Tommaso Parentucelli, Pope Nicholas V Encyclopedia Article

Tommaso Parentucelli, Pope Nicholas V

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Tommaso Parentucelli, Pope Nicholas V

1397-1455

Italian scholar who, as Pope Nicholas V (r. 1447-1455), fostered learning in the sciences and arts by establishing the Vatican Library. The son of a physician, Tommaso rose through the ranks until, during the Council of Basel (1431-1449), he was elected to the church's leading position. After removing the antipope Felix V, he set about rebuilding much of Rome, including a renovation of the Vatican, and soon established the Vatican Library "for the common convenience of the learned." By the time of his death, the library contained some 1,200 manuscripts, one-third of which were in Greek, and most of which focused on classical learning. Within another quarter-century, the library contained more than 3,500 volumes, making it by far the largest in Europe, and securing Tommaso's lasting reputation as "the humanist pope."