



INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED JESUIT STUDIES
BOSTON COLLEGE

JESUIT SOURCES

International Symposia on Jesuit Studies

ISSN: 2766-0664

The Expulsion and Return of the Jesuits to Venice, 1606–57:
A Test of Loyalty between the Papacy and the Jesuits

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Source: *The Jesuits and the Church in History*
(Proceedings of the Symposium held at Boston College, August 1–4, 2022)

Edited by: Barton Geger, S.J., Robert Gerlich, S.J., and Claude N. Pavur, S.J.

ISBN: 978-1-947617-19-3

Published by: Institute of Jesuit Sources

Originally Published: November 30, 2023

<https://doi.org/10.51238/ISJS.2022.03>

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The Expulsion and Return of the Jesuits to Venice, 1606–57: A Test of Loyalty between the Papacy and the Jesuits

PAUL F. GRENDLER

The most important relationship that the Jesuits had inside the church was with the papacy. Outsiders viewed the Society of Jesus as extraordinarily loyal to the papacy. They saw the Jesuits as willing to obey the papacy whatever the consequences. And the Jesuits were remarkably loyal to the papacy. Did the papacy return that loyalty? The expulsion from Venice is a test case. The Jesuits were expelled from the Republic of Venice because they obeyed the papacy in extreme circumstances. What did the papacy do, if anything, to enable the Jesuits to return to the Republic of Venice?¹

Expulsion

In 1606, the Republic of Venice expelled the Jesuits and did not permit them to return until 1657. A major Catholic state banishing the Jesuits for fifty-one years was a startling event. The only comparable but lesser episode was the banishment of the Jesuits from part of France from early 1595 to 1604. This forced the closure of nine Jesuit colleges with schools for about nine years.² The French banishment was punishment for an attempted assassination of the French king by a former student of the Jesuits. But no former students of the Jesuits tried to assassinate anyone in Venice or did anything close to this. There were two other very minor expulsions of the Jesuits from Catholic states before 1759. In 1588, the Diet of Transylvania forced a new young ruler to banish the Jesuits as a condition for making him ruler of Transylvania, because it disliked their alleged influence on him. But the Jesuits returned in 1595.³ And the grand master of the Knights of Malta expelled the Jesuits for a few months in 1639, as he made the Jesuits the scapegoats for his own unpopular policies.⁴ Hence, the expulsion and return in Venice was a unique event. And it tested the relationship of the Jesuits with the papacy.

Venice expelled the Jesuits because they obeyed the papacy rather than the Republic in the papal interdict of 1606 to 1607. The causes of the interdict were a series of

1. This is a much-condensed version of a story that is discussed in more detail in my book in preparation entitled “Jesuit Schools in Italy 1548–1773.” The text here tries to maintain the conversational style of the oral delivery, and it presents only the necessary minimum documentation. I thank Cristiano Casalini for the invitation to participate in the conference at Boston College and Claude Pavur, S.J. for providing welcome transportation at the conference when it was needed.

2. For a brief account and bibliography, see Paul F. Grendler, *Jesuit Schools and Universities in Europe 1548–1773* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 60–61.

3. László Szilas, “Austria,” in *Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús: Biográfico-temático*, ed. Charles E. O’Neill, S.J. and Joaquín María Domínguez, S.J., 4 vols. (Rome: Institutum Historicum S.I., 2001) (hereafter DHCJ), 1:277–92, here 277. I thank Robert Maryks for informing me about the Transylvania and Malta expulsions.

4. Anthony F. Sapienza, “Malta,” DHCJ 3:2488–90 here 2489.

Venetian laws that limited the legal rights of the church. Several laws sharply restricted the rights of church institutions including religious orders over lands donated to them. Such laws were especially aimed at newer and expanding religious orders, such as the Jesuits and the Capuchins.⁵ Another law decreed that clergymen accused of crimes would be tried in civil courts instead of ecclesiastical courts. These laws asserted Venetian state absolutism in ecclesiastical matters.

There was also ideological hostility. There had already been friction concerning the Jesuit schools in Padua, as some professors and students, plus Venetian senators, saw the Jesuit school as an illegal rival to the University of Padua. By 1606, a significant fraction of the Venetian nobility hated the Jesuits. It was an ideological hatred that had no basis in truth. The anti-Jesuit faction believed that the Jesuits were agents of Spain paid to help the king of Spain achieve world domination. At this time, Venice diplomatically supported France, Spain's enemy. The anti-Jesuit senators believed that the Jesuits used the classroom to persuade young Venetian nobles to favor Spain and betray Venice as the right thing to do, because Spain was the champion of Catholic Europe.⁶ As in most conspiratorial ideologies, there was no truth to the accusation. But Venetian hostility did not need a factual foundation to be persuasive. Hatred of the Jesuits would influence Venetian policy toward the Jesuits during the interdict and long after.

Pope Paul V (r.1605–21), a lawyer by training, strongly objected to the Venetian laws. So on December 5, 1605, he issued an ultimatum. If the Republic of Venice would not revoke civil laws concerning the disposition of ecclesiastical lands and jurisdiction over clergymen accused of crimes, he would impose an interdict on the entire Venetian state.⁷ Venice refused to change its laws. Hence, on April 17, 1606, Paul V imposed a general interdict on the Republic of Venice. It forbade the clergy from exercising almost all sacerdotal functions, including celebrating Mass, distributing Holy Communion, hearing confessions, presiding over marriages, baptizing newborns, and conducting funeral services. For good measure, the papacy also excommunicated the doge and members of the Venetian Senate.

