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**Oration "Ecce, ecce" of Pope Pius II (August 1463, Rome).  
Final version (2025). (Orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini /  
Pope Pius II; 77)**

Michael Von Cotta-Schönberg

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**Oration "*Ecce, ecce*" of Pope Pius II (August 1463, Rome). Edited and translated by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg**

**(Collected Orations of Pope Pius II; 77)**

**Final Version (2025)**



## **Abstract**

At the Congress in Mantua in 1459, the Venetians had been extremely reluctant to support a papal crusade against the Turks, to the great frustration of the pope and the gleeful satisfaction of those cardinals who opposed the papal crusade plans. In the following years, the Venetians would come to realise, however, that their hopes for peaceful coexistence with the Turks were in vain and that the Turkish threats to their Mediterranean empire had to be countered. So, in a major change of strategy, they gave up their resistance to the papal crusade plans and began to exert pressure on the pope to launch his crusade against the Turks, together with as many European allies as possible. They formally decided to go to war against the Turks on 28 July 1463. The pope received the news of the Venetian decision some days later and immediately announced it to the cardinals, requiring them to discuss both how to assist the Venetians in their present military venture against the Turks and how to proceed in the manner of the papal crusade to be launched the following year.

## **Keywords**

Enea Silvio Piccolomini; Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini; Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini; Pope Pius II; Papa Pio II; Venezia; Venice; Turks; Crusades; War against the Turks; 1463; 15th century; Renaissance orations; Renaissance oratory; Renaissance rhetoric

## **Editor and translator**

Michael v. Cotta-Schönberg

Magister artium (University of Copenhagen)  
Bachelier en Philosophie (Université Catholique de Louvain)  
Emeritus Deputy Director / The Royal Library, Copenhagen  
Emeritus University Librarian / University of Copenhagen

ORCID identity: 000-0001-8499-4142

e-mail: [typsita@gmail.com](mailto:typsita@gmail.com)

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### **II. TEXT AND TRANSLATION**

1. New Venetian crusade strategy [1]
2. Papal response [2]



# I. INTRODUCTION

## 1. Context<sup>1</sup>

At the Congress in Mantua in 1459, the Venetians had been extremely reluctant - and not without reason - to support a papal crusade against the Turks,<sup>2</sup> to the great frustration of the pope and the gleeful satisfaction of those cardinals who opposed the papal crusade plans. In the following years, the Venetians would come to realise, however, that their hopes for a peaceful coexistence with the Turks were in vain and that the Turkish threats to their Mediterranean empire had to be countered. So, in a major change of strategy, they gave up their resistance to the papal crusade plans and began to exert pressure on the pope to launch his crusade against the Turks, together with as many European allies as possible. On 28 July 1463, they formally decided to go to war against the Turks, and the day afterwards, Cardinal Bessarion sent a message to the pope announcing the Venetian decision.<sup>3</sup> The pope received the message some days later and immediately announced it to the cardinals in a secret consistory, requiring them to discuss both how to assist the Venetians in their present military venture against the Turks and how to proceed in the manner of the papal crusade to be launched the following year.

In his *Commentarii*,<sup>4</sup> the pope wrote about the Venetian decision:

*Bessarion<sup>5</sup> meantime had reached Venice where he was received with great enthusiasm by the state and loaded with distinguished honours as a mark of reverence for the Holy See. On being given audience in the Senate he easily persuaded the citizens (who were already convinced) to do what he wanted, namely to issue a public declaration of war against the Turks. For the Venetians, though they had left the admiral of the fleet free to decide as to making war, nevertheless were shrewdly keeping the plan secret and had no intention of making it public till they had inflicted some great disaster on the enemy. But when they had heard Bessarion and learned the will of the Pope, who was offering himself as their ally in the war, they published the Senate's decree, which declared the Turks enemies of the Venetians. With such high courage war was declared, more galleys were added to the fleet, which had already sailed, and reinforcements of troops were sent.<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Pastor, II, pp. 246-248. See also orations "*Expectatis*" [73] and "*Si essemus*" [74]

