

PRELIMINARY

“Les anuncio una gran alegria. Tenemos papa.” (“I announce to you a great joy. We have a Pope.”).

If explained purpose may seem essential, then this effort is best described as furnishing historical circumstance. Most certainly there is no intent or interest to act in the capacity of an expositor.

Do we not always attempt to make sense out of history? So often, it seems that apprehension or fear fuels our need to comprehend prevailing conditions. I would offer that history’s most significant value tenders the opportunity to avoid repetition of the negativities, while expanding upon the myriad of constructive occurrences contained within the human experience.

As Bernard Lewis said, “Make no mistake, those who are unwilling to confront the past will be unable to understand the present and unfit to face the future.”

The subject of documentation of significant, albeit at times, contradictory events calls for some explanation. Although a minimum of three resources was required to insure a degree of credibility, one might perchance take exception to the sequence of events, specific dates versus the use of “circa”, and the spelling of some names and places.

Roman Catholic Church historical data (i.e. succession of popes, dates of reign and/or installation) may vary with alternative sources, especially in the area of tradition, anti-popes, Church Council results and addressing issues offered by those determined by the Church to be heretics. On these occasions, kindly accept “*mea culpa*”.

Even while utilizing certain well-established and generally accepted sources, we must always be attuned to the phenomenon of “selective amnesia”, proclivity, or simply outright bias.

As the availability of information has expanded, so also has MI (mis-information). This can only be combated through a deliberate on going and, at times, uncomfortable search through a variety of resources.

Still another curiosity might well be called *Fictionalized History*. Just two examples include:

In 2003, there was a whimsical tale of the marriage of Mary of Magdala to Jesus and their “petite” French family. This topic had been scrutinized in the mid 1200s

by a monk who authored the *Golden Legend*. That story line suggested that after Christ's resurrection Magdala had left Jerusalem and fled to Gaul.

For years, there have been a variety of stories regarding the existence of "Pope Joan Angeles" (aka *Joanna Pappa Fenima* [Joan Pope Female]), circa 855, and her two and one-half year reign. The first story was written 400 years later, referring to an Englishman named John. (There had been an "antipope" named John who reigned during the month of January 844). Substantial documentation exists which historically addresses the reigns of popes during this time frame. Pope Gregory IV from late 827 to 844 was immediately followed by Sergius II through 847, and then Leo IV to July 855, with Benedict III in the next month through mid 858.

This effort is intended to be encyclopedic. As we consider only a few issues such as political and religious intrigue, inquisitions, rule-by-force, and slavery, these tend to be measured in light of our own individualized "Age of Enlightenment" and therefore might well be termed notorious. Today's bin Laden-types refer to the Crusades as invasions. Are we also able to consider the 500 years or so of the Muslim occupation of the Iberian Peninsula and the Balkans, as well as current threats to the balance of the West, in the same light?

Buddha is credited with the analysis, "The fault of others is easily perceived, but that of one's self is difficult to perceive."

Even though "heavy" issues may at times seem paramount, taking on personal interpretations and perhaps moral judgments, they occupy only a portion of life's experiences. For this reason, it is only appropriate that the space allotted is intentionally overshadowed by the somewhat more significant.

Hopefully, these chronologically detailed events will stimulate curiosity sufficient enough for the reader to seek out more detail through the use of personal investigative resources.

As always, free will allows the choice- *To Expand One's Horizons; or not.*