Venice responded by ordering the clergy to disobey the papacy and to carry on their sacerdotal functions under pain of death. All the bishops obeyed Venice, which meant that the secular clergy obeyed Venice. Most religious orders obeyed Venice. However, the Jesuits, the Capuchins, and the Theatines resisted the Venetian government. Things were tense in Venice as the Jesuits waited for instructions. Jesuit superior general Claudio Acquaviva (in office 1581–1615) by his own authority and in the name of

5. Maurizio Sangalli, *Cultura, politica e religione nella Repubblica di Venezia tra Cinque e Seicento: Gesuiti e somaschi a Venezia* (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 1999), 194–202.

6. For an example of an anti-Jesuit tract written between 1604 and 1606, see Gian Paolo Brizzi, "Educare il principe, formare le élites: I gesuiti e Ranuccio I Farnese," in *Università, principe, gesuiti: La politica farnesiana dell'istruzione a Parma e Piacenza (1545–1622)* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1980), 135–211, here 190–92.

7. There is no single study of the entire interdict. The most comprehensive history to date is William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty: Renaissance Values in the Age of the Counter Reformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 339–482. For a day-to-day narrative of the discussions and actions by the Venetian government, see Gaetano Cozzi, *Il doge Nicolò Contarini: Ricerche sul patriziato veneziano agli inizi del Seicento* (Venice: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 1958), 93–147.

the pope ordered them to obey the interdict. On May 8, 1606, the rector of the Jesuit professed house in Venice told the doge that they had no choice but to disobey the state.⁸ Expulsion was the obvious next step. On May 9, 1606, the government ordered the Jesuits to leave, and the order was immediately executed. On May 10 and 11, 1606, the Jesuits were escorted by police officers or soldiers out of Venice, Padua, Brescia, Verona, and Vicenza. They left by ship or carriages. The Jesuits in Candia, the major city of Crete that Venice ruled, were expelled on June 25, 1606.⁹

At the time of the expulsion, the Jesuits had colleges with schools for non-Jesuit students in Venice, Brescia, Verona, and Candia. They had a school for Jesuits only in Padua. The Vicenza residence had only four Jesuits, and there was no school. The total number of Jesuits expelled was probably 153. That included sixty-four priests, thirty-three scholastics, fifty-five temporal coadjutors, and one Jesuit who was either a scholastic or a temporal coadjutor.¹⁰ The expelled Jesuits from Venice and the Veneto were temporarily distributed among various Jesuit colleges, especially Bologna, Ferrara, Mantua, Parma, and Piacenza. After a perilous journey of five months, the Jesuits expelled from Candia landed in Barletta in Apulia.¹¹ After the Jesuits were expelled, the Capuchins and Theatines were also expelled.

Worse was to come. On June 14, 1606, the Venetian Senate permanently banned the Jesuits. They might never return to any part of the Venetian state. To make sure of this, the Senate erected very high legal barriers against return. It mandated that any decision to allow the Jesuits to return had to receive the near unanimous consent of the Council of Ten, the Senate, and the Great Council. These were hurdles impossible to surmount, as the Senate well knew. Permanent exile with no possibility of return was an extraordinary punishment. The reasons cited in the preamble to the law were ingratitude, disturbing the peace, ill-will toward Venice, disobedience to the state, inciting others to disobedience, and creating division and slander.¹² In the legal tradition of the time, disobedience to the state and inciting others to disobey were the most serious. In short, the Senate judged that the Jesuits were enemies of the state. Finally, on August 18, 1606, the Senate forbade all inhabitants of the Republic, male and female, from sending letters to or receiving letters from Jesuits, or to have any other contact with them.¹³

On April 21, 1607, the papacy and Venice signed a peace treaty that was a papal capitulation. Paul V lifted the interdict, although Venice did not change its laws asserting civil jurisdiction over church lands and clergymen. As part of the peace treaty, Venice allowed the Capuchins and Theatines to return and restored their assets to

8. Giuseppe Cappelletti, *I gesuiti e la Repubblica di Venezia: Documenti diplomatici relativi alla società gesuitica* (Venice: Grimaldo, 1873), 50. This is a very valuable collection of documents concerning the Jesuits and Venice from the Archivio di Stato di Venezia.

9. For the expulsion from Venice, see Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 69–74; for the expulsions from Brescia, Candia, Padua, Verona, and Vicenza, see Pietro Pirri, S.J., *L'interdetto di Venezia del 1606 e i gesuiti: Silloge di documenti con introduzione* (Rome: Institutum Historicum S.I., 1959), 154–89, 202–4.

10. Pirri, *L'interdetto*, 267–73.

11. Pirri, *L'interdetto*, 157n1, 160–61, 264–73.

12. Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 31–34; Pirri, *L'interdetto*, 27.

13. Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 140–42; Pirri, *L'interdetto*, 27–28.

them. Pope Paul V wanted the Jesuits readmitted, but Venice refused.¹⁴ The pope gave way, and the settlement left the Jesuits permanently banished.¹⁵ Overall, the papacy was responsible for the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1606. It had imposed an interdict, which was foolish because it could not be enforced, and the pope should have realized this. Paul V also insisted that the Jesuits obey him, which caused the Jesuits to be permanently banished.

