

94 and Not Dead Yet: If Only

by [Reg Green](#) (April 2023)



Surge, Stanka Kordic, 2017

At this time of year, I am always reminded that, had a piece of history that I was part of had swerved off-course, the Pope's blessing in St. Peter's square at Easter could have been sensationally different.

The moment came on a private tour of the Vatican that my wife, Maggie, our six -year-old daughter, Eleanor and I were given many years ago. We saw everything alone with one guide, lingered when we wanted to, discussed quietly anything that caught our eyes, absorbed the details of the Sistine Chapel in an almost uncanny silence.

Near the end, we were taken into the papal robing room which adjoins the famous balcony and shown what could be the world's most exquisite collection of clothes, each for a different occasion, each glowing in a different color—luminous green, rich red, imperial purple, immaculate white. As we gasped, the Devil—always at work even in the holiest places—entered into the guide's soul and in a fit of mischievousness he picked up one of the Pope's mitres and popped it on Eleanor's head.

No, the earth didn't shake. But, as I looked down at her upturned smiling face, her headpiece almost as big as she was, a new dynasty of popes suddenly seemed possible: American, female and first-grade.

PS: Since I wrote this report, Pope Francis has been taken to a hospital in Rome, reportedly with a respiratory infection. Let me join the many millions of others wishing him an early return to full health.

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