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Pope Francis, Cardinal Egan and 9/11

Robert McClory | Sep. 27, 2013 NCR Today

This story from the mega-blog Whispers in the Loggia [1] explains how, in the aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy, New York Cardinal Edward Egan, amid much pressure, declined the post of relator general for the synod of bishops focusing on the role of bishops in the third millennium.

The man named as his substitute was the little-known Argentine Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio. His performance was so effective during the synod, according to the blog's author, Rocco Palmo, that his name started to be floated around for higher posts in the Curia.

Palmo doesn't go so far as to suggest all this explains why Francis is the pope and not Egan. Indeed, Egan was in his 80s when Pope Benedict resigned. But the odd coincidence of events is well worth noting.

An excerpt from Palmo's blog post:

> Like Egan, Bergoglio had been given his red hat at the mega-consistory of the prior February, when John Paul created 42 cardinals -- an all-time high -- in one fell swoop. Yet in a distinct contrast to his New York counterpart -- a three-decade veteran of the Rota and the university scene who was given the Presidential Suite of his favorite hotel whenever he was back in town -- the low-profile Argentine Jesuit had never studied nor worked in Rome, and generally tended to avoid the place except when summoned under duress.
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> Even so, all of a sudden, the surprise turn at the Synod became Bergoglio's "launchpad" into the spotlight of the global church.
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> In the gathering's wake, the Argentine's performance was deemed so effective that his name would start being floated for key offices in the Curia -- a place where he reputedly said "I would die" were he called to work in it.
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> Of course, that wouldn't be the end of the buzz -- were it not for his stand-in role in the Aula, the Argentine's name would've attracted far less recognition (and, hence, been a non-starter) at the 2005 Conclave ... and without Bergoglio's showing at the last election -- burnished by the amplified status which resulted from it -- his emergence eight years later as B16's successor simply never would've happened.

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