

The Seventist-day Adventist Church all but abandoned the search for the 'evidence' after years of fruitless searching, while never abandoning the *belief* that such a tiara with such a title existed. The search was resurrected when a member of the Church managed to get access to the original *Our Catholic Visitor* article, the article itself being treated as evidence that efforts of the Roman Catholic Church to 'suppress' the truth had failed. Though no other evidence apart from one article in one magazine in 1914 (which subsequently stated *twice* that it had got its facts wrong) has ever been produced, the Seventh-day Adventist Church continues trying to prove both existence of such a papal title and of a tiara bearing the title. It also claims that *all* popes are crowned with *the* tiara with the words *Vicarius Filii Dei* on it. When a Roman Catholic Church denial was issued, it was suggested that the words might have appeared on some mitre rather than a crown, or on some crown deliberately hidden from view.

Numerising Vicarius Filii Dei

The following is the basis of claim that Vicarius Filii Dei, when numerised, produces the total of 666. It is based on the roman numeral value of certain letters.

V -- 5
I -- 1
C -- 100
A
R
I -- 1
U -- 5
S

F
I -- 1
L -- 50
I -- 1
I -- 1

D -- 500
E
I -- 1

TOTAL – 666

You will arrive at 666, by summing the letters in the name Ellen Gould White. You can perform the tally yourself, keeping in mind that in Roman numerals D=500, L=50, U=5, W=U+U=10, and I=1.

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Vicarius Filii Dei

Vicarius Filii Dei, *Vicar of the Son of God* in Latin, is a title mentioned in the forged Donation of Constantine as belonging to Saint Peter. Seventh-day Adventists claim that it is a title possessed by the Pope as head of the Roman Catholic Church. However the Roman Catholic Church categorically denies this.

When numerised (see below), the words *Vicarius Filii Dei* produces the total of 666, a number described as the "number of the beast" (ie, Antichrist in the *Book of Revelation*). Seventh-day Adventists claim this is evidence that the pope is the Antichrist. They also claim such a title is written on the Papal Tiara, the papal crown.

The “Sources”

Four definitive sources are sometimes given:

A protestant woman visiting Rome said she witnessed Pope Gregory XVI wearing a crown with the words on it, in or around 1832;³

Pope Gregory XVI had worn a papal tiara with these words clearly visible on it at a Pontifical High Mass during Easter 1845;

The 'existence' of a photograph of a papal funeral at the start of the twentieth century (which probably means the funeral of Pope Leo XIII in 1903 but could possibly be Pope Pius X's in 1914) showing the words on a papal tiara.

The tiara (with the words mentioned) is *always* used to crown popes, but specifically was used in 1939 to crown Eugenio Pacelli as Pope Pius XII.

The Reality

The claim is demonstrably false.

Whether or not the numerised total of the letters in *Vicarius Filii Dei* produce the total '666' is irrelevant

because no such title actually exists for the papacy or the Holy See. While the words did feature in the *Donation of Constantine* (now known to be a forged document) they referred to St. Peter not subsequent popes.

In 1832, only two tiaras existed; one from the sixteenth century and one, given by Napoleon I to Pope Pius VII in 1804. Neither contain writing.

Pope Gregory could not have worn a triple tiara containing the alleged words during Easter Mass in 1845, because, as has been mentioned, papal tiaras were not worn during religious ceremonial most especially not during Mass. (The only principal exception, when a pope gave his traditional *urbi et orbi* blessing wearing the Tiara, occurred high up on a balcony and could not possibly be confused with a Mass celebrated at an altar.)

