



HOLIDAY GREETING CARD:

YALE 2015

Mike Widener, the Rare Book Librarian in the Lillian Goldman Law Library at Yale Law School, is a reliable correspondent. Each year, sometime close to its end, he sends us a lovely and scholarly greeting card. The front of the card is reproduced in black-and-white on the page before this one. (The original is quite colorful – mostly greens and reds.) Here is the explanatory note from the back of the card:

Images like these, known as book presentation scenes, are common in medieval manuscripts and early printed books. They typically show the book's author presenting his finished work to a patron or monarch. This image, one of the earliest examples from printed books, is from the opening page of Niccolò de' Tudeschi's *Lectura super V libris decretalium* (5 volumes; Basel: Michael Wenssler, Berthold Ruppel & Bernard Richel, 1477), a commentary on one of the central texts of medieval canon law, the Decretals of Pope Gregory IX.

The author is better known as Panormitanus (1386-1445), the name he received after his appointment as the Archbishop of Palermo (Panormus in Latin). His teaching and writings earned him the title of "lucerna juris" (lamp of the law). Kenneth Pennington calls him "the most influential jurist of the 15th century."

The image shows Panormitanus before he became an archbishop, presenting his book to a pope in his three-tiered papal tiara. His relationship to the papacy was complicated. Pope Eugene IV sent Panormitanus as his representative to the Council of Basel in 1433, where Panormitanus energetically but unsuccessfully argued for the pope's supremacy over the council. Once Panormitanus became Archbishop of Palermo, however, he switched sides and returned to the Council of Basel as an opponent of papal supremacy, in accordance with the wishes of his royal patron King Alfonso V of Sicily. The sides finally made peace in 1443, and Panormitanus died from the plague not long after returning to Palermo.

Mike Widener, *Happy Holidays!* (Dec. 2015).