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End Times Prophecy of St. Malachy

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According to the prophecies of St. Malachy (d. 1148), the successor of [Pope Benedict](#) will be the last man to sit on the throne of Peter before the end of the world. But are these prophecies truly from the Irish archbishop who visited Rome in 1139? And if so, what do they really mean?

Uncanny Match

First of all, St. Malachy's prophetic predictions are concise, to put it mildly. Actually, they consist of no more than a brief Latin phrase or motto for each pope such as "*aquila rapax*" (the rapacious eagle). But when you put these prophecies side by side with the lives of each pontiff from 1143 to 1590, you find a perfect fit—the phrases can be seen to describe the birthplace, character, or career of each of the popes from the period. Take, for example, the pope described as "*De rure albo*" (from a white country). This corresponds remarkably to Pope Adrian IV (1154-59), an Englishman. The ancient name for England happens to be **Albion**, Nicholas was born near the British town of **St. Albans**, and later became Cardinal Archbishop of **Albano**. "*Piscator minorita*" ("The Minorite fisherman") could only have been Pope Sixtus IV (1471-84) who was a member of the Friars Minor, or Franciscans, and was the son of a fisherman.

Megastretch

After 1590, we see a distinct change. Gyration is necessary to twist the Latin phrases into matching the appropriate pontiffs. To see a match between the phrase "*Gloria olivae*" ("Glory of the olives") and Pope Benedict XVI requires some that you put on some rather funky spectacles. OK, so there is a branch of the Benedictine order that is called the Olivetans, but Pope Benedict is not a monk! Some of the connections are even more far-fetched. "*Pastor angelicus*" was supposed to usher in a golden age for the Church and the world. But the Pope bearing this name is identified with Pope Pius XII, who guided the Church through the horrors of World War II and the cold war.

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A Simple Answer

How could Malachy be so right for so long and then suddenly go far astray? Simple. The "prophecies" were not the utterances of St. Malachy at all, but the work of a forger. The first mention of the prophecies appears in 1595, more than 400 years after the saint's death. Not even St. Malachy's friend and biographer, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, makes any reference to them.

Fr. Claude-Francois Menestrier (d. 1705), a Jesus historian, theorized that the forgery took place before the papal conclave of 1590 with the goal of promoting the election of Cardinal Girolamo Simoncelli, the favorite candidate of the town of Orvieto, Italy. The prophetic phrase listed for the next pope to be elected reads "*Ex antiquitate urbis*" ("from the ancient city"); the Latin name for Orvieto is *Urbs Vetus*, meaning "old city."

Evidently the cardinals did not buy St. Malachy's prophecy—they elected someone else.

In hindsight, we all see with 20/20 vision. The forger was easily able to come up with Latin phrases to fit every Pope from Saint Malachy's time to his own. Of course, he had no such easy time in the case of future Popes after 1590. But of course, that did not matter to him. His ruse was intended to influence contemporary events, not to foretell the future.

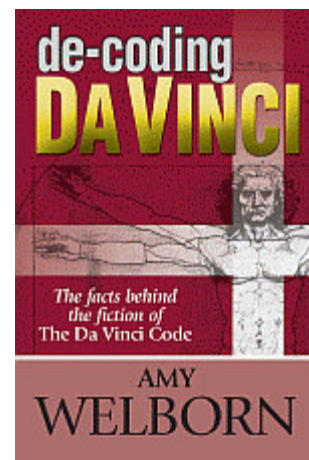
If the Cardinals of the 1590 conclave wouldn't allow themselves to be fooled by this anonymous imposter, neither should we.

For more information on the forged prophecies of St. Malachy, read Thomas Craughwell's "Catholic Cardlinks: Patron Saints" ([Our Sunday Visitor](#)).

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