By 1845 the pope had received a new tiara, which like the earlier two does not contain any writing. Only one tiara has any major writing at all, the Belgian tiara of 1871 but it does not feature *Vicarius Filii Dei* or words even remotely similar. It reads *Christi Vicario in Terra Regum*, with the words spread out over three lairs. Only one word of the alleged writing appears in the actual words on the 1871 tiara, and even there the word is in a different grammatical case. (For pictures of popes wearing these tiaras, see *Papal Tiara*)

All of the tiaras in existence at the time of the creation of photography and hence in the timeframe for the mysterious 'photographic evidence' still exist and have been accounted for, through receipts, repair records, valuations, etc. No tiara other than those currently in existence has existed since the destruction of early Tiaras by Napoleon's soldiers at the beginning of nineteenth century.

Though the evidence supposed 'exists' in the form of a photograph, in nearly one hundred years no-one has been able to produce the photograph, or even give definitive evidence of its existence, such as stating where exactly it was published.

While 'promoters' of the story constantly demand that the tiaras be 'released so that they can be inspected', that has in fact long been happening. One tiara is on public display in St. Peter's basilica itself on June 29th every year, where it is placed on the head of a statue of St. Peter. Pope Paul VI's tiara is on permanent display in Washington, DC. All the other tiaras have been displayed either separately or in groups, not just within the Vatican but even in the United States, where the 'story' first originated. They have also been displayed around Europe. Having been seen by large numbers, no-one has seen the words *Vicarius Filii Dei* on the side of a papal tiara, as is the claim.

There is not one Papal Tiara but many, with numerous ones being used for different popes, often with the decision on which one to use being decided on the basis of which one corresponded most closely to papal head size. Yet some websites promoting the myth speak of the same tiara *always* being used.

The papal tiara used in the coronation of Pope Pius XII, which was explicitly stated in one Seventh-day Adventist website as being the tiara with the *Vicarius Filii Dei* words spelt out in jewellery and diamonds was in fact manufactured in 1877 and so could not have been the tiara with those words supposedly seen in 1832 or 1845. As Pope Pius XII's coronation was filmed and shown in cinemas around the world, had his papal tiara contained such words, they would have been captured by the camera and seen by millions worldwide in theatres. Even if the actual placing of the crown on Pius's head was not seen clearly from a distance by film cameras, photographers were allowed unprecedented access, being able to photograph the coronation from within a few feet of the Supreme Pontiff. Pius as a result was pictured from every angle up close. If lettering existed on Pius's crown, it could not but have been seen and pictured.

In the absence of any evidence of *Vicarius Filii Dei* on any papal crown, it has been suggested that it exists on a papal mitre. Again the words do not

appear on any of the vast number of mitres in existence in the Vatican. Furthermore, references have been made to a "triple tiered mitre". Mitres are not and never have been triple tiered. Only the papal crown is triple tiered.

Even if, contrary to all the evidence a triple tiara with those words on it did exist and had been photographed (presumably placed on the coffin of the late pope), in the absence of modern photographic technology or even zoom lens, with constant movement during the funeral ceremony and slow shutter speeds, the chances a camera being able from a distance (and given the restrictions imposed on photographers during a papal funeral, it would have to have been at a distance) to capture lettering on a tiara are remote in the extreme. (One of the websites 'claiming' such a photograph exists shows a photograph of a papal tiara placed on top of the glass-sided coffin of Pius X at his canonisation. Even in the 1950s when that picture was taken, the photographic technology was such that the pope's remains nor the tiara could be clearly seen.

The story seems to owe its *modern* origins to an inaccurately written story in an American Roman Catholic magazine, *Our Catholic Visitor* of 15 November 1914, in which the author erroneously referred to the mythical title. Others inside and outside Catholicism repeated the claim as fact, based on the article. The article was subsequently corrected twice in issues of the magazine published in September 1917 and August 1941. Historically, where this story first developed remains unclear. It did however spread, being accepted as 'fact' by Catholics and non-Catholics alike (though with each side attaching different meanings to it). Historians, academics and mainstream religious leaders view the story as a classic anti-Catholic urban myth, a story for which not the slightest shred of evidence has been found, even by the Seventh Day Adventists who have spent over a century extensively searching for the evidence.