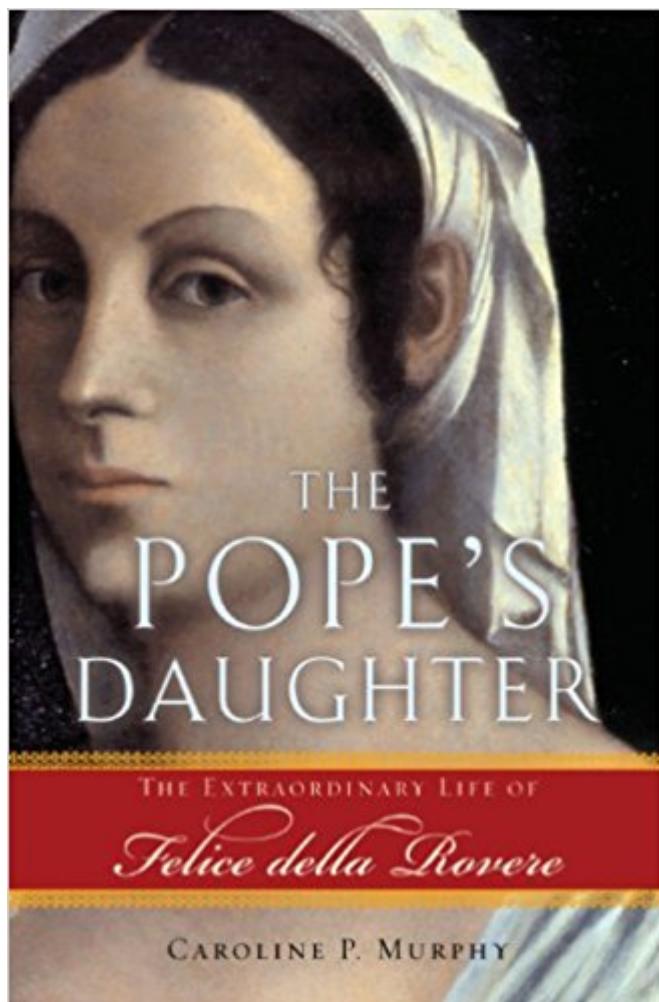


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# The Pope's Daughter: The Extraordinary Life Of Felice Della Rovere



## **Synopsis**

The illegitimate daughter of Pope Julius II, Felice della Rovere became one of the most powerful and accomplished women of the Italian Renaissance. Now, Caroline Murphy vividly captures the untold story of a rare woman who moved with confidence through a world of popes and princes. Using a wide variety of sources, including Felice's personal correspondence, as well as diaries, account books, and chronicles of Renaissance Rome, Murphy skillfully weaves a compelling portrait of this remarkable woman. Felice della Rovere was to witness Michelangelo paint the Sistine Chapel, watch her father Pope Julius II lay the foundation stone for the new Saint Peter's, and see herself immortalized by Raphael in his Vatican frescos. With her marriage to Gian Giordano Orsini--arranged, though not attended, by her father the Pope--she came to possess great wealth and power, assets which she turned to her advantage. While her father lived, Felice exercised much influence in the affairs of Rome--even negotiating for peace with the Queen of France--and after his death, Felice persevered, making allies of the cardinals and clerics of St. Peter's and maintaining her control of the Orsini land through tenacity, ingenuity, and carefully cultivated political savvy. She survived the Sack of Rome in 1527, but her greatest enemy proved to be her own stepson Napoleone. The rivalry between him and her son Girolamo had a sudden and violent end, and brought her perilously close to losing everything she had spent her life acquiring. With a marvelous cast of characters, this is a spellbinding biography set against the brilliant backdrop of Renaissance Rome.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

