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Pope-Pourri: What You Don't Remember From Catholic School

John Dollison

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How many Catholics know that a priest invented the fax machine, or that monks were the first to make coffee, champagne, and pretzels? How many know why St. Elmo is portrayed in art with his intestines hanging out, or why St. Maximus is often shown commanding a bear to carry his luggage?

Probably none. The Catholic Church is all too eager to tell us about the Ten Commandments, the Resurrection, and the glories of St. Peter's Basilica, but how often do you hear about items like "Pope on a Rope" soap, or the "Let Us Spray" lawn sprinkler (shaped like Pope John Paul II, the sprinkler squirts water out of his outstretched arms as it spins)?

It's all here in "Pope-Pourri"-- an unprecendented collection of entertaining anecdotes, trivia, and intriguing information that the Catholic Church never told you about-- and in many cases doesn't want you to know about. Such as the bizarre story of the "Cadaver Synod", when Pope Stephen VI dug up the rotting corpse of his predecessor, Pope Formosus I, dressed it in papal robes, and put it on trial for "aspiring to the papacy" and other crimes. Other unusual footnotes to Catholic history include the Cataphrygians, an early separatist movement whose members prayed with their index and middle fingers inserted into their noses.

"Pope-Pourri" celebrates the wealth of amusing trivia the Church has produced during its 2,000-year history-- from oddball saints to the Vatican's censorious movie reviews, from strange Virgin Mary sightings to embarrasing secret scandals-- presented for the first time in one fascinating volume that practicing Catholics, lapsed Catholics, and the merely curious will all enjoy.

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