

## Antipopes of the Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church claims that the pope is head bishop of the Church and the Vicar of Christ and has been chosen by Jesus to stand in for him on earth to rule the Church, protect its doctrine and teach it as supreme shepherd. The pope is the rock the Church is built on.

Vatican 1 Dogma: If anyone then says that it is not from the institution of Christ the Lord Himself, or by divine right that the blessed Peter has perpetual successors in the primacy over the universal Church, or that the Roman Pontiff is not the successor of the blessed Peter in the same primacy, let him be anathema. This study proves how untrue this dogma and invalid this anathema or excommunication is.

In the Entry for Papal Elections in the Catholic Encyclopedia on [www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org) it is confessed that the first big crisis, not the first crisis, over whether a papal election was really valid and true and honest and binding was over Boniface I. This caused the Church to bring in the rule that if an election was disputed another candidate must be chosen for the papacy! So the Church must have abandoned true popes because the election was disputed and chose new popes who would in effect be fake popes, antipopes. So much for arguing that Christ promised that his Church would always have a rock, and a rock must be undisputed to be the rock meaning the true pope's election will clearly be seen to be valid. But here we have popes being rejected and replaced because they were disputed. The Church ignores the fact that its doctrine about the pope being rock means that it is impossible for God to let any question hang over the validity of a papal election. Under Gregory X who was elected in 1271 a rule was brought in that virtually starved the cardinals if they failed to elect a pope fast enough. If they took more than five days they were allowed only some bread and water and a little wine. So with hunger pangs influencing them and forcing them we are expected to believe they could validly elect a pope! They were mostly old men and already malnourished in many cases so how could they really decide anything? A true pope can only be elected by men who want to make the best decision guided by the Holy Spirit and by reason and by their knowledge of the person they want to propose. Gregory XV was so disgusted at the shameless political manipulations that made him pope at his conclave in 1621 that he banned voting verbally and introduced secret ballot and other rules to stop factions browbeating and bullying to make things go their way. There can be no questioning the fact that it is only sensible and right to doubt the valid election of many popes.

The conclave is a secret society and still is even in an age where no political leader cares who becomes pope and though they meet in the Vatican City which is an independent state. An untrustworthy Church meeting in such over the top secrecy to elect a pope! Worrying!

Some popes as we are told in the Encyclopedia wished to elect their successor! We are told that many canonists consider this contrary to divine law which commands that the Church do the choosing. But it is not the Church but only a few cardinals who are only appointed because they further the political and religious aims of the pope that appointed them so big deal! If the canonists are right then hardly any pope of the last millennium was really a pope!

At times disputes over papal elections have led to a pope being elected to a pope seemingly elected already. The rival pope to a true pope is called an antipope.

So a long time ago there was a lot of confusion about who was truly pope in the past. We are heading into an age in which it is about to happen again but luckily for the Church so far there have been no plausible claimants though there have been claimants. Some Catholics say it does not matter which one of the papal claimants of centuries past was infallible for the charism was not intended to be used by any of them. That is no way to speak of the rock the Church is built on! It is just a pat-answer!

Leo VIII (963-4) was counted an antipope for years but is now considered a true pope. It is thought that Benedict V consented to be deposed by Leo VIII meaning Leo became the new pope. But Benedict V was forced for Leo was waging war and had an army. The Benedict V resignation was invalid and forced. Leo then was not a real pope.

Sylvester III removed Benedict IX from the papacy. If he was right to then himself, Gregory VI, Clement II, the successors of Sylvester, were real popes. Benedict IX had the most confusing papacy, or the most confusing three papacies, in the history of the Catholic Church. Benedict was forcibly removed from office in 1044 and Sylvester III was elected to take his place. In 1045 Benedict seized control again, and again he was removed — but this time he resigned as well. He was succeeded first by Gregory VI and then by Clement II, after which he returned once again for a few months before being rejected. It's not clear that any of the times Benedict was removed from office was canonically valid, which would mean that the other three mentioned here were antipopes, but the *Annuario Pontificio* continues to list them as genuine popes.

