

The Prophecy of St Malachy

Saint Maelmhaedhoc (latinized to Malachy) O'Morgair was born in Armagh, Ireland in 1094. In 1148, he died in the company of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who was writing his biography (at the request of the Abbot of Mellifont.). This saint has become very well known on account of the prophecies he allegedly made as Archbishop of Armagh, regarding 112 future popes, while on a trip to visit to Pope Innocent II in Rome in 1139-40. Some believe that Saint Malachy predicted the identities of all the popes from the time of Celestine II in the 12th. Century, and that according to him, there are to be only two more popes, the next one being "the glory of the olive" and the last calling himself Peter.

The Abbe Cucherat put forward his views in 1871 in his book *Proph. de la succession des papes*, namely that the prophecy originated in 1139-40 during Malachy's Roman visit. Malachy is said to have written the prophecies down, and given them to Pope Innocent II, who then threw them in a vault, to be forgotten for the next four hundred years.

In the 17th century, the Jesuit Menestrier claimed the prophecies were a forgery dating from the 1590 conclave election of Gregory XIV, and even names the forger as one of Cardinal Simoncelli's party, who, apparently, wanted his candidate to secure the victory. What better way than to have a prophecy fitting him exactly? On the other hand, one of the most outstanding historians of the 16th century, Onofrio Panvinio, accepted them in full. His interpretations of the first 69 popes of the 112 in the list in his book "Epitome Romanorum Pontificum" which was written in the reign of Pope Paul IV (1555-9).

The most common objections to the authenticity of the prophecies are: a) St. Bernard never mentions them in his biography of Malachy, b) the inclusion of a number of antipopes in the list (only two of whom are listed by Malachi as antipopes) and c) the difficulty in ascribing the descriptions to some of the popes. It is also claimed that the prophecies since Pope Urban VII (1590) are rather vague, giving rise to further speculation that they were the work of 16th century forgers, though how vague they are compared to the earlier ones is perhaps a matter of opinion.

Critics point out that even if the prophecies are genuine, perhaps there will be a time gap between "Peter the Roman" and "Gloria Olivae", or between Peter the Roman and the return of Christ. It is of interest that the testimony of many Catholic saints through the centuries who had the gift of prophecy points to a great era of peace for the Church before the final tribulation, none of which has come to pass as yet.

Saint Malachy listed 112 future Popes, each described by a phrase in Latin. There has been increasing interest in this list among Roman Catholics, for two reasons. First, the descriptions of Popes #109 and #110 appear to match the pontificates of Popes John Paul I and John Paul II. Second, there are only two more Popes on the list, and the last Pope on the list is given a long apocalyptic description, instead of a quaint and cryptic phrase.

The prophecies concern the papacy, starting with Pope Celestine II in 1143. A total of 112 popes are listed, each in a very brief description, from 1143 (Celestine II) to the "end of the world" (Peter the Roman). The prophecies were first mentioned by the Benedictine historian Arnold Wion (de Wyon) in his book *Lignum Vitae* in 1559.

From the [Catholic Encyclopedia: St. Malachy](#) we read:

The most famous and best known prophecies about the popes are those attributed to [St. Malachy](#). In 1139 he went to Rome to give an account of the affairs of his diocese to the pope, [Innocent II](#), who promised him two [palliums](#) for the metropolitan Sees of Armagh and Cashel. While at Rome, he received (according to the Abbé Cucherat) the strange vision of the future wherein was unfolded before his mind the long list of illustrious pontiffs who were to rule the Church until the end of time. The same author tells us that St. Malachy gave his manuscript to [Innocent II](#) to console him in the midst of his tribulations, and that the document remained unknown in the Roman Archives until its discovery in 1590 (Cucherat, "Proph. de la succession des papes", ch. xv). They were first published by Arnold de Wyon, and ever since there has been much discussion as to whether they are genuine predictions of St. Malachy or forgeries. The silence of 400 years on the part of so many learned authors who had written about the popes, and the silence of St. Bernard especially, who wrote the "Life of St. Malachy", is a strong argument against their authenticity, but it is not conclusive if we adopt Cucherat's theory that they were hidden in the Archives during those 400 years.