<sup>2</sup> Picotti

<sup>3</sup> Pastor, II, p. 247

<sup>4</sup> COM, XII, 20 (Heck, II, pp. 750-751)

<sup>5</sup> Cardinal Bessarion, whom the pope had sent to Venice to negotiate the crusade matter

<sup>6</sup> COM, XII, 20 (Gragg, pp. 804-805)

In this text, the pope did not mention his address to the cardinals.

## 2. Themes

The very short oration has three themes:

- **The Venetian decision to go to war against the Turks: those who were considered to be most opposed to a war against the Turks were now the first to actively engage in this war:**

*... those whom all said were sleeping and sluggish were the first of all to take arms for the honour of God. All were criticising the Venetians, saying that they were the only ones who refused to provide aid in this great need of the Christians. But see, now they are the only ones who are vigilant, who act, who undertake to come to aid the Christians and to take revenge on the enemy of Christ, the persecutor of our faith!*  
[Sect. 1]

The pope may be forgiven for enjoying a moment of unholy satisfaction that the Venetians who had so stubbornly resisted his crusade plans at the Congress in Mantua in 1459<sup>1</sup> had now, four years later, seen the wisdom of the papal project.

- **All should imitate the Venetian example, a clear invitation to the other Italian powers to do as the Venetians had now done – and a veiled rebuke:**

*Let now all the others be moved by the example of those whom they were condemning! Let them follow those whom they were blaming! Let them do just one little bit of what they are doing, whom they called sluggards.* [Sect. 1]

- **Assistance to the Venetians and the planning of the crusade, to be launched next year:**

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<sup>1</sup> See Picotti, and Voigt, IV, p. 75: *Die beiden Venetianer [at the Congress of Mantua]*

*mischten sich wenig in die Discussion; ihnen lag mehr daran, den Congress erfolglos*

*hinzuziehen, als ihn mit Ernst zu unterstützen.*

*Venerable brothers, now it is your duty to assist Our beloved sons, the Venetians, in their great and praiseworthy undertaking. They must not be left alone in this great affair. Rather, they must be supported with all means, and especially by us who are responsible for the Christians. Therefore, we must consider two things: firstly, how to help the Venetians in the expedition they have launched, and giving them aid this year. Secondly, we must consider the expedition to be made next year. [Sect. 2]*

As the pope was speaking, a Burgundian embassy was on its way to the pope to announce the Duke of Burgundy's participation in the crusade, which would lead, some months later, to a formal alliance between the Apostolic See, Burgundy, and Venice – with Hungary as a fourth partner in the crusade.

### **3. Date, place, audience, and format**

The Venetians declared war against the Turks on 28 July 1463. The pope would have received news of the Venetian decision within a week's time and may be presumed to have immediately informed the cardinals, indicating a date in early August.

The place was presumably the Apostolic Palace in Rome, and the audience were the cardinals assembled in consistory, probably a secret (closed) consistory.

The format was a short informal papal address in consistory.

### **4. Text<sup>1</sup>**

The pope's address was probably noted down as it was being delivered, by a secretary who wrote about the pope in third person: *Post haec addidit ...*

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<sup>1</sup> For the textual transmission of Pius II's orations, see COR, 1: 5

## 4.1. Manuscripts

- **Roma / Archivio Apostolico Vaticano**  
Fondo Pio 22, f. 470r (**S**)
- **Venezia / Biblioteca Marciana**  
Lat XIV 265, ff. 142v-143r (**V**)  
Lat XIV 228, ff. 390r-390v (**X**)  
Lat XIV 267, 49r (**Y**)

## 4.2. Editions

The text has not been edited previously.

## 4.3. Present edition

For principles of edition (incl. orthography) and translation, see COR, 1: 9-10.