The Boy-Pope Benedict IX who was eleven when elected couldn't be a real pope. How could a child that cannot contract a valid marriage become a valid pope? Yet the Church says he was a real and legal pope from the first time he held the papacy. Benedict IX was never pope.

The controversy about whether Benedict's rival Sylvester III was pope or antipope will never cease in the Roman Church. But if he was antipope then the Church's list is wrong for he and his two successors are on it as true popes.

The antipope Anacletus II (1130-8) is admitted by the Church to a strong case for being the true pope in canon law and in fact and the Church says the canonists might never have been able to prove he was antipope. The Catholic Church rejects him simply because he was elected later in the same day as Innocent II was blackmailed to become pope on the threat of excommunication. Excommunication meant the entire loss of legal and social privileges not to mention the threat of eternal damnation for being expelled from the Church so this was no minor threat. Clearly Innocent II was forced to be pope so he was not the real pope. How could a real pope succeed an antipope he recognises as the true pope? That means the pope is in communion with a false pope and a false Church led by that pope and the pope is a schismatic. Benedict XVI the current pope would trace his papal lineage through Innocent II and reject Anacletus so Benedict XVI can't be the real pope at all. Victor IV was the successor of Anacletus II and he came to Pope Innocent II and confessed Innocent as real pope. But this proves nothing.

If it is true as Catholics say that the true Church needs a visible head the pope who is infallible and who must run the Church then the historians must be infallible as well who decide which claimant to the papacy is the real pope. If you cannot be sure who was the real pope the pope is not the rock of the Church so you need infallibility in the historians to be sure. The pope cannot function as the rock unless he ultimately functions as the marker of where the true Church is to be found. The Catholic Church changed its list of the popes in July 1947 as a result of the conclusions of top Vatican scholars. They dropped St Anacletus who allegedly was pope about 100 AD. Dono II was rejected as non-existent and they added in a pope as a real pope who had previously been categorised as an antipope. St Felix II who reigned from 363 to 365 was rejected as an antipope. Gregory VI and Clement II were reckoned to be possible antipopes. Alexander V and John XXIII from 1410 to 1415 were dropped from the list as fake popes even though the notorious Borgia pope Alexander VI called himself the VI claiming to be successor of Alexander V and indicating that the Council of Pisa was a valid council contrary to modern Catholic dogma. In 1963 the Pontifical Yearbook stated that it was giving up trying to work out the number of popes there were.

## Conclusion

The history of the popes which reveals that many popes were really antipopes and which reveals how hard it was to discern the true pope from the false shows that the pope cannot be the mark of the one true visible Church of Christ at all. Roman Catholicism is not the one right religion. The list the Church has of popes has been produced by men who took sides. Even if you have evidence for one pope being real who is to say that the case for him is just based on hearsay and gossip and the case against his rival isn't based on hearsay and gossip? Many antipopes took office after the deposition of the pope. If you disagree with the Catholic doctrine that the Church cannot depose a valid pope the whole thing gets far more murky and means that plenty of men rejected by the Church as antipopes were in fact real popes. What list you will accept will depend on your prejudices. However if you are biased towards reason your list will be drastically different to that of the modern Church. The number of papal disasters is too high to deny that the papacy is just a human institution.

The Church says that reason shows that the Church needs a simple marker to indicate that it is the true Church so that even the most uneducated person can see where the true Church is. But none of this papacy stuff is simple. Even the experts in the Vatican were wrong about who was pope and who was a pretender. So how then can the pope mark out the true Church?

To have a situation in which the true pope cannot be known and nobody knows which of two or more claimants is the true pope proves Catholicism is false because tradition is the supreme authority in Catholicism and the wrong pope means you have the wrong person telling you what divine tradition is. The true pope alone can have the means of working out what true tradition from God is and can have the power to protect it.

The Roman Catholic Church cannot be the true Church when at times it didn't know who was the Vicar of Christ on earth!

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