The permanent banishment left a major issue undetermined: What was to be done with Jesuit churches, buildings, lands, and other assets? When a person was banished or deported from a city or state for an alleged crime, a judge might order *adnotatio bonorum* (annotation of goods) of the banished person. That is, his possessions were inventoried, registered, and frozen for a period, typically one year. If the banished person returned for trial within the year, his goods were unfrozen, and their ultimate disposition depended on the outcome of his trial. They might be confiscated, restored to him, given to heirs, or disposed of in some other way. On the other hand, if the banished person did not return within the year, the state normally confiscated his goods. This was particularly true if the person refused to stand trial and fled.¹⁶

The Venetian government had begun to inventory the assets of the Jesuits on May 9, 1606, the day after the Senate banished the Jesuits and the day before they left.¹⁷ The inventory listed the contents of the professed house in Venice, including the books in the library. It included a list of religious objects that were returned to donors. The office of the bishop of Venice, who was called a patriarch, then took custody of the rest of the contents of the church and professed house, including the books in the library. The same happened in the other Jesuit houses in the Republic. As in Venice, Jesuit churches, college buildings, their interior contents, properties that produced income or foodstuffs, and financial documents were inventoried and annotated. What would Venice do with the frozen assets of the Jesuits?

Paul V had an interest in this question as well. He had not forgotten the Jesuits or their properties. He could not persuade the Venetian government to readmit the Jesuits in the near term. So he did what he could to safeguard their assets for the time being. In 1609, he proposed that someone be appointed to administer the Jesuit assets, and his choice was the patriarch of Venice. Venice agreed.¹⁸ Behind this decision was the political reality that the Jesuits might be allowed to return at some point, despite the high legal barriers. So it was a compromise arrangement. It confirmed Jesuit ownership of their assets, with ecclesiastical management by the patriarch.

14. Ludwig von Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, trans. F. I. [Frederick Ignatius] Antrobus et al., 40 vols. (London: Herder, 1891–1953), 25:172–74, 178; and Pirri, *L'interdetto*, 45–57.

15. Pastor, *History of the Popes*, 25:175–83; Bouwsma, *Venice*, 408–15.

16. Cornelius M. Riethdorf, “Citizenship, Exile and Natural Rights in Medieval Roman Law, ca. 1200–1400” (PhD diss., Cambridge University, 2016), 53–54, 193, 196, <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.41648> (accessed July 6, 2023).

17. For the inventory of May 9, 1606, the list of objects returned to donors, and a subsequent list of some of the books in the Jesuit library of May 26, 1606, see Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 53–68; see also Pirri, *L'interdetto*, 125.

18. Vittorio Frajese, “Il mito del gesuita tra Venezia e i gallicani,” in *I gesuiti e Venezia: Momenti e problemi di storia veneziana della Compagnia di Gesù*, Atti del Convegno di Studi, Venezia, 2–5 ottobre 1990, ed. Mario Zanardi (Padua: Gregoriana libreria editrice, 1994), 283–345, here 334.

Of course, this meant that the Venetian government would make the ultimate decisions, because the patriarch was always a Venetian noble whom the Senate chose and the papacy confirmed. What would it do? In 1615, the Senate assigned the Jesuit church and professed house in Venice to an order of Benedictine nuns who had been forced out of Cyprus by the Turks. They stayed until 1806.¹⁹ This was a de facto Senate confiscation and reassignment of the Jesuit church and professed house in Venice. However, the Venetian government did not confiscate, reassign, or sell Jesuit churches and properties in Padua, Brescia, Verona, Vicenza, or Candia. They remained in limbo.

Jesuit Schools and Venetian Students during the Expulsion

Although the Jesuits were banished and their schools closed, they still taught students from the Venetian Republic.

In January 1612, the heads of the Council of Ten in Venice wrote an angry letter to the Venetian governors of Brescia and Verona. They had heard that sons of noble families from these two cities were attending the Jesuit school in Castiglione delle Stiviere just beyond the border of the Republic of Venice.²⁰ This violated the law of August 18, 1606, which forbade anyone from the Republic of Venice having any contact with the Jesuits. The Venetian governors in Brescia and Verona commissioned an agent—really a spy—to go to Castiglione delle Stiviere to discover if this was true. He learned that it was true. Many Venetian subjects were attending the Jesuit school there.

In 1608, the Jesuits had founded a college with a school in Castiglione delle Stiviere. It was the sole town in the tiny marquisate and (from 1610) the imperial principality of the same name. The town was small. But it had a special place in Jesuit hearts, because it was the birthplace of the second Jesuit to be beatified, Aloysius (Luigi) Gonzaga (1568–91). The eldest son of the ruler of Castiglione delle Stiviere, Aloysius was beatified in 1605 and canonized in 1726.²¹ Italian Jesuits held up Aloysius Gonzaga as a spiritual example to youth. His portrait hung on the walls of Jesuit classrooms across Italy.

In 1608, the ruler of Castiglione delle Stiviere was Francesco Gonzaga (1577–1616), a younger brother of Blessed Luigi. He had proposed to Superior General Acquaviva that the Jesuits establish a church and a college with a school in Castiglione delle Stiviere, and a church honoring his late brother. Acquaviva agreed, and Francesco Gonzaga provided considerable financial support to build the church, college, and school.²² It was also clear that the college and school were intended from the beginning to be a

19. Mario Zanardi, "I 'domicilia' o centri operativi della Compagnia di Gesù nello Stato veneto (1542–1773)," in *I gesuiti e Venezia*, 89–179, here 110.

20. Council of Ten documents of January 24 and February 27, 1611 *more veneto*, which means 1612, printed in Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 223–24. Much of what follows on the Jesuit school at Castiglione delle Stiviere is based on documents from the Archivio di Stato di Venice January 24 through June 9, 1612, printed in Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 223–38.

21. There is a large bibliography on St. Aloysius Gonzaga. Start with Silvano Giordano, "Luigi (Alvigi) Gonzaga, santo," *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (hereafter DBI), 100 vols. (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1960–2022), 66 (2006): 499–502.

22. Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 224–27, 230–31, for the spy's report on Francesco Gonzaga. For a short biography of Francesco Gonzaga, see Raffaele Tamalio, "Gonzaga, Francesco," DBI 57 (2001): 766–67.

place that would serve the people of the western part of the Veneto. The town of Castiglione delle Stiviere, with a population of probably two thousand to five thousand, was too small to support a college and school by itself.²³

In early 1612, the Jesuit school in Castiglione delle Stiviere offered two classes, grammar and humanities. Each enrolled forty students for a total of eighty. Venetian subjects comprised somewhere between thirty and sixty of the students, according to contemporary estimates, that is, thirty-eight to seventy-five percent. The vast majority of the students came from Brescia, others came from Veneto towns near Brescia. Some of the Brescia students were nobles, something that always mattered a great deal to the Venetian authorities. The students from the Republic of Venice lived in boarding houses.²⁴

The Jesuit school was ideally located to attract students from the Venetian state. The town of Castiglione delle Stiviere is only twenty-eight kilometers directly east from Brescia on level land. A horse and buggy could make the trip in three or four hours. Castiglione delle Stiviere is only forty kilometers west from Verona on a less direct route. But it was still a journey of fewer than eight hours.

Like the students, the Jesuits at Castiglione delle Stiviere were overwhelmingly Venetian subjects. In 1612, there were eight Jesuits at Castiglione delle Stiviere. Six were Venetian subjects. Three were born in Brescia, and one each was born in Verona, Padua, and Cividale di Belluno. Two of the priests bore the names of Brescian noble families. At least two of the eight Jesuits had been expelled from the Republic of Venice in 1606, one of them from the Brescian college.²⁵ In other words, students from Brescia and other Veneto towns went to Castiglione delle Stiviere to study under Jesuits who spoke the Veneto dialect and might even be relatives. It was almost as if the Brescia Jesuit school was transplanted to Castiglione delle Stiviere.

It was not surprising that parents from Brescia and Verona defied Venetian law and sent their sons to study at a Jesuit school outside the Venetian state. Of the five towns with Jesuit foundations in the mainland state, Brescia and Verona most strongly supported the Jesuits. The Venetian Senate ordered the Venetian governors to publicize and enforce the law forbidding subjects from sending their sons to Jesuit schools outside the state. But the law was not enforced. In 1622, ten years later, the Jesuit school at Castiglione delle Stiviere enrolled two hundred students, of which about 175 came from Brescia and Verona.²⁶

The same thing happened on the eastern border of the Venetian state. The Jesuit college and school at Gorizia attracted some students from Friuli, the eastern part of the Venetian mainland state. Ferdinand II Habsburg (1578–1637, r.1619–37) helped found a Jesuit college and school at Gorizia in 1618, and it attracted some students from Friuli, including a few sons of the leading nobility of Friuli. It was not surprising

23. This is my estimate. No population data has been located.

24. Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 224–29, 231, 234.

25. For the names of the Jesuits and where they were born, see Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 229, 233–34; and Pirri, *L'interdetto*, 213, 261, 264, 268, 270, 271.

26. Frajese, "Il mito," 337–38.

that some Venetian subjects from Friuli attended the Gorizia Jesuit schools, because family, commercial, and linguistic links connected Friuli and the Austrian-ruled bordering lands. The Venetian government reiterated the ban against Venetian subjects studying in Jesuit schools, but was ignored.²⁷

Relations between Ferdinand II and Venice were very bad, and in at least one case their quarrel entangled a Jesuit. A Jesuit priest, Father Bartholomew Viller (c.1542–1626) was the confessor, friend, and advisor to Ferdinand II. In late 1615, he went to Rome to participate in the seventh Jesuit general congregation, which chose a new superior general. When the congregation ended in late January 1616, he needed to return to Graz, Austria, and the most convenient route was through Venetian territory. So, he foolishly tried to slip through the Republic of Venice disguised as a secular priest. He was recognized, arrested in March 1616, and imprisoned until February 1617.²⁸

Pope Paul V did not forget that the Jesuits were still banished from the Republic of Venice. In 1613 and again in 1614, the cardinal secretary of state, acting on behalf of the pope, spoke to two different Venetian ambassadors in order to urge Venice to allow the Jesuits to return. The Senate sharply rejected the idea.²⁹ Subsequent popes did not raise the issue with Venice. However, when plague raged in Venice in 1630, Jesuit superior general Muzio Vitelleschi (1563–1645, in office 1615–45) offered the assistance of the Jesuits. Nothing happened.³⁰ The anti-Jesuit party still dominated the Senate.

The Jesuits Return

The outbreak of the War of Crete in 1645 awakened hope that a way could be found to return the Jesuits to Venice. In June 1645, an Ottoman army arrived on the island of Crete, the largest remaining Venetian possession in the eastern Mediterranean. It conquered most of the island and in May 1648 laid siege to Candia.³¹ But it could not take the city, and Venice was able to re-supply it by sea. Hence, the years-long war of Crete continued. Venice needed allies and money.

The Jesuits offered to help in the war. Superior General Vitelleschi told a Venetian cardinal in Rome that the Society had many priests who were well trained in navigation; in judging weather, winds, and storms; and in interpreting astral influences. They were knowledgeable about the construction and defense of fortresses, siege warfare, and military machines. And they were willing to serve on Venetian warships.³² Venice did not reply.

Some Venetian nobles wanted the Jesuits back because they were excellent teach-

27. Claudio Ferlan, *Dentro e fuori le aule: La Compagnia di Gesù a Gorizia e nell'Austria interna (secoli XVI–XVII)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012), 232–37.

28. Robert Bireley, *Ferdinand II, Counter-Reformation Emperor, 1578–1637* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 82.

29. Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 250–54, 256–58.

30. Gian Vittorio Signorotto, “Il rientro dei gesuiti a Venezia: La trattativa (1606–1657),” in *I gesuiti e Venezia*, 385–419, here 388.