*Text:*

The text is based on all four manuscripts.

*Pagination*

Pagination is from the Lat XIV 265.

## 5. Sources

In this short address, no direct or indirect quotations have been identified.

## 6. Bibliography

Pastor, Ludwig: *Geschichte der Päpste im Zeitalter der Renaissance*. 16 vols. Freiburg i.B., 1886-1933

Picotti, Giovanni Battista: *La dieta di Mantova e la politica de' Veneziani*. Venezia, 1912

*Piccolomini, Enea Silvio SEE ALSO Pius II*

Piccolomini, Enea Silvio: *Epistolae*

- *Der Briefwechsel des Eneas Silvius Piccolomini*. Hrsg. von Rudolf Wolkan. 3 vols. Wien, 1909-1918
- *Reject Aeneas, accept Pius : Selected letters of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II)*. Transl. by T.M. Izbicki et al.. Washington, D.C., 2006
- *Enee Silvii Piccolominei Epistolarium Seculare*. Ed. A. van Heck. Città del Vaticano, 2007
- *Collected letters of Enea Silvio Piccolomini*. Ed. and transl. by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg. 10 vols. 2022-2026. [Available in HAL Archives].

*Pius II SEE ALSO Piccolomini, Enea Silvio*

Pius II: *Orationes*.

- *Collected Orations of Pope Pius II*. Ed. and transl. by Michael v. Cotta-Schönberg. 12 vols. 2019-2020. [Final Version, 2024-2025]. [Available in HAL Archives].

Voigt, Georg: *Enea Silvio de' Piccolomini als Papst Pius der Zweite und sein Zeitalter*. 3 vols. Berlin, 1856-63

## 7. Sigla and abbreviations

**S** = Roma / Archivio Segreto Vaticano / Fondo Pio 22

**V** = Venezia / Biblioteca Marciana / Lat XIV 265

**X** = Venezia / Biblioteca Marciana / Lat XIV 228

**Y** = Venezia / Biblioteca Marciana / Lat XIV 267

## Abbreviations

### Works

**AC** = Acta Cusana

**APD** = Acta pontificum danica

**CAR** = Eneas Silvius Piccolomineus (postea Pius II): *Carmina*. Edid. Adrian van Heck. 1994.

**CB** = *Concilium Basiliense*.

**COD** = *Conciliarum oecumenicorum decreta*, ed. G. Alberigo. 1952.

**COM** = Pius II: *Commentarii rerum memorabilium quae suis temporibus contigerunt*. [1464].

**COR** = *Collected Orations of Pope Pius II*. Edit. and transl. by Michael v. Cotta-Schönberg. 12 vols. 2019-2020.

**CRDM** = Piccolomini, Enea Silvio: *Collected Reports of Diplomatic Missions, 1447-1455*. Edit. and transl. by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg. 2021.

**DBI** = Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani.

**DGCB** = Piccolomini, Enea Silvio: *De Gestis Concilii Basiliensis Commentariorum Libri II*. Ed. and transl. by Dennis Hay and W.K. Smith. London, 1967.

**DIA** = Enea Silvio Piccolomini: *Libellus Dialogorum*. A cura di Simona Iaria. 2015. (Edizione Nazionale dei Testi Umanistici; 12).

**DLE** = Piccolomini, Enea Silvio: *De Liberos Educatione* [1450]. In: *Humanist Educational Treatises*. Ed. and transl. by C.W. Kallendorf. 2002, pp. 126-259.

**DRBG** = Piccolomini, Enea Silvio: *De Rebus Basiliae gestis Commentarius*. [1450]

**DVI** = *De Viris Illustribus and other biographical Writings* of Enea Silvio Piccolomini. Edit. and transl. by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg. 2021.

**EPI** = *Collected Letters of Enea Silvio Piccolomini*. 10 vols. Ed. and transl. by Michael von Cotta-Schönberg. 2022-2026.

