

# Foreword: The Popes and the Dove

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## *A heavenly sign*

The figure of the gentle dove, a symbol of peace and purity, has long been a prominent motif in the sacred art and imagery related to the Catholic Faith. In the early centuries, the tabernacle was often fashioned in the shape of a dove in flight. In some churches, it was suspended by chains high above the altar, and could be lowered to allow the clergy access to the Blessed Sacrament. In etchings, frescos and sculpture, the dove has often signified the presence of the Holy Ghost. This tradition is based upon rare and miraculous appearances of the sign, which have occurred during the course of significant events in the life of Christ, His Church, and His saints. The first recorded example of this manifestation, can be found in St. Matthew's account of the baptism of Christ:

“And when Jesus had been baptized, He immediately came up from the water. And behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon Him.”<sup>1</sup>

In the great paintings of the old masters, images of white doves figured prominently in the depictions of the sacred mysteries of the Faith, such as the Annunciation, the Descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost and the Coronation in Heaven of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Down through history, many saints have been illustrated with doves above their heads (including St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Catherine of Siena, and St. Teresa of Avilla), in art that dramatizes the wondrous miracles believed to have been associated with them.

## *“Son of the Dove”*

In “Lesson IX” of the *Roman Breviary*, for the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, St. Jerome comments about the connection between the dove, the Holy Ghost, and the first Pope:

“What flesh and blood could not reveal [to Peter] was revealed by the grace of the Holy Ghost. Therefore his [Peter's] name was decided by his confession [to Jesus in the presence of the apostles: “Thou art the Christ; the Son of the Living God.”], because he received a revelation from the Holy Ghost. As such, he [Peter] is called His son. In fact, [Simon] Bar-Jona [commonly understood to mean, *Simon, son of James*] in our language means *Son of the Dove*.”<sup>2</sup>

St. Peter's successors have also been closely associated with the symbol of the Holy Ghost. Several holy pontiffs have been memorialized with the emblematic dove hovering overhead. Examples of this include the portrait of Blessed Pope Eugene III and the statue of Pope Benedict XIII, in St. Peter's Basilica, Rome. This visual tradition is firmly rooted in the history of the popes and prelates destined to be elected as popes.

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<sup>1</sup> *Matthew* 3:16

<sup>2</sup> “Lectio ix”; Die 29 Junii Ss. Petri et Pauli Apostolorum, *Breviarum Romanum* – Vol. Pars Aestiva, 1946, E Domo Libraria S. Gregorii, Antea Friderici Pustet, Germany, page 557.

## *Pope St. Fabian*

One of the earliest recorded occurrences of this phenomenon pertained to the election of the holy, martyred Pope St. Fabian (236-50):

“ . . . the extraordinary circumstances of whose election is related by Eusebius [in his *Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. VI, 29]. After the death of [Pope] Anterus he had come to Rome, with some others, from his farm and was in the city when the new election began. While the names of several illustrious and noble persons were being considered, a dove suddenly descended upon the head of Fabian, of whom no one had even thought. To the assembled brethren the sight recalled the Gospel scene of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Savior of mankind, and so, divinely inspired, as it were, they chose Fabian with joyous unanimity and placed him in the Chair of Peter.”<sup>3</sup>

## *Pope St. Gregory the Great*

Also among the early popes connected with this reoccurring marvel was St. Gregory the Great (590-604) of whom the following account is given:

“ . . . In art the great pope is usually shown in full pontifical robes with the tiara and double cross. A dove is his special emblem, an allusion to the well-known story recorded by Peter the Deacon (*Vita*, XXVIII), who tells that when the Pope was dictating his homilies on Ezechiel, a veil was drawn between his secretary and himself. As, however, the Pope remained silent for long periods of time, the servant made a hole in the curtain and looking through beheld a dove seated upon Gregory's head with his beak between his lips. When then the dove withdrew its beak the holy pontiff spoke and the secretary took down his words; but when he became silent the servant again applied his eye to the hole and saw that the dove had replaced its beak between his lips. [*As if placing His very words into the pope's mouth, this would seem to demonstrate that the Holy Ghost indeed spoke through Gregory I, and through all other true popes, as well.*] The miracles attributed to Gregory are very many, but space forbids even the barest catalogue of them.”<sup>4</sup>

