

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PAPACY

By John Judy

(Written mid-April 2005 for "Big News.")

MICHAEL

Any day now the College of Cardinals will be choosing a new Pope. White smoke will billow out into Saint Peter's Square signaling that the Holy Mother Church has discovered fire. I'm kidding. The Catholic Church has long since acknowledged the existence of fire and has used it on more than a few occasions. If you don't believe me, ask a heretic. If you can find one!

(Did I mention John Paul II once issued a formal apology to Prometheus?

True story...)

In any case, we Big News Catholics don't want the rest of you sinners to spend the next week in complete ignorance of our glorious heritage and the intricate, infallible goings-on of our higher-ups. With that in mind we now present a brief history of the papacy, or, as we call it: "The Vatican Highlight Reel!"

MATT

There have been 265 Popes since Jesus chose Saint Peter to be the rock on which he founded his church in 32 A.D.

SAINT PETER

Numero Uno, baby! Pearly gates in the house!

MATT

According to Catholic tradition, Peter brought Christianity to Rome although it was there well before Peter arrived.

SAINT PETER

We were in previews out of town, man.

MATT

And once he was in Rome, Peter didn't serve as any kind of bishop or leader.

SAINT PETER

It was casual. Why you doggin' me, Boo?

MATT

Saint Sixtus, the seventh Pope, was the first Pope known to

be the son of a Priest. Back in the year 115 there was no requirement that Priests be celibate.

SAINT SIXTUS
Good times!

MATT
Saint Victor, the 14th Pope was the first African Pope.

SAINT VICTOR
"North Africa." Don't freak out.

MATT
Saint Pontain, the 18th Pope, was the first Pope to resign from office.

SAINT PONTAIN
I am not a crook!

MATT
The 40th Pope, Saint Innocent, was the first Pope whose father had also been Pope.

SAINT INNOCENT
Good times.

MATT
Saint Leo, the 45th Pope, was the first Pope to claim authority over the entire Christian Church, East and West.

SAINT LEO
"It is my precious!"

MATT
Saint Gelasius, the 49th Pope, was the first Pope to use the title "Vicar of Christ" and was also the last Pope, so far, to be of African descent.

SAINT GELASIUS
Born in Rome. Don't freak out.

MATT
The 55th Pope Pope Boniface II, was the first German Pope.

BONIFACE II
Ve vill haff more sitting und standing up.

MATT

And Pope John II, the 56th Pope, was the first Pope to adopt a new name when elected; probably because his given name was that of the pagan god Mercurius.

JOHN II

My agent said it would be better for my career.
"Mercurius" was a little "gay."

MATT

Pope Pelagius I, the 60th Pope, was the first pope not actually elected at all - he was simply appointed by emperor Justinian.

POPE PELAGIUS

Who needs a Supreme Court? Good times.

MATT

Pope John IV, the 72nd Pope was the first (and thus far only) pope from Dalmatia. Yes, one of our Popes was technically a Dalmatian.

POPE JOHN IV

Woof. Fuck you.

MATT

Saint Paul, the 94th Pope, was the first pope who succeeded his own brother, Pope Stephen III.

SAINT PAUL

Call me "Jeb" and I'll kick your ass.

MATT

Pope Adrian I, the 96th Pope, was the oldest person elected pope at age 80.

ADRIAN

Mommy?

MATT

The 107th Pope, Pope Adrian II was the last married pope - his wife Setphania and his daughter lived in the Vatican palace with him.

SETPHANIA
Yo, Adrian!

ADRIAN II
Get off my ass! I'm infallible!

MATT
Pope John VIII, the 108th Pope was the first pope to be assassinated, possibly for promoting the indissolubility of marriage: first he was poisoned and then he was beaten to death.

(CROWD beats JOHN VIII to death.)

CROWD
Thanks a lot asshole!

JOHN VIII
Wait, it's coming to me! "Annulment!"

MATT
The 113th Pope, Pope Boniface VI, when elected, he had already been defrocked twice because of immoral behavior.