**EUR** = Piccolomini, Enea Silvio: *Europa*. [1458].

- Enea Silvii Piccolominei postea Pii II *de Europa*. Ed. A. van Heck. Città del Vaticano, 2001. (Studi e testi; 398).
- Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini: *Europe (c. 1400-1458)*. Transl. by Robert Brown. Washington, DC, 2013.

**GER** = Piccolomini, Enea Silvio: *Germania*. 1458.

- Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini: *Germania*. Edit. A. Schmidt. 1962.
- Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini: *Deutschland*. Transl. A. Schmidt. 1962.

**HA** = Eneas Silvius Piccolomini: *Historia Austriasis*. Teil 1: Einleitung von Martin Wagendorfer. 1. Redaktion ed. von Julia Knödler. Teil 2: 2./3, ed. Martin Wagendorfer. 2 vols. Hannover, 2009. (Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum. Nova Series; 24).

**HB** = Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini: *Historia Bohemica*. Herausg. J. Hejnic & H. Rothe. 2 vols. Köln, 2005. (Bausteine zur slavischen Philologie und Kulturgeschichte. Neue Folge. Reihe B; 20).

**HE** = Enea Silvii Piccolominei *Epistolarium seculare*. Complectens De duobus amantibus, De naturis equorum, De curialium miseris. Cur. A. van Heck. Città del Vaticano, 2007. (Studi e testi, 439).

**KO** = *Epistolae familiares. De duobus amantibus Euryalo et Lucretia. Descriptio urbis Viennensis*. Edit. Nicolaus de Wyle. Nürnberg: Antonius Koberger, 1481. [With later editions of 1486 and 1496].

**ME** = Enea Silvio Piccolomini: *Briefe. Dichtungen*. Übers. Max Mells. 1966.

**MPL** = Migne. Patrologia Latina.

**RE** = Reject Aeneas, Accept Pius. Selected Letters of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II). Edit. Th. M. Izbicki. Washington, 2006.

**RTA** = Deutsche Reichstagsakten.

**SRD** = Scriptores rerum danicarum.

**ST** = Piccolomini, Enea Silvio: *Les misères des gens de cour. Le songe de Fortune*. Trad. Serge Stolf. 2015.

**VO** = Voigt, Georg: *Enea Silvio de' Piccolomini als Papst Pius der Zweite und sein Zeitalter*. 3 vols. 1856-1863.

**WI** = Widmer, Berthe (ed.): *Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Papst Pius II. Ausgewählte Texte aus seinen Schriften*. 1960.

**WO** = Wolkan, Rudolf: *Der Briefwechsel des Eneas Silvius Piccolomini*. 3 vols. Wien, 1909-1918. (Fontes rerum Austriacarum, II. Abteilung, 61, 62, 67, 68).

Others

**\*\*** Lead manuscript.

**CE** = Common Era.

**BCE** = Before the Common Era.

**DV** = digital version.

## II. TEXT AND TRANSLATION

**Gravissima et Christianissima verba Pii pontificis maximi ad sacrum collegium reverendissimorum dominorum cardinalium quando illustrissimus Venetorum senatus arma sumpsit contra perfidum Mahometum<sup>1</sup> Turcum<sup>2</sup> fortissimo imperatore magnae classis Ludovico procuratore Sancti Marci<sup>3</sup>**

