

## PIENZA - La città di papa Pio II

The history of Pienza is closely tied to its founder: Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, later to become Pope Pius II who was born here in 1405 of a noble Sienese family that, due to political turmoil, had been forced to move here to their country home. At that time Corsignano, as Pienza was then known, was a fortified hamlet dating back to Roman times although excavations have brought to light the existence of a settlement here in the Neolithic and Bronze Age.

Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, a Humanist with a refined literary flair, was ordained priest in 1446 and went on to become Pope at the age of fifty three. Pope Pius wanted to create a splendid city in memory of his papacy that would be in complete contrast to the city which had unjustly snubbed his family, Siena.

He commissioned the most famous architect and artists of the time to work together on this project which would so implicitly express the philosophy of the Italian Renaissance. In only three years, from 1459 to 1462, this Utopian City was created, and was renamed Pienza by papal bull in 1462. A city "born with love and from a dream of beauty" wrote Giovanni Pascoli.

It is difficult to say what would have become of Pienza if the Pope had not prematurely passed away on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1464, on the eve of a crusade against Islam. In three and a half years the nucleus of the "City of Pius" had been born. "Corsignano of the Thieves", the hamlet that Boccaccio had cited in his celebrated novel the Decameron in the tale of Cecco di Fortarrigo, could change its name and image thanks to its great protector.

