. lat. 469, fols. 9v-10r; Joaquim Nabuco, *Le cérémonial apostolique avant Innocent VIII, texte du MS Urbinate Latin 469* (Roma: Edizioni Liturgiche, 1966), 23-24.

²⁴ Marc Dykmans (ed.), *L'oeuvre de Patrizi Piccolomini ou le cérémonial papal del la première Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1980-1982), 1: 81: *Cum pontifex pervenerit ad montem Iordanum, Iudei illi obviam veniunt et genuflexi legem pontifici offerunt, lingua hebraea legen laudantes, et hortantes pontificem ut illam veneretur. Pontifex vero, illis auditis, in hanc sententiam respond[e]t: "Sanctam legem, viri hebrei, et laudamus et veneramus, utpote que ab omnipotenti Deo per manus Moysi patribus vestris tradita est. Observantiam vero vestram, et vanam legis interpretationem damnamus atque improbamus, quia salvatorem quem adhuc frustra expectatis, apostolica fides iam pridem advenisse docet et predicat Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum, qui cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto vivit et regnat Deus in secula seculorum."* *Sed quoniam nonnumquam accidit ut Iudei populi multitudine opprimantur, solent aliquando impetrare pro eorum securitate, ut hoc faciant super antemurali arcis Sancti Angeli, in angulo ad viam qua itur ad palatium respicienti*. See also the passage in Johannes Burchardus, *Liber notarum*, ed. Enrico Celani (Città di Castello: Lapi, 1906), 1: 67; as well as Stinger 1985, 53-54.

²⁵ Concerning this ecclesiological transfer of the Mosaic principle of the lawgiver into the specter of the liturgical manifestation of the *potestas papalis*, see esp. the treatise dedicated to Pope Sixtus IV, and composed by a certain Spanish theologian, presumably employed in the services of Cardinal Guillaume d'Estouteville, Fernando de Córdoba in his *De iure medios exigandi fructus quos vulgo annatas dicunt et Romani Pontificis in temporalibus potestate*: BAV, Vat. lat. 1128, fols. 1v-199r, at fols. 13v-14r. This particular significance of the Roman liturgy of the Mass was also a crucial feature in Sixtus IV's discourse *De sanguine Christi* that the Della Rovere Pope had composed during his time as a Franciscan friar before being elected the Order's Minister General in 1464: BAV, Vat. lat. 1051, fols. 1r-105v; BAV, Vat. lat. 1052, fols. 1r-76v; BAV, Urb. lat. 151, fols. 2v-132r. Another relevant discourse, composed during Sixtus IV's papacy and dedicated to the pontiff, which can be directly associated with the relevance of the liturgical celebration of Mass, is the poem by the Milanese scholar Bonino Mombrizio entitled *De dominica passione* around 1474: BAV, Urb. lat. 198v-259r; BAV, Vat. lat. 1681, fols. 1r-107r. A printed version from 1474 is preserved in BAV, Inc.IV.743.

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