

PREAMBLE

*“Consult not your fears but your hopes and your dreams.
Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential.
Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in,
but with what it is still possible for you to do.”*

“See everything, overlook a great deal, correct a little.”
-- Pope John XXIII

*“If someone had told me I would be pope someday,
I would have studied harder.”*
-- Pope John Paul I

This book is meant to be a handbook for the next papal election, the one that will occur sometime in the future following the reign of the current pope, Benedict XVI. It strives to provide a systematic, data rich guide as to the dynamics, politics, traditions and precedents of how the next pope, the Vicar of Christ, will be elected. There is even an attempt to identify and describe ten potential contenders, the so called *papabili*. The goal of this book is to provide answers, background, context, facts, trivia and rationales to those wanting to know more about how the next pope will come to be elected than what they can readily discern from the media or the Web. Think of it as value-added information.

This book, as with all my other work on the papacy and papal history, is not meant to be controversial, provocative or sensationalistic. My aim is to elucidate and hopefully educate. This book is not meant, in any way, to be disrespectful to Benedict XVI, the current pope. I hope he has a long and productive papacy. Since this book is based on the latest ‘print-on-demand’ (PoD) technology there are no assumptions or any dependence on when the next election may come to be. In reality, given that it will extend the ‘shelf life’ of the book, it would be better if the election occurred later than sooner! I, therefore, hope you will appreciate that this book was not written with a time-line or an agenda as to when there will be a next pope.

The last papal transition was in April 2005. It was a gigantic, frenzied, around-the-clock, seventeen day media event closely followed by billions, most not even Catholics, across the globe. There were multiple reasons for this overwhelming interest. The larger-than-life John Paul II had been iconic, charismatic and transformational. He was much loved and near universally known, transcending geographic, cultural and religious boundaries. It was the first papal changeover in over twenty-six years, and thus, the first in the age of 24x7 cable news, the Web and blogs. However, independent of the media, many, from all walks of life, from all corners of the world, also understood, viscerally, the historic significance of what was taking place within the inescapable splendor of the Vatican. A group of Catholic prelates, many in their seventies, were electing, in secret, the best known of the world’s religious leaders. The pope, however, is not just a spiritual potentate. He is also a highly influential head-of-state; a European world leader with a worldwide following. His power-base, which grids the globe, really has no equal. In one way or another, during the bulk of the last two millennia the pope was always an inescapable presence on the world stage.

The pope’s words and actions, indubitably, have global repercussions. Consequently, there is tremendous interest as to who will be the next pope. Hundreds, if not thousands of people a day, seven days a week, from all over the globe, do Web searches along the lines of ‘who will be the next pope?’ I know because many of these searches have resulted in people visiting two of my papacy-related blogs, viz.

www.popes-and-papacy.com and papam.wordpress.com where I have had postings about potential *papabili*. This book was motivated by the interest I have seen in the topic 'the next pope,' though I was aware of the adage that came to be during Pope John Paul II's twenty-six year papacy, i.e., *'the pope invariably outlives those that speculate about his successors!'* But, I am comforted somewhat by the knowledge that I am by no means the first to write a book on this topic.

My first book on popes was *'Popes and the Tale of Their Names,'* in 2008. You cannot research and study papal names without getting involved in papal elections. Hence, as of around 2006 I had started building up a large volume of data related to conclaves. This book provided me with a means to gainfully utilize this data and expand my work on papal history. Thus, this book contains a considerable amount of in-depth historical information about papal eligibility, the role of cardinals and conclaves. I have also included analysis, commentary, statistics and minutiae. Pope John Paul II's 1996 Apostolic Constitution pertaining to papal elections, *Universi Domini Gregis*, is discussed in detail with oblique references to a few 'inconsistencies' contained within it. Since the 'pope names' book came out, I also often get asked, usually via e-mail, as to the possible name of the next pope. I have addressed this in a number of posts on my blogs. But, in this book, I get the chance to elaborate further and to also spell out, categorically, why I am sure, the St. Malachy prophecy notwithstanding that the next pope is highly unlikely to be named 'Peter.'

This is a reference book. It can be read sequentially, chapter-by-chapter. But, it has also been structured such that it can be read, profitably in piece meal, 'pick-and-choose' reference mode. In addition to the index and table of contents, readers can exploit the layout of this book with its numerous sub-headings, sidebars, tables and illustrations to quickly locate sections of immediate or specific interest. It could, particularly during the transition, even serve as a coffee table book that will provide significant background and context to the reports from Rome being shown on TV.

In the end, this book turned out to be, as did the 'pope names' book, a one-man effort. I was, however, fortunate that there were a number of kind souls I had 'met' over the Internet, who at various times helped me, via e-mails, to locate information, understand nuances or rectify misunderstandings. Salvador Miranda, of Miami, Florida, who publishes the invaluable 'Cardinals' Web site, helped me, unstintingly and expeditiously, numerous times, always graciously, with words of encouragement. Thank you, dear Salvador. I also need to thank Byron Hoover of Louisiana, a certified religion teacher, Gabriel Chow who runs GCatholic.com, Father Reto Nay of CardinalRating.com and Tom Heneghan of Reuters FaithWorld. They all helped me whenever I asked. Thank you.

I employed four proofreaders. Much of this book was proofed by at least three of them. My wife, Deanna, also stepped in to coordinate the proofing and help me with the index. But, I need to make clear, my idiosyncratic writing style is deeply ingrained and there is only so much anyone can do to truly fix my prose. During three decades as a professional writer, I gained a hard-earned reputation for veracity. I was lucky with the 'pope names' book. But, I know that I flirt with fallibility on a daily basis. Given the depth and breadth of the subject matter covered in this book it is inevitable that there will be some unintended errors and oversights. I apologize for them in advance. In the Notes section that follows, I explain how this book will be kept up to-date. My www.popes-and-papacy.com will serve as the primary 'portal' for this book. You can contact me at: anu@wownh.com.

I hope you find the information in this book timely, germane, useful and possibly even rewarding. My hope is that this book will enable you to experience the next papal transition with an enhanced sense of awareness. My motto, as it appears on my Web site www.guruge.com, is *'Think Free, Or Die.'* In the spirit of that, my intent, as ever, is to provide you with food for thought. Grace, and may peace be with you.



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