31. For a detailed military and diplomatic history of the war from the Venetian perspective, see Kenneth M. Setton, *Venice, Austria, and the Turks in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1991), 106–243.

32. Signorotto, “Il rientro,” 390–91.

ers. They believed that young Venetian nobles were not well prepared to fill public offices, and their chancery secretaries could not write good Latin letters. In April 1653, a senator reported to Rome that the majority of senators favored the return of the Jesuits for their schools.³³ In the absence of the Jesuits, the Somascans and the Venetian government founded several schools in Venice and the Veneto. With one exception, they did not attract many students.³⁴

It became clear that Venice needed money to continue the war. And so the Jesuits considered that they might purchase their return. The leadership canvassed the views of Jesuits in the province of Venice. (The Jesuit province of Venice embraced the Republic of Venice plus Bologna and the duchies of Ferrara, Mantua, and Parma.) At least one Jesuit objected that paying to re-enter the Republic of Venice would be the equivalent of admitting guilt for crimes they had never committed. That would hand their enemies a powerful argument. But other Jesuits wanted to return.³⁵ So in March 1653 Superior General Goswin Nickel (in office 1652–54) made an offer to the doge. It failed. Five months later, on August 16, 1653, he again wrote to the doge. He offered 150,000 ducats for permission to return.³⁶ Venice rejected the offer by not replying.

Why did the Jesuits offer money to return to a state that had expelled them and whose rulers showed no sign of wanting them back? The likely reason is that many people inside the Republic wanted them back for their schools and other ministries. This was undoubtedly true for such cities as Brescia and Verona. And the Jesuits were willing to return, even at the price of a large sum of money, because their goal was to help souls. It is also likely that the leaders of Brescia, Verona, and other towns in the Venetian state privately promised strong financial and other support if they were permitted to return.³⁷

Although the majority of the senators favored taking the money and allowing the Jesuits to return, a small group of influential senators was intransigently opposed. Part of the reason was civic pride and memory; Venice had defied the papacy and asserted Venetian sovereignty during the interdict. A determined minority of senators would not disavow this legacy, which included expulsion of the Jesuits.³⁸ And the previous ideology still gripped some senators. In 1655, a senator harangued the Senate with the old lie that the Jesuits were rebels against the state who served Spain.³⁹

Conspicuously absent from the discussions to this point was the papacy. This was because Pope Innocent X (r.1644–55) did not view either Venice or the Jesuits favorably. But he died on January 7, 1655, and Alexander VII (Fabio Chigi [1599–1667]) be-

33. Signorotto, "Il rientro," 411–12.

34. The efforts to found new schools to replace Jesuit schools are discussed in my book in preparation.

35. Signorotto, "Il rientro," 391.

36. Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 272–74; Signorotto, "Il rientro," 389–91, 397–98, 401.

37. This topic merits further research in the archives, which I have been unable to do because of the pandemic.

38. Gaetano Cozzi, "Venezia nello scenario europeo (1517–1699)," in Gaetano Cozzi, Michael Knapton, and Giovanni Scarabello, *La Repubblica di Venezia nell'età moderna: Dal 1517 alla fine della Repubblica* (Turin: UTET, 1992), 161–62; and Signorotto, "Il rientro," 404.

39. Signorotto, "Il rientro," 412. Although the occasion for the denunciation was different, the accusation against the Jesuits was the same.

came pope on April 7, 1655. Alexander VII was very worried about the threat of the Ottoman Turks and was favorably inclined toward Venice. He also supported the Jesuits. He had made the Spiritual Exercises and was friendly with several Jesuits in Rome. During the conclave, when he was still Cardinal Chigi, he proposed a resolution that the assembled cardinals approved: the new pope, whomever he might be, should help Venice in its battle against the Ottomans. After his election, Alexander VII repeated this pledge in a letter to the doge. However, given the penury of the papal treasury, it was unclear how he was going to honor the commitment.⁴⁰

Then in early 1655 a new papal nuncio arrived in Venice. This was Carlo Carafa (1611–80), a Theatine, a cardinal, and a friend of the Jesuits.⁴¹ While Pope Alexander VII was open to helping Venice, Carafa devised the strategy that connected helping Venice win the Crete War and returning the Jesuits to Venice. In the summer of 1655, Carafa made a proposal to Rome. The papacy would provide a large amount of money to Venice to help it prosecute the war against the Turks. The papacy would obtain the money by suppressing some religious orders. Their assets would be sold and the money given to Venice for the war. Venice would thank the pope by permitting the Jesuits to return.⁴² The scheme was set into motion.

In November 1655, the Venetian government sent four very senior senators to Rome for the traditional visit to congratulate the new pope on his election, to pledge loyalty to him, and to take his measure. Alexander VII made an offer to them: he would suppress two religious orders. He would then authorize the Venetian government to sell their assets. The proceeds would go to the Venetian state to prosecute the Crete War, on which he put high priority. Then almost as an afterthought, he wished that the Jesuits might return to the Republic of Venice. Naturally, Venice welcomed the offer of funds for the war. But it made no commitment concerning the Jesuits.⁴³

The political and ecclesiastical climate was prepared for religious order suppressions. In 1652, Innocent X, the previous pope, had ordered the suppression of about twenty-four percent of the male religious order convents in Italy on the grounds that they were too small to maintain proper monastic discipline. He did not suppress any entire religious orders. Rather he ordered the closure of small convents from all male religious orders, including the Jesuits. However, only a handful of Jesuit houses were ordered closed, because almost all of their colleges were relatively large and financially healthy. For the small convents that were suppressed, their assets—houses, furniture, properties, financial instruments—were confiscated and sold. The papal justification

40. Pastor, *History of the Popes*, 30:366; 31:84; and Emanuele Boaga, *La soppressione innocenziana dei piccoli conventi in Italia* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1971), 119.

