

Papal bull (1518)

in which a territorial dispute between two religious communities is settled

BULL OF POPE LEO X (GIOVANNI DI LORENZO DE' MEDICI), ADDRESSED TO BERNARDINO STROCIO, CANON OF THE DIOCESE OF CASALE MONFERRATO, ORDERING HIM TO ENFORCE PREVIOUS ECCLESIASTICAL VEREDICTS ON A LITIGATION REGARDING USUFRUCT OF LANDS CLAIMED BY RESIDENTS OF CALLIANO (AN AREA LOCATED ABOUT 6 MILES FROM ASTI, PIEMONTE, ITALY). ACCORDING TO THE BULL, SUCH LANDS ARE UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE MONASTERY OF SAINTS GIACOMO AND FILIPPO OF ASTI, WHICH IS WHY THE POPE ISSUED THE BULL IN FAVOR OF THE MONASTERY, ORDERING CANON STROCIO TO DEMAND PAYMENT FROM THE LITIGANT PARTY SENTENCED TO BEAR THE COSTS OF THE PROCESS AND TO REPAY ANY GAINS OBTAINED OUT OF THE IMPROPER USUFRUCT OF THE LAND SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE ILICIT APPROPRIATION.

Rome: 13 July 1518

Vellum. The document is in a very good state of conservation. In the margins, the pricking marks, made with a dry-point tool, are visible. There are slight moisture stains on the verso and other minor marks on account of its age and use, although they do not affect the legibility of the text whatsoever. The foldings exhibited by the document are typical of papal bulls.

Recto: Single column, 18 lines in a papal documentary script, signed by *P. Gabrielis*. Standing out are a prominent capital L, the initial of pope Leo X's name, and a smaller capital Q at the beginning of the first paragraph. Initial letters of most words and ascenders in the first line are exaggeratedly elongated upwards for decorative purposes to balance the visual composition of the whole, a common feature of these papal documents. On the top margin is an inscription made up of six or seven illegible words, probably a name and a title. Another inscription reads *Affixa Jo Cor*, repeated in the verso, as *Jo Cor*). THE ORIGINAL BULLA (LEAD SEAL) IS IN OPTIMAL STATE OF CONSERVATION AND STILL ATTACHED TO THE DOCUMENT BY SILK CORDS. The face of the bulla bears the inscription *Leo Papa X*. Additionally, and notably regarding the iconography of power, the mint is decorated with the Medici family emblem (six balls, usually five of them red and one blue, often seen in Florentine architecture and also found in pope Leo X's coat of arms). The six *palle*, as they are called in Italian, are placed below the images of Saint Peter and Saint Paul—these traditional figures and the six balls in the papal seal emphasize the legitimacy of the inheritance of Christ's power by this Medici pope. At the bottom left of the document, what is probably a Roman number can be read: *iii*.

Verso: Brief description (6 lines) of the contents of the *recto* by a later hand, probably from the second half of the 16th century. In its upper section there are notations from different hands: Hand A (the same one that wrote the descriptive colophon of the verso), top left: *one illegible word*

| Hand B: several unreadable words to the left, center and right | Hand C, center: *two illegible words*. On the top left, an isolated number 26¹. On the bottom left, in pencil, an inventory number: 1825800R3ZKOST. Bottom right: Stamp with the number 110, or just 10, to which an initial I was probably added in another ink. Another central notation, most likely from the 20th century, written obliquely in pencil, states: *Monastero | di S Giacomo e Filippo | di Asti (1518)*.

This papal bull is signed by Leo X, a very significant pope in the history of the Church, under whose pontificate the Protestant Reformation began—partly due to his unbridled policy of selling indulgences. Leo X (Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici), son of Lorenzo de' Medici, *il Magnifico*, and Clarice Orsini, was educated by notable humanists, such as Marsilio Ficino, Angelo Poliziano, and Demetrios Chalkokondyles. He had a meteoric ecclesiastical career, propelled by the influence of his family: he became pope in 1513, at the age of 38. His government of the Church was hindered by disputes with the kingdom of France, while the reaction of the Roman Curia to the radicalization of Lutheranism in Germany forced the epochal and cultural turn that would later lead to the Council of Trent. Also, Leo X continued the artistic policy of Julius II, being a patron of Raphael and Bramante, among other great artists.

Turning to the document itself, this papal bull is addressed to the ecclesiastical authority that must carry out the papal sentence, namely Bernardino Strocio², canon of Casale Monferrato³, who receives an initial greeting from the pope, before the statement of the matter. Another historical document, an epistle between friends, dated in April 2nd, 1527, ratifies the existence of a Bernardino Strocio, and his standing in the ecclesiastical sphere. Indeed, Domenico Schellino⁴, Bishop of Acqui (1508-1534), complains in a letter, written in Italian, though headed in Latin, to his beloved *domino Bernardino Strocio Canonicho Casalensi*, about his current health and financial hardships⁵.

The issue addressed in the bull is of great historical complexity, and requires further specialized

1 A hypothesis: this type of documents was kept, in some archives, folded in envelopes that contained several similar ones, so this isolated number could refer to the number of the envelope.

2 *Strotio* was a documented Florentine patrician surname during the 16th century. The surname *Strocio*, most probably related to the Latin form *Strot(t)ius*, corresponds to the Italian *Strozzi*. There is historical evidence of the presence of the Strozzi family in Casale at least since the 17th century.