These short prophetic announcements, in number 112, indicate some noticeable trait of all future popes from Celestine II, who was elected in the year 1130, until the end of the world. They are enunciated under mystical titles. Those who have undertaken to interpret and explain these symbolical prophecies have succeeded in discovering some trait,

allusion, point, or similitude in their application to the individual popes, either as to their country, their name, their coat of arms or insignia, their birth-place, their talent or learning, the title of their cardinalate, the dignities which they held etc. For example, the prophecy concerning Urban VIII is *Lilium et Rosa* (the lily and the rose); he was a native of Florence and on the arms of Florence figured a fleur-de-lis; he had three bees emblazoned on his escutcheon, and the bees gather honey from the lilies and roses. Again, the name accords often with some remarkable and rare circumstance in the pope's career; thus *Peregrinus apostolicus* (pilgrim pope), which designates Pius VI, appears to be verified by his journey when pope into Germany, by his long career as pope, and by his expatriation from Rome at the end of his pontificate. Those who have lived and followed the course of events in an intelligent manner during the pontificates of Pius IX, Leo XIII, and Pius X cannot fail to be impressed with the titles given to each by the prophecies of St. Malachy and their wonderful appropriateness: *Crux de Cruce* (Cross from a Cross) Pius IX; *Lumen in caelo* (Light in the Sky) Leo XIII; *Ignis ardens* (Burning Fire) Pius X. There is something more than coincidence in the designations given to these three popes so many hundred years before their time. We need not have recourse either to the family names, armorial bearings or cardinalatial titles, to see the fitness of their designations as given in the prophecies. The afflictions and crosses of Pius IX were more than fell to the lot of his predecessors; and the more aggravating of these crosses were brought on by the House of Savoy whose emblem was a cross. Leo XIII was a veritable luminary of the papacy. The present pope is truly a burning fire of zeal for the restoration of all things to Christ.

The last of these prophecies concerns the end of the world and is as follows: "In the final persecution of the Holy Roman Church there will reign Peter the Roman, who will feed his flock amid many tribulations, after which the seven-hilled city will be destroyed and the dreadful Judge will judge the people. The End." It has been noticed concerning *Petrus Romanus*, who according to St. Malachy's list is to be the last pope, that the prophecy does not say that no popes will intervene between him and his predecessor designated *Gloria olivae*. It merely says that he is to be the last, so that we may suppose as many popes as we please before "Peter the Roman".

(Note: there is one small error in that passage. Celestine II was elected in 1143, not 1130.)

Pope #109 on St. Malachy's list is given the phrase: "From the Half of the Moon." Pope John Paul I was elected on August 26 of 1978, when the moon was in its last quarter (i.e. half the moon was visible in the sky). He died on September 28, when the moon was again in its last quarter. The length of his Pontificate was only 33 days, a little more than the length of one lunar cycle.

Pope #110 on St. Malachy's list is given the phrase: "From the Labor of the Sun." If you take the view that the sun's work is to travel around the earth, so did Pope John Paul II; he was the most traveled Pope in history, his Pontificate was marked by his constant travels around the world. Another

interpretation is that he was also born during the solar eclipse of May 18th, 1920. While it was a partial, and not a total, solar eclipse, nevertheless, according to NASA, it was the largest of the 20th century with a magnitude of 0.9734.

Pope #111 on St. Malachy's list is given the phrase: "From the Glory of the Olive." Since the olive branch is a well-known symbol of peace, some say the next Pope after John Paul II will be a man of great peace. Others say that this prediction refers to the Order of St. Benedict, who are sometimes called 'Olivetans' and that the new Pope will come from the Order of St. Benedict, or that he will take the name of Benedict and imitate of him.

Pope #112 on St. Malachy's list is given this description: "In the final persecution of the Holy Roman Church there shall reign Peter the Roman who will feed his flock amid many tribulations, after which the seven-hilled city will be destroyed and the dreadful Judge will judge the people. The End."

If true, will Peter the Roman be someone born in Rome or who grew up in Rome or who has spent most of his vocation in Rome, or take the name Pope Peter II? (No Pope has chosen the name Peter since Christ gave that name to Simon bar-Jonah, who became Saint Peter, leader of the Apostles and of the Church.). The seven-hilled city is the city of Rome, which not only has seven hills, but also is divided into seven Roman Catholic dioceses. St. Malachy is predicting that the city of Rome will be destroyed during the Pontificate of the second Pope after John Paul II, the Pope called Peter the Roman.

Are we only two popes away from the second coming of Christ ("the dreadful Judge")? Is the prophecy of St Malachy false, or a warning? Time will surely tell.

N.B. I wrote the above on the 4th of April 2005, shortly before the appointment of Pope Benedict XVI on April 18, 2005, whose name has fulfilled St Malachy's prophecy re Pope# 111.

PC (April 17, 2008)