[1] {142v} Ecce, ecce, quomodo Deus excitavit fidelem populum suum, dilectos filios<sup>4</sup> nostros, senatum et dominium Venetum! Ecce, quomodo hi, quos dormire et desides esse omnes dicebant, primi omnium in honore Dei arma susceperunt<sup>5</sup>. Obloquebantur omnes<sup>6</sup> de Venetis. Hi soli esse<sup>7</sup> videbantur<sup>8</sup>, qui in tanta Christianorum necessitate subvenire recusarent: ecce, ecce soli vigilant, soli laborant, soli parant se ad subveniendum Christianis, ad ulciscendum inimicum Christi, persecutorem fidei nostrae! Moveantur nunc ceteri exemplo eorum<sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup>, quos damnabant! Sequantur eos, quos culpabant! Faciant vel minimam particulam eorum, quae faciunt hi, quos desides vocabant! Benedicti sint dilectissimi filii nostri Veneti. Benedicta sit eorum tam pia et<sup>11</sup> sancta intentio. Benedicat Deus<sup>12</sup> Christianissimam rempublicam et conatus<sup>13</sup> eorum adjuvet, eisque honorificentissime adversus Turcos<sup>14</sup> praestet victoriam<sup>15</sup>.

[2] {143r} (*Post haec addidit:*) Officium vestrum est, venerabiles fratres<sup>16</sup>, in eorum tanto et<sup>17</sup> laudabili proposito adjuvare dilectos filios nostros Venetos. Non sunt soli in tanto negotio relinquendi. Adjuvandi sunt omni conatu, a nobis<sup>18</sup> praesertim, qui curam Christianorum gerimus. Propterea duo a nobis consideranda sunt: primo de adjuvando Venetos in hac prima expeditione, quam fecerunt, et dando<sup>19</sup> eis aliquod subsidium pro hoc anno praesenti. Secundo considerandum est de expeditione facienda pro anno futuro<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Mahometum *add.* V, Y

<sup>2</sup> Turcam S

<sup>3</sup> fortissimo ... Marci *omit.* V, Y

<sup>4</sup> 1463 *add.* V, Y

<sup>5</sup> sumpserunt X

<sup>6</sup> *omit.* X

<sup>7</sup> cum Y

<sup>8</sup> dicebantur V, Y

<sup>9</sup> *omit.* X

<sup>10</sup> exemplo eorum : eorum

exemplo V, Y

<sup>11</sup> tam V, Y

<sup>12</sup> que Y

<sup>13</sup> senatus V, Y

<sup>14</sup> Turchas S

<sup>15</sup> et *add.* V

<sup>16</sup> etiam venerabiles fratres : o fratres venerabiles X

<sup>17</sup> tanto et : tam V

<sup>18</sup> vobis Y

<sup>19</sup> et dando : in dando Y;

dedando X

<sup>20</sup> 1464 *add.* V

## **Grave and Christian words of Pius, Supreme Pontiff, to the Sacred College of the Most Reverend Lords Cardinals, when the illustrious Venetian Senate went to war against the Mehmed, the Infidel Turk, 1463**

[1] See, see, how God has aroused his faithful people, Our beloved sons, the Senate and Realm of Venice! See, how those whom all said were sleeping and sluggish, were the first of all to take arms for the honour of God. All were criticising the Venetians, who were seen as the only ones who refused to provide aid in this great crisis of the Christians. But see, now they are the only ones who are vigilant, who act, who move to aid the Christians and to take revenge on the enemy of Christ, the persecutor of our Faith! Let now all the others be moved by the example of those whom they were condemning! Let them follow those whom they were blaming! Let them do just one little bit of what they are doing, whom they called sluggards. Blessed be Our beloved sons, the Venetians. Blessed be their pious and holy endeavour. May God bless that most Christian republic and assist their endeavours, and may He grant them a most honourable victory against the Turks.

[2] (*And after this, he added*): Venerable brothers, now it is your duty to assist Our beloved sons, the Venetians, in their great and praiseworthy undertaking. They must not be left alone in this great affair. Rather, they must be supported with all means, and especially by us who are responsible for the Christians. Therefore, we must consider two things: firstly, how to assist the Venetians in the expedition they have now launched and give them aid this year. Secondly, we must consider the expedition to be made next year.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I.e., the papal crusade against the Turks, to be launch-

ed in 1464, together with Burgundy and Hungary