3 The *Casalense* diocese (in Italian, Diocesi di Casale Monferrato) was erected only in 1474 by means of the *Pro excellenti* bull of pope Sixtus IV. Between 1517 and 1525, Gian Giorgio Paleologo (1488-1533) was its [bishop](#).

4 *Storia deglo scavi di Romae – Notizie intorno le collezioni romane di Antichità, Volume Terzo dalla elezione di Giulio III a la morte di Pio IV*, Roma, Ermanno Loescher & Co, 1907, p. 7.

5 With affectionate words, bishop Schellino writes: «*Venerabili domino Bernardino Strocio Canonicho Casalensi dignissimo Affini carissimo – Casali / Affinis uti frater honorande, salutem / non ve sia in admiracione la mia tarditade del scrivere ma imputarlo a li mali et adversi tempi in li quali non siamo sicuri usire fora de casa nostra per dubio de esser pigliati presoni in tanto che per me sono reduto in tanta extremitade del tuto non solum de grano me quante victuale sia al mondo usuale io non ho ne feno ne paglia ne mancho biava et per mia disgratia mia longa infirmitade de quatro meisi continui in leto me hanno del tuto ruinato de qualche denari che aveva io non ho ne mancho aspeto intrada alcuna de li mey beneficy ne del pasato ne meno de l'anno avenire per che tuti li mei fictabilli me anno remise le locacione in tanto me trovo megio disperato et ne prego voliate al solito pigliarve qualchi fatiche per amore mio circha il mio beneficio de ottilio in fare ne abia qualche utilidade per che non voglio che li miei inimici goldeno li miei sudori et stenti che ho patidi per aquistarli non me aricordo tanto tempo fa averne abuto uno quatrino et quanto presto vedero non posere far altro lo voglio rinunciare ad uno me serva la vita mia cum fede et cosi de la mia prebenda non voglio me rendiati rasone excepto che a me per che come ho dito non voglio li miei inimici goldino la mia roba et però me offero et ricomando a voy Aquis die 2 Aprilis 1527 / Affinis Vester Dominus Episcopus Aquensis» (Notary: Filippo de Alba, Binder 7).*

study of the legal, jurisdictional and social frameworks of the actors involved. In essence, pope Leo X confirms, apparently after long judicial proceedings before an ecclesiastical court, three previous rulings on a dispute, not fully described in the document, over the usufruct of certain lands, in favor of the extramural monastery of Saints Giacomo and Filippo of Asti⁶, and against a community near Calliano, represented by a trustee (*sindicus*), stated in the document⁷. The lands had been exploited by the said community to the detriment of their legitimate owners, namely, the members of the Monastery of Saints Giacomo and Filippo of Asti. The bull also points out that, during the judicial proceedings, the convicted party committed forgery and submitted false testimony, and therefore must bear the costs and, in addition, pay back the income from the usufruct of the land under dispute, obtained since it was illegally appropriated.

The bull is signed by *P. Gabrielis*, an apostolic secretary, who validates the papal writing, a common practice in this kind of documents. That person is almost certainly Pietro Gabrielli da Fano, secretary to Leo X, and brother of the influential cardinal Gabrielle de' Gabrielli (1445-1511), bishop of Urbino (1504-1511). By way of illustration of how these networks of humanists worked within the Roman Curia at the beginning of the 16th century, it is worth mentioning that the well-known historian and poet from Foligno, Sigismondo dei Conti (1432-1512), married Allegrezza degli Atti, of whom two children were born: Giovan Francesco, who was also secretary to popes Julius II and Clement VII, and Brasilla (or Plantilla, or Plautilla)⁸, precisely the wife of Pietro Gabrielli da Fano, papal secretary who most probably signed this bull⁹.

In short, this is a very relevant document for the study of economic, ecclesiastical and jurisdictional issues in the Italian region of Piemonte, as well as for the understanding of papal bureaucracy, ecclesiastical administration, and the regional social history of Asti and, more broadly, northern Italy. Its uniqueness also makes it of special value to any University's collection with a department of Italian Culture and History or a Center for Renaissance Studies. Other copies of this document are unknown, and no edited transcriptions or works of analysis have been identified.

This bull is also offered for sale (only on-demand!) along with a complete and annotated philological and critical transcription of the Latin text and colophon, and its translations into English and Italian. An expanded study of such instances of solid research, to be surely undertaken by experts in regional history contemporary to the document, will allow the discovery of new layers of the remarkable symbolic and historical wealth of this papal bull.

6 The [Cartusia Astensis or Church of the Saints Giacomo and Filippo](#) is mentioned in *Analecta Cartusiana*, 1970, Volumen 185, p. 243, and also in G.R. Gaja, "Chiesa e monastero dei Santi Apostoli Giacomo e Filippo (Certosa) – Certosini", in *Asti nel Seicento. Artisti e committenti in una città di frontier. Catalogo della mostra (Asti 2014)*, Genova, 2014, pp. 159-163. It refers to the Monastero dei Santi Apostoli Giacomo e Filippo presso Asti (also known as Certosa di Valmanera).

7 It refers to the then-known village of Calliano, a city currently located 6 miles from Asti in the province of Asti in Piemonte.

8 Mario Sensi, «La "Madonna di Foligno" e il suo committente Sigismondo dei Conti d'Antignano». *Bollettino storico della città di Foligno*, Foligno, 2014, XXXVII: 75-186 (p. 91). Sensi reports that Pietro and Brasilla had three daughters, and that Brasilla lived at least until 1564.

9 Durante Dorio, *Istoria della famiglia Trinci, signori di Foligno*, Foligno, Agostinus Alterius, 1638, p. 130.