

On this day: Pope John Paul I

Gerelyn Hollingsworth | Sep. 28, 2011 | NCR Today

On this day in 1978, Pope John Paul I died in his bed at the Vatican. He had reigned only 33 days. His body was discovered the next morning by Sister Vinceza Tafferel, one of the four nuns who served him.

Odd behavior and inconsistent statements by Vatican officials raised questions about what had caused the new Pope's sudden and unprovided death.

"I am completely convinced that Pope John Paul I, Albino Luciani, was murdered."

--*In God's Name: An Investigation Into the Murder of Pope John Paul I*, [1] by David Yallop, Carroll & Graf, 2007 edition, page 228.

From "The Road to Rome," Yallop's chapter on Luciani's early life:

"Albino Luciani's generation of priests had to cope with the full force of the *Syllabus of Errors* and anti-modernism mentality. Luciani himself might easily have become, under such dominant influences, yet another priest with a closed mind. A variety of factors save him from that fate. Not the least was a simple but great gift, a thirst for knowledge.

"Despite his mother's exaggeration about his early health there was one considerable bonus in her over-protectiveness. By refusing to let the boy enjoy the rough and tumble of his friends and by replacing the ball with a book she opened the entire world to her son. He began to read voraciously at an early age the complete works of Dickens and Jules Verne. Mark Twain, for example, he read at the age of seven, unusual in a country where still nearly half the adults could not read at all at that time." Pages 5-6.

"We Are Left Frightened," Yallop's account of the end of Pope John Paul I's life, begins on page 203. Search terms: autopsy, Vincenza.

Albino Luciani's book, *Illustrissimi*, [2] is a collection of letters he wrote to authors, including Dickens, Twain, and Chesterton; to Jesus and to saints, including Francis de Sales, Theresa of Lisieux, and Bernardine of Siena; to fictional characters, including Figaro and Pinocchio; and to many others. From his letter to Mark Twain:

"Dear Mark Twain,

"When I was a boy, you were one of my favourite writers. I still remember *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, which were the adventures of your own childhood. . . .

"When I said: 'Now I'm going to tell you another of Mark Twain's stories,' my students were always delighted. But I'm afraid people in my diocese are going to be shocked. 'A bishop quoting Mark Twain!' they'll say. Perhaps I ought to explain that bishops vary just as much as books. Some are like eagles, soaring high above us,

bearing important messages; others are nightingales, who sing God's praises in a marvelous way; and others are poor wrens, who simply squawk on the lowest branch of the ecclesiastical tree, trying to express the odd thought on some great subject.

"Dear Twain, I am one of this latter kind."

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