"The Pope's Daughter: The Extraordinary life of Felice della Rovere. I bought this hard cover book used. It came in excellent condition and a timely manner. I have no qualms these days about buying used hard cover books, where I did at first. They have always come promptly and in excellent condition. This book is an excellent account of Felice della Rovere's life the illegitimate daughter of Pope Julius II set in Renaissance Italy. One of the Pope's greatest accomplishment was having Michelangelo paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The book gives excellent details of life in the late 15th century and early 16th century's. But if you aren't into details of the era or ones everyday life, you might find the book a real drag. I personally found it all highly interesting. I have always find it fascinating to see how ancient people's lives, their superstitions, their fertility practices along with how they conducted their daily lives. Felice had a tempestuous relationship with her irascible father. She lived with her mother the first years of her life which was not the norm of the day, until Rodrigo Borgia was elected Pope. Her father then a Cardinal accused Borgia of simony. So he was forced to flee Italy for France and sent his daughter to live with his relatives in northern Italy. Felice didn't get on with very well with her father's relatives. She could often be outspoken and difficult, that her father didn't have much patience for. She frequently refused matches her father tried to betroth her too. Which was not common for women of her day. Felice married once when she was young but not much is known about that marriage. She preferred the independence of single life, if she remarried she had to relinquish monies from her dowry after her first husband died, so she resisted her father as long as she could. Her father later managed to finally betrothed her to one of the Orsini clan. Whom she married and eventually had 4 children by. Julius was often aloof and indifferent to her. But, on other occasions he could be generous to her with money. She often negotiated with others on behalf of her father after he became Pope. Felice was an intelligent woman who later became one of the wealthiest women in Italy in her own right. She took money her father gave her and bought an working estate with the money that made her wealthy selling grain. So unlike a lot of women of her day, she was independently wealthy. She was a good manager of money. Until after the sack of Rome by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. A lot of her possessions were either

looted, stolen or paid in random. After her husband's death Felice fought her step son Napoleon for her sons inheritance of Orsini lands. She managed most of her son's inheritance until later years when her sons were old enough to inherit and take care of their possessions. I found it a excellent account of the Renaissances. But, as I stated before if you're not into a lot of details about everyday life, you might consider not buying it. It has a lot of era details in it.

I had never heard of Felice della Rovere, or even the della Rovere family until I watched the tv series "The Borgias" (although I know the series is not an historically authentic version of events). Not being a fluent student of Italian history or the papacy, this was interesting because it was new information to me. What I do have is a strong history in women in earlier European history (especially Britian) so it was interesting to be able to compare Felice's life to the lives of other prominent historical women of power (given the time). The book details the early life of Felice, her interactions with her distant father, her married life, etc. It also provides an interesting insight into Rome, the Church and the politics of the time. I have read some history on Lucrezia Borgia and it's interesting to compare the differences in the relationships between the two women and their respective fathers (with Lucrezia's being much more public and close to her father). Ultimately I didn't give the book 5 stars because, while well written over all, I don't think it surpasses who I believe to be the ultimate European historical biographer (Lady Antonia Fraser) as far as prose or style. That certainly shouldn't keep anyone from taking up this interesting book as it provides insight into a variety of areas and doesn't require a lot of background information to enjoy.

If anyone should've been made a cardinal in the 16th century Catholic Church, it should've been Felice della Rovere, bastard daughter of Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, later Pope Julius II ! Caroline Murphy's portrait of this remarkable woman is well-written, well-documented & fascinating enough to keep me up until 2AM reading it! I would love to have known Felice, a truly "self-made" woman who defied the tremendous societal odds against her and rose to be the most powerful woman, or at least one of the most powerful, in her era. She knew Vatican & Roman politics like the back of her hand, and used it, not only to her & her children's advantage, but to that of the whole Orsini clan. It was surprising & comforting to know that when I was in Rome in 1998, I'd been at (probably looking at) the palace on Piazza Navona where she lived, & at or near other places of interest to her there (TrinitÃ dei Monti; Campo de Fiore, Trastevere, etc.). I also learned a lot about the sack of Rome in 1527 which I'd either missed or forgotten about, & gained some insight into the history which has enabled Roman cardinals to become entrenched as "princes", up to the present.

This is a fascinating biography of Felice della Rovere, illegitimate daughter of Pope Julius II, the great Renaissance pope. Felice, however, was important and influential in her own right, and the author, with thorough research, has vividly provided an engrossing story of Felice's life, including her childhood; marriages and children; her complex relationship with her father, the pope; and her rise to power, political influence, and wealth within Renaissance Italy. The author convincingly contends that Felice became the most powerful woman of her time, and yet, strangely, her story has not been told before. The biography of this remarkable women is enhanced with the backdrop of life in Renaissance Rome and the surrounding Italian countryside; the life of the city streets, the day-to-day workings of the great palaces, how the economy worked, wars, the lives and works of the great painters Michelangelo and Raphael, and the intrigues of the nobility are all described. Dozens of beautiful black and white illustrations are placed at the beginning of each chapter, and an attractive set of color plates highlights key persons, important paintings, and castles and palaces of the era. Strongly recommended for readers interested in women's history, the history of the Renaissance and the history of Rome.

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