41. Born in Rome, Carafa attended the Roman diocesan seminary managed by the Jesuits and attended classes at the Roman College. He obtained a doctorate in civil and canon law, became a Theatine, rose in its ranks, became a bishop, then began a papal diplomatic career. He was a strong friend of the Jesuits and continued to support them after completion of his Venetian nunciature. The Jesuits reciprocated by burying him in the church of the Gesù. Marina Raffaelli Cammarota, "Carafa, Carlo," *DBI* 19 (1976): 513–17.

42. Giuseppe Gullino, "L'opera del nunzio Carafa per il ritorno dei gesuiti nella Serenissima (1655–57)," *Studi romani* 24, no. 2 (1976): 162–80, here 172–73; and Giuseppe Gullino, "Il rientro dei gesuiti a Venezia nel 1657: Le ragioni della politica e dell'economia," in *I gesuiti e Venezia*, 421–33, here 424–25.

43. Signorotto, "Il rientro," 416.

was that dioceses needed the money in order to support their parishes. The closing of small convents meant sending away the members. It was up to the religious orders to find space for them in their other houses. When there was no room in other convents, friars and monks were turned out into the street. Some became homeless.⁴⁴

Innocent X had designated seventy-five small convents in the Republic of Venice to be suppressed. Naturally, Venice objected that suppression of the small convents infringed on the right of the state to decide such matters. And the dispute was unresolved in the spring of 1655.⁴⁵

In February and March 1656, the papal plan went forward. The seventy-five small convents to be suppressed were reduced to fifty-nine, and Venice agreed that they might be suppressed. Most important, the papacy, guided by Carafa, chose two Venetian religious orders to be completely suppressed. The first was the Crossbearer Fathers (Padri Cruciferi or Crocigeri). It was a medieval hospitaler order of obscure origins approved in 1169. At one time, it had two hundred hospitals, but only four remained in the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, it had about ten houses and about fifty members. And it was wealthy.⁴⁶ The second was the Canons Regular of the Holy Spirit of Venice (Canonici Regolari dello Spirito Santo di Venezia). It had been founded in 1421. At first, it had many wealthy patrician novices, but it was now down to one house.⁴⁷ Since neither order extended beyond the borders of the Republic of Venice, suppressing them would not provoke opposition outside of Venice.

In late April and early May 1656, the papacy issued the necessary orders, and the fifty-nine small convents of various religious orders and the two Venetian orders were suppressed, their assets sold, with the proceeds to go to the Venetian state. Public auctions began in May or August 1656 and continued into December 1659.⁴⁸

The auctions produced at least 904,074 Venetian ducats to be used by the government for the Crete War. The figure merits repeating: at least 904,074 Venetian ducats. And the total may have reached one million ducats.⁴⁹ The money came from the sale of 11,274 *campi* (small cultivated fields or plots of land),⁵⁰ 163 houses, 121 *casoni* (buildings with multiple living units), twenty-nine commercial shops and windmills, and 928 *livelli* (properties under long-term leases). About ninety-two percent (832,333 Venetian ducats) of the total came from the sale of the assets of the two religious orders.⁵¹ Some

44. Boaga, *La soppressione*, is the indispensable source.

45. Boaga, *La soppressione*, 115–18.

46. H. L. M. van Rooijen and G. D. Gordini, "Crocigeri italiani," *Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione* (hereafter DIP), ed. Guerrino Pelliccia and Giancarlo Rocca, 10 vols. (Rome: Edizioni Paolini, 1974–2003), 3 (1976): 311–13; and Gullino, "Il rientro," 426. For Carafa's judgment about the Crossbearers, see Raffaelli Cammarota, "Carafa," 515.

47. Balbino Rano, "Canonici regolari dello Spirito Santo di Venezia," DIP 2 (1975): 151–54; and Gullino, "Il rientro," 426.

48. Boaga, *La soppressione*, 121–29. At p. 128, Boaga states that the auctions began in May 1656 and gives no termination date. Gullino, "Il rientro," 427, states that they began on August 4, 1656 and ended on December 15, 1659.

49. Pastor, *History of the Popes*, 31:85; and Boaga, *La soppressione*, 129, both based on contemporary estimates.

50. The *Cambridge Italian Dictionary*, general editor Barbara Reynolds (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 125, states that a *campo* was a little less than an acre in Padua and Treviso.

51. Gullino, "Il rientro," 423, 427.

items were not sold. For example, nuncio Carafa arranged for the paintings from the Venetian church of the Canons of the Holy Spirit of Venice, including four paintings by Titian, to be transferred to another church, the well-known Santa Maria della Salute.⁵² Venetian nobles purchased about seventy-one percent (for 590,007 ducats) of the assets of the two religious orders. Veneto nobles and commoners purchased the rest. The members of the two Venetian religious orders that were suppressed were not abandoned. The papacy decreed that they might join other religious orders or become diocesan priests. And they would receive annual pensions of forty silver scudi each.⁵³

Once the auctions were underway, it was time for the papacy to obtain permission for the Jesuits to return. Although it was perfectly clear from the beginning that this was what the pope expected, it had not been part of the negotiations concerning the suppressions and auctions. Most senators were willing to allow the Jesuits to return. But a minority had no intention of acceding to the pope's request, even though the state was receiving about a million ducats for the war. And Venetian nobles were acquiring an enormous number of former religious order land and buildings. Some senators still hated the Jesuits.

