

St Gelasius Pope II



Gelasius II Born in the kingdom of Naples, John of Gaeta entered Monte Cassino c. 1060 and became a cardinal in 1088. He was called to Rome from Montecassino, Italy, by Pope Urban II, who created him cardinal (1088) and papal chancellor (1089). He was elected pope on Jan. 24, 1118, as successor to Paschal II, whose pontificate had been damaged by dissension from the “investiture controversy,” an administrative struggle between the popes and the Holy Roman emperors over the right to grant titles to ecclesiastics. Paschal’s attempt to end the struggle with the Holy Roman emperor Henry V in 1111 had caused a revolt among the German bishops. Henry then fled Rome amidst an uprising there and took Paschal as his prisoner. Despite opposition from the Curia, Paschal—whom Gelasius fervently defended—granted Henry the right to investiture, but the controversy continued.

Gelasius’ election was blackened by Henry, whose loyal supporter Cencius II Frangipani attacked and imprisoned the elderly pope. Driven twice from Rome by Henry, who installed Antipope Gregory VIII, Gelasius died at the monastery of Cluny while planning a council at Reims; he was buried at the monastery.