## *Pope Gregory XVI*

An example of this prodigy during more recent times, can be found in an episode in the life of Blessed Anna Maria Taigi (1769-1837), when her path crossed the future Pope Gregory XVI (1831-46), as recounted below:

“ . . . Msgr. Rafaele Natali tells this charming story regarding the election of Gregory XVI: ‘I was with the servant of God [Blessed Anna] at St. Paul’s Outside-The-Walls, when Cardinal Cappellari entered. Anna, in ecstasy, occupied the only priedieu [kneeler]. I shook her so that she should give her place to the cardinal, but he signed to me to leave her alone. Coming out of her ecstasy, Anna fixed her gaze upon him, and as we returned to Rome she said to me: ‘That was the future Pope.’ In her sun [the word Blessed Anna used to describe a perpetual, miraculous vision of past, present and future events in the Church which Heaven kept in her awareness at all times] she had seen a *dove* settling upon him; it was bathed in golden light, but surrounded by gloomy clouds, foreshadowing the coming revolution . . . Cardinal Cappellari would be elected

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<sup>3</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1913, Vol. V, page 742.

<sup>4</sup> *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VI, Page 786.

[as Pope Gregory XVI] within seventeen days.”<sup>5</sup>

### *Pope Pius IX*

Upon the death of Papa Cappellari in 1846, the cardinals would again journey to Rome and prepare for the selection of the next successor to St. Peter. An incident involving the soon-to-be-elected, future Pope Pius IX, as he made his way to the Eternal City, is here recalled by a prominent historian of the popes:

“Devoted to his clergy as he was to his people . . . Such was the life of Cardinal Mastai Ferretti, when the death of Gregory XVI summoned him to the conclave. As he passed through Fossombrone the crowd gathered around the carriage to see the prince of the Church, when suddenly a white dove, undisturbed by their noise, and regardless of their attempts to drive it away, settled on the carriage. Taking it as an omen, the people cried out: ‘Evviva! Evviva! Behold the Pope!’”<sup>6</sup>

### *Giuseppe Cardinal Siri*

An unusual photograph of Giuseppe Cardinal Siri, taken 40 years ago, and buried deep within the files of Bettman Archives in New York City, surfaced in 1988. The picture, which has most likely never been widely published outside of Italy, clearly shows a dove alighting upon the head of the then young cardinal during his offering of Holy Mass in Genoa, in 1958. This sight, which was witnessed by hundreds of people, was described in the following caption attached to the photograph:

“Pigeon perches on Cardinal’s Cap - Genoa, Italy - Giuseppe Cardinal Siri, Archbishop of Genoa, remained unperturbed when a pigeon perched on his cap as he celebrated Mass in the arena of the Orfei Circus here. The pigeon was one of a flock released in tribute to the cardinal. The Mass, said on an altar set up in the center ring of the Big Top, was attended by circus entertainers and a crowd of Genoese.”<sup>7</sup>

It should be noted that the 1967 *Thorndike-Barnhart Dictionary* indicates that the words, “pigeon” and “dove,” are synonymous. As in past examples, Siri’s dove was symbolically white. What is also significant is that this bird, which could have landed on top of anyone’s head under the tent (or no one’s head at all), chose the cardinal’s instead, and remained there for some time, while His Eminence offered holy Mass and moved about the altar.

Was this simply a bizarre but meaningless coincidence or was it an authentic portent of Cardinal Siri’s imminent election as pope? Those interested in this question are invited to examine the forthcoming evidence to be presented herein. For, this writer believes that through the inquiry that has led to the publication of this book, the secret mechanism has finally been uncovered by which Christ’s ancient enemies are presently inflicting the most monstrous evil in history upon His Church and what is left of Christian civilization.

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<sup>5</sup> Rev. Albert Bessieres, S.J., *Wife Mother And Mystic*, 1952, Tan Books, Rockford Illinois, page 164.

<sup>6</sup> The Chavalier Artaud de Montor, *The Life and Times of the Roman Pontiffs*, Vol. IX, 1911, The Catholic Publication Society of America, New York, page 153-54.

<sup>7</sup> 1-ID-57 NAB Religious News Service Photo # C-20193



Giuseppe Cardinal Siri offers Mass under a circus tent in Genoa, Italy, 1958 - RNS Photo.