Nuncio Carafa worked tirelessly to win over recalcitrant senators by dispensing favors. The Roman curia helped by bestowing ecclesiastical appointments, benefices, and favors on clerical relatives of senators, plus anything else needed to secure a senator's vote.⁵⁴ Above all, he persuaded a very powerful senator and future doge to become his ally. This was Giovanni di Vettore Pesaro (1589–1659, doge 1658–59). From a very wealthy family, Pesaro had a long and distinguished political career. He had been one of the four senators who congratulated Alexander VII on his election and first heard of the pope's offer. Contemporaries viewed him as the person most able to persuade the Senate toward a course of action.⁵⁵

Pesaro was seventeen when the Jesuits were expelled in 1606, and his views were formed at that time. He was anti-papal and strongly opposed to the return of the Jesuits. However, he was now in his late sixties, and his highest priority was to win the War of Crete. When some senators concluded that the war was unwinnable and wished to sue for peace, Pesaro vehemently argued that Venice had to continue the war in order to maintain its position in the Mediterranean and to hold on to its most important maritime possession. But to win the war Venice needed money and allies. The pope provided money and could persuade other Christian states to join the cause. Hence, Pesaro changed his position on the Jesuits. He argued eloquently in favor of pleasing the pope by readmitting the Jesuits.⁵⁶

The clauses in the law of June 14, 1606, remained a huge obstacle. It was not possible to obtain a five-sixths majority of the Senate, or unanimous approval of the Council of Ten, to overturn the law. But there might be a different route. The idea arose that the

52. Boaga, *La soppressione*, 128.

53. Gullino, "Il rientro," 427.

54. Gullino, "L'opera," 172–74.

55. For a short biography, see Federico Barbierato, "Pesaro, Giovanni," *DBI* 82 (2015): 586–89.

56. Gullino, "L'opera," 173, 177; Gullino, "Il rientro," 423–26, 429–30; Signorotto, "Il rientro," 415–17; and Barbierato, "Pesaro," 587.

Jesuits might be readmitted as an act of grace (*grazia*) to be conceded to the pope. This would require only a majority vote of the Senate.⁵⁷

In Venetian governance, a grace was a special favor, permission, pardon, privilege, or bestowal of an office that facilitated reaching a desired goal. It was a political action that lubricated the wheels of government when normal procedures were difficult, embarrassing, or certain to fail. The use of graces was common in Venice and in every other Italian state at this time. The overwhelming majority of Venetian graces involved small issues or an individual. Typical graces included appointment to an office or removal of a restriction.⁵⁸ However, the Venetian Senate possessed the power of granting major graces, including graces allowing exiles to return.⁵⁹

A grace for the pope was the route taken. On July 29, 1656, Alexander VII sent a papal brief to the doge. He lamented that Venice had been deprived for such a long time of the presence of the Jesuits, who were servants of God dear to us and very effective workers in the vineyard of Christ. He argued that the Jesuits would be very useful to the citizens of Venice, particularly by educating youths in good letters, piety, and the fear of God. He recommended to Venice the guidance of St. Ignatius of Loyola and noted that the saint had laid the foundations of the Society when he lived in Venice. (This was not true; although Ignatius spent 1536 and a few months of 1537 in Venice, he laid the foundations of the Society earlier in Paris and later in Rome.) Alexander VII noted that Venice had received many graces from God, and that Venice had been generous in turn. He praised Venice for defending Christianity from “the fierce enemy” (*il fiero nemico*), a cause dear to the pope. He practically promised that if Venice permitted the Jesuits to return, there would be additional support for the war against the Ottomans.⁶⁰ Overall, the pope made a strong argument for the return of the Jesuits without ever requesting it.

Carafa, Pesaro, and other supporters of the Jesuits worked through the necessary steps in the next months. Some senators argued passionately against the return, and Pesaro answered them just as passionately. Some members of other religious orders, including the Somascans, opposed the return of the Jesuits. But they were not senators. Carafa and Pesaro were also lucky. One strong opponent of the return of the Jesuits conveniently died.⁶¹ Finally, on January 19, 1657, the issue was put to a vote of the Senate. It voted that the Jesuit fathers would be received into the city of Venice and every other place in the state. The vote was 116 yes, fifty-three no, and nineteen abstentions.⁶² Thus, thirty-eight percent of the senators still rejected the Jesuits despite the papal gift of a million ducats. On the same day, the Senate passed a resolution that stated that, notwithstanding the law of June 14, 1606, readmission of the Jesuits was

57. Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 16.

58. For the definition and many Venetian examples, see Monique O’Connell, *Men of Empire: Power and Negotiation in Venice’s Maritime State* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 97–118.

59. Giuseppe Maranini, *La costituzione di Venezia*, vol. 2, *Dopo la serrata del Maggio Consiglio* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1974 [1931]), 209.

60. It is printed in Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 287–90, quote on 289.

61. Boaga, *La soppressione*, 118n2; Gullino, “L’opera,” 177; Gullino, “Il rientro,” 420–31; and Signorotto, “Il rientro,” 416–17.

62. Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 291–92.

a grace conceded by the Venetian state at the intercession of the pope and the French monarchy.⁶³ Indeed, the French crown had recommended for years that the Jesuits should be readmitted. Also on January 19, the Senate sent a letter to the pope pointing out that, while many were opposed, Venice had given the Jesuits the grace of returning to Venice as a favor to him.⁶⁴

Further actions in February and March 1657 completed the re-entry of the Jesuits. On February 20, the Jesuit superior of the province of Venice personally delivered a letter of thanks from Superior General Goswin Nickel.⁶⁵ He may have been the first Jesuit to enter the Republic of Venice legally in fifty-one years. Next came the question of the restoration of the Jesuit assets. For these, the Jesuits had to pay dearly. Venice did not restore to the Jesuits their church and professed house in Venice, which had been given to an order of nuns. Instead, on February 28, 1657, the Senate approved the Jesuit purchase of the former Venetian church and monastery of the Crossbearer Fathers, one of the suppressed Venetian orders, for fifty thousand Venetian ducats.⁶⁶ The Jesuit generalate in Rome immediately paid the fifty thousand ducats. The generalate then decreed that each college in the Jesuit province of Venice would pay an assigned amount of the fifty thousand ducats. Hence, the colleges in Bologna, Mantua, Parma, and elsewhere—which were outside of the Republic of Venice—had to pay the cost of re-establishing the Jesuits in the city of Venice.⁶⁷

On March 9, 1657, the provincial superior and other Jesuits, accompanied by nuncio Carafa, presented themselves to the doge and Senate and asked for the return of their churches, colleges, and other assets in Brescia, Padua, Verona, and Vicenza. (Returning to Candia was out of the question, because Candia was under siege and most of Crete was in the hands of the Ottoman Turks.) The Senate forced the Jesuits to pay dearly for the return of their own assets. It would return them on condition that the Jesuits make annual payments totaling 1,600 ducats to a female religious order and two state-run educational institutions in Venice and Padua.⁶⁸ Overall, Venice extorted an enormous amount of money from the papacy and the Jesuits as the price for allowing the Jesuits to return.

However, the million ducats did not enable Venice to win the Crete War. It continued for another twelve years. Venice won some naval victories, but it could not lift the siege of Candia, nor recapture the rest of Crete. The geographical distances were too great and the logistical burdens too heavy. In September 1669, Candia surrendered and Venice sued for peace.⁶⁹ The peace treaty acknowledged that Crete was gone forever.

The Jesuits made a rapid comeback after their return in 1657. Parents welcomed

63. Cappetelli, *I gesuiti*, 292.

64. Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 293–94.

65. Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 294–95.

66. Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 295. The Jesuits first offered forty thousand ducats but had to pay fifty thousand. Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 302.

67. Giuseppe Gorzoni, *Istoria del Collegio di Mantova della Compagnia di Gesù scritta dal padre Giuseppe Gorzoni: Parte prima*, ed. Antonella Bilotto and Flavio Rurale (Mantua: Gianluigi Arcari, 1997), 235–36, 260–61.

68. Cappelletti, *I gesuiti*, 296–98, 302–3.

69. Pastor, *History of the Popes*, 31:86–90, 418–27; and Setton, *Venice, Austria*, 185–243.

Jesuit schools. Enrollments at the day schools at Brescia, Verona, and Venice were immediately as high or higher than in 1606. Brescia became the largest and most successful Jesuit college in the Republic of Venice. Padua, which had been forced to close its school to non-Jesuit students in 1591, now welcomed them to a day school with five classes. Both Brescia and Padua added noble boarding schools, although the Padua boarding school did not last. Vicenza, which was a residence without a school in 1606, grew into a college with a day school. And the Jesuits founded a new college with a day school at Belluno.⁷⁰ There were some disappointments and minor difficulties with the Venetian government. But on the whole the Jesuits did well in the Venetian state after 1657.

Conclusion

One pope's action caused the expulsion of the Jesuits. Although a significant part of the Venetian patriciate already hated the Jesuits, they were expelled because they obeyed the pope rather than the doge during the interdict of 1606–7. They were expelled because of their loyalty and obedience to the pope.

The papacy returned that loyalty. Paul V tried to make amends by asking for the Jesuits to be readmitted in 1607 and probing to see if Venice would discuss readmitting the Jesuits in the following years. The next three popes did little or nothing. In fairness to them, there was no sign that the Republic would even discuss the matter. Fifty years later, another pope went to extraordinary lengths to persuade—in reality, to bribe—Venice to readmit the Jesuits and he succeeded. Alexander VII paid a million ducats for the readmission of the Jesuits. It is true that the million ducats did not come from the papal treasury. He had the larger policy objective of halting the advance of the Ottoman Turks in the Mediterranean Sea. So he launched a powerful and persuasive initiative to provide money for Venice to fight the Turks. He could have done that without mentioning the Jesuits. But he added the extreme complication of the Jesuits to his plan. Alexander VII seized the opportunity that the Crete War presented to get the Jesuits back into Venice. Had he not done so, one wonders if the Society would have been able to return.

There are other facets of the story worth consideration. The Society obeyed the pope because he was the head of the church, and so they were expelled. (So far as is known the papacy did not punish the religious orders that disobeyed it during the interdict.) But the Jesuits demonstrated imagination and initiative by establishing colleges with schools in Castiglione delle Stiviere and Gorizia to teach students from the Venetian state during the expulsion.

The Venetian expulsion suggests an answer to another question, under what circumstances did the papacy support or fail to support the Jesuits? The first answer is that it depended on the personal attitude of the reigning pope, because the papacy was and is a personal monarchy. The second answer is that when larger political interests were at stake, the Society lost. When the papacy had to weigh good relations with a

70. For the history of the Jesuit colleges in the Republic of Venice from 1657 to 1773, see my monograph in preparation.

large secular state or states against the fate of the Jesuits, the papacy abandoned the Society. This happened in 1607, as Paul V wanted the Jesuits to be permitted to return to Venice. But he yielded on this issue in order to settle the losing interdict conflict, and to avoid the risk of war and further involvement of the major European powers. The most important example by far was in 1773 when Pope Clement XIV (r.1769–74) surrendered to the demands of France, Spain, and Portugal to suppress the Society. But when a pope commits a terrible act, with luck, a future pope will undo it. This happened in 1814. That is the historical message of the expulsion and return to Venice.