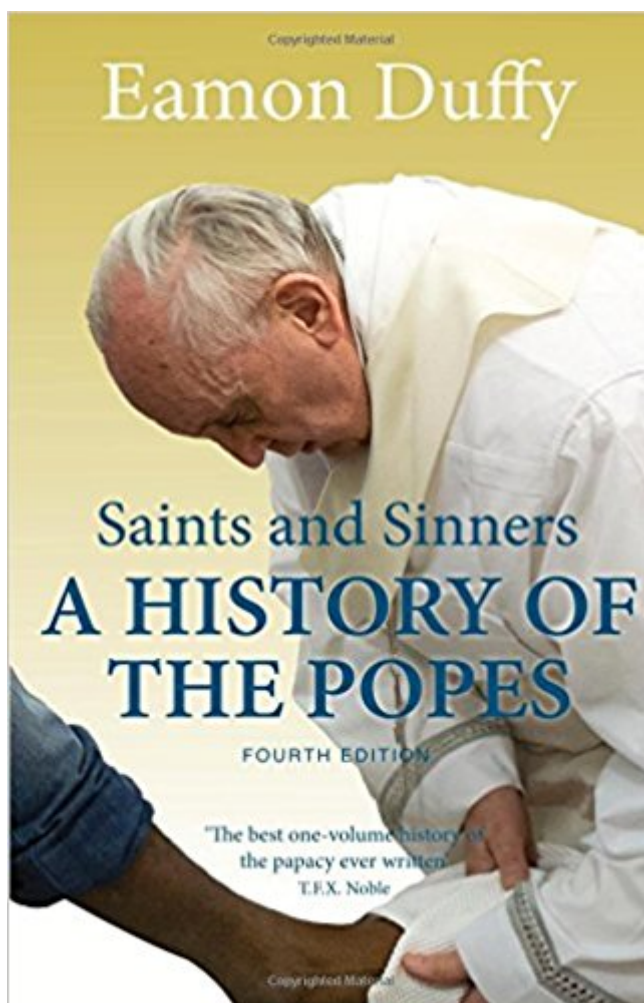


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# Saints And Sinners: A History Of The Popes; Fourth Edition



## Synopsis

This engrossing book encompasses the extraordinary history of the papacy, from its beginnings to the present day. This new edition covers the unprecedented resignation of Benedict XVI and the election of the first Argentinian pope. Praise for the earlier editions: "Duffy enlivens the long march through church history with anecdotes that bring the different pontiffs to life. . . . Saints and Sinners is a remarkable achievement." "A distinguished text . . . offering plenty of historical facts and sobering, valuable judgments." "Will fascinate anyone wishing to better understand the history of the Catholic Church and the forces that have shaped the role of the papacy." Piers Paul Read, *The Times* (London) "A distinguished text . . . offering plenty of historical facts and sobering, valuable judgments." Henry Chadwick, *New York Times Book Review* "Will fascinate anyone wishing to better understand the history of the Catholic Church and the forces that have shaped the role of the papacy." Gloria J. Tysl, *Christian Century*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"[A] minor masterpiece which is everything good, popular history ought to be. . . . The most comprehensive single-volume history of the popes in print." "John Adamson, *Sunday Telegraph* (on the previous edition)" "[T]races the history of the papacy from its humble beginnings . . . with St. Peter, to the distinctly different institution . . . [of] today." "Washington Post Book World

Eamon Duffy, professor of the history of Christianity and fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge,

is also the author of *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580* and *The Voices of Morebath*, both published by Yale University Press.

Duffy's timely and thought-provoking history of the papacy introduces the reader to the rise of the centralized papacy and the older collegial model of Church governance, revived by Pope John XXIII and now by Pope Francis. The author's work deserved five stars but he was poorly served by the publisher's careless conversion of the print version to a Kindle e-book. OCR errors are frequent; some truly absurd as when the bishop of Arles in southern France is consistently transposed into the zodiac as the bishop of Aries and the Ottonian Emperor's influence over the Church is transferred to the Ottoman Emperor. Such a fine book should have been proofread more carefully.

