

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

March 19, 2013 at 9:11am

Update on Pope Francis' ring

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The Francis Chronicles

Pope Francis

Vatican City — As part of his inauguration to his papal ministry Tuesday, Pope Francis received a special signet ring, the seal of which is used to signify approval of special Vatican documents.

All popes wear a special ring, named the fisherman's ring after Peter's initial job as a fisherman.

Initial reports on Francis' ring, a gold-plate silver band with a small face carrying a relief image of a bearded St. Peter holding the symbolic keys to heaven, were a bit confused.

Clarifying the matter Tuesday, Vatican spokesman Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi said Francis' ring was not quite a hand-me-down, as first reported.

Lombardi said Tuesday the ring was initially designed for Pope Paul VI, but was never made. Instead, Lombardi said, a wax mold of the ring had been kept by Paul VI's former secretary, Archbishop Pasquale Macchi, who, at his death, passed it on to Msgr. Ettore Malnati, an aide.

Malnati, Lombardi said, had the mold used to make a ring, which Francis then chose to wear as his.

Hand-me-downs, it seems, always have good provenance stories.

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