BONIFACE VI
I did not have inappropriate relations with that woman. Okay, I did. Twice.

MATT
After 15 days as Pope, Boniface VI died of severe gout. Honest. He is buried under the porch of Saint Peter's, along with three good huntin' dawgs.

(The following is acted out.)

MATT
Boniface's successor, Pope Stephen VII had the body of Pope Formosus dug up and put on trial on trumped-up charges. Formosus was found guilty of various things, reburied, re-exhumed, thrown in the river Tiber, and then buried again after having three of his fingers cut off. For his trouble, Pope Stephen would end up being imprisoned and strangled to death. By the evil POPE FORMOSA ZOMBIE!!! The 120th Pope, Pope Sergius III ordered the murder by strangulation of his predecessor, Pope Leo, and his rival the antipope Christopher.

POPE SERGIUS III

I just asked myself "What would Pope Stephen VII do?"

MATT

Pope John XI, the 126th Pope was the first and (as far as we know only) pope who was the illegitimate son of a previous pope (Pope Sergius III).

JOHN XI

Good times. Thanks dad.

MATT

Pope John XII, the 131st Pope, was the first and only teenager elected pope. He subsequently turned one of the papal palaces into a brothel and died at age 28 of a stroke, allegedly in bed with a married woman.

JOHN

If "allegedly" means "laughing my ass off", then you are correct.

MATT

The 160th Pope, Blessed Urban II launched the First Crusade.

URBAN III

To fight the evil-doers.

MATT

The 177th Pope, Innocent III claimed authority over the entire world as well as the universal Christian Church.

INNOCENT III

No, I'm not that Innocent.

MATT

Blessed Innocent V was the 186th Pope and was the first member of the Dominican order elected pope. Because he kept wearing the Dominicans' white cassock, it became traditional papal garb that is still worn today.

INNOCENT V

Perhaps I should have called myself "Pope Faaabulous!"

MATT

Pope John XXI was the only medical doctor to be pope. Of course this was the year 1276, so that meant...

JOHN XXI

...I was a barber.

MATT

Under the reign of Pope Nicholas IV, Christianity first reached China. Sadly, everyone there only spoke Chinese.

NICHOLAS

What's the matter with you people?! Speak Latin dammit!

MATT

Pope Julius II was a patron of both Michaelangelo and Raphael. Perhaps the most momentous decision he made as Pope was to finance the construction of Saint Peter's Basilica with the sale of papal indulgences, thereby pissing off Martin Luther and starting the Protestant Reformation.

JULIUS II

I just like the pretty, pretty pictures...

MATT

Pope Paul IV established the Index of Forbidden Books.

PAUL IV

"Catcher in the Rhineland", "Papal Place", "Laity Chatterly's Lover" Smutty, smutty smutty...

MATT

And he segregated Jews to a special quarter of Rome and required them to wear special headgear.

PAUL IV

Special headgear is bad? I wear special headgear myself. Get with the program!

MATT

Pope Urban VII was the shortest pontificate in history. No, he wasn't a dwarf. He was elected Pope and 12 days later (about the length of this sketch) died of malaria.

POPE URBAN

But it was quality time.

MATT

Pope Paul V censured Galileo and threatened him with torture and burning at the stake if he didn't recant his belief that the earth went around the sun.

POPE PAUL V

Can you prove it goes around the sun? No, you can't, can you?

GALILEO

Um, actually I can...

POPE PAUL V

Shut up!!!!

MATT

He then placed Galileo under house arrest for the rest of his life. Since then there have been 34 Popes. Some great, some so-so, but all infallible. I haven't listed the so-called anti-popes, because there have been so many of them. They're hard to explain except to say that, well, just repeat after me: "I declare myself The Pope!" (Beat) Great, now you, like Mel Gibson's dad, are all anti-popes and you're all going to Hell. And by the way, John-Paul II cleared up that whole Galileo thing in 1979 so it's cool. For Big News, I'm Matt Lageman.

(BLACKOUT)