Eamon Duffy's history of the papacy is an intriguing study of the men and the institution. It also provides a snapshot of the history of Western civilization over 2,000 years.

Ordered as text for my master's program. The book service was great and the book even more wonderful.

Very readable and insightful. I was looking for a lot of gruesome medieval stuff, but in fact the theology, politics and humanity of the more recent Popes was far more interesting.

Very insightful look into the papacy and its history in almost two thousand years of the Roman Catholic church.

Replete with detail. Honest.

Exceeded my every expectation. Especially about the 19th century church & Benedict XV.

It has been said that the Church thinks in terms of centuries and that we may still be in its early days even though that Friday afternoon when the world turned on its Savior seems so long ago. In those 2000 years, 266 (sometimes very) flawed men have been pope. It's a lot to cover in 500 pages, but Eamon Duffy does so masterfully in his fourth edition of his history of the papacy, *Saints and Sinners*. A book review, at minimum, should tell whether a book is worth reading. So often a reviewer spends time making common cause with or combatting the author's arguments that no

mention is made of whether the book is well written, well organized, enjoyable, and worth a share of a reader's limited time. *Saints and Sinners* is all of those. While the author and this reviewer are Catholic, one need not be a Catholic to enjoy this book. An interest in Western history will suffice as there is certainly no single office which has had such a consistent role in its shaping for so long a time. And the papacy, as an office, and the men who have held it, is what this book is about. Church doctrine and general Church history are not its subjects unless directly affecting the office. One example: the Crusades are barely mentioned other than how only a strong papacy could have willed them into existence in a fractious Europe. For 2000 years, the men to whom Jesus gave the keys to the kingdom, have striven to perpetuate his Church from age to age. From its earliest days they believed a unity was required - a unity rooted in a successor to Peter at the head of Christ's one Church. A cynic might see in this simply a desire for power. Power against deviants from orthodoxy. And temporal power while awaiting Christ's return. And there is no doubt truth in both of those assertions. But the mission of the Church, from the time of Pentecost, has been to ensure people's eternal souls ultimately end up where they belong: in heaven with their Creator. What may appear as a lust for power can also reasonably be seen as fallen men doing as they see fit to create the most visible, straight path back to Heaven. To the 266 popes, that path is through the Catholic Church. That is not to say there have not been some reprehensible men elected Pontiff. And a whitewash this is not. Constantine's Edict of Milan, legalizing Christianity in the Roman Empire, was a blessing and a curse. A blessing in that it opened the gates to the Church and is no doubt one of the key reasons that Christianity became the dominant faith of Europe. A curse in that it began the intertwining of the Church and politics. And where politics are involved, corruption, greed, and every other vice are not far behind. While the days of European monarchs wielding great authority in papal elections was long over, some still had a veto authority as late as the 1910s. Of course, it cuts both ways: for centuries the popes were kingmakers in whichever European kingdoms were currently under its sway. This unfortunate, and probably inevitable, commingling gave rise to the worst periods of the papacy culminating in the some of history's more notorious characters such as the Alexander VI. The wave of 19th century political upheaval, and Napoleon specifically, were death knells to the Church's temporal power. And all for the good. Though popes like Leo XIII (1878-1903) and his immediate successors fought it, the breaking of the papal influence on temporal power (including the loss of the Papal States) was the greatest thing to ever happen to the Church. It paved the way for popes exclusively dedicated to its mission without having to operate within the confines of conflicting agreements with different countries, some of which could exert inordinate amounts of influence on the Church's leadership, ability to evangelize, and revenue collection. I do

not think it's going too far to say that without Napoleon it would be hard to imagine St. John Paul the Great, Benedict XVI, and Francis I becoming pope. The qualifications for election would still have been too concerned with temporal matters when these men were the right age. 2000 years. 266 saints and sinners. All have been both. Some more one than the other. But David had Uriah killed so he could take his wife, Bathsheba. And still he wrote the Psalms. Peter denied even knowing Jesus three times in a span of hours after having walked on water with him. And still he was crucified in Rome after having established his Lord's Church there. God works through men; that is to say sinners. And He does so in the hope that we shall all stumble home and be saints with him in Paradise. However circuitous the route.

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