

Daily Parish Communication

April 17, 2023

Good Morning! Sorry for the delay - way too early airport run today!

1. Today's Readings: [Monday of the Second Week of Easter | USCCB](#)

2. The RE Corner with Jan Heithaus: As we resume with our history of the popes, we come to another segment that is difficult to understand. Pope Formosus had controversy regarding his papacy, but more afterwards than during. Ever hear of a cadaver being put on trial?

3. Quotes of the Day:

~"Those who sincerely say 'Jesus, I trust in You' will find comfort in all their anxieties and fears." *Pope St. John Paul II*

~"In all created things discern the providence and wisdom of God, and in all things give Him thanks." *St. Theresa of Avila*

~"Now all things have been filled with light, both heaven and earth and those beneath the earth; so let all creation sing Christ's rising, by which it is established." *St. John Damascene*

***St. Joseph, Pray for Us!***

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## Pope of the late 800s, part 2

### 112. Formosus (891-96)

The pontificate of this pope belongs to that era of strife for political supremacy in Italy. Formosus was probably a native of Rome, and must have been born about 816, since, at his death, he is characterized as an old man of eighty.

Formosus was a mysteriously controversial pope. Born in 815/816, probably in Rome, he became bishop of Porto in 864. King Boris of Bulgaria was so impressed with the bishop that he twice requested Formosus be made metropolitan of Bulgaria. However, Popes Nicholas I and Adrian II refused to move a bishop from one see to another. Formosus served as papal legate to France and Germany, and in 869, he was a member of the synod that deposed Patriarch Photios of Constantinople. In 875, Pope John VIII sent Formosus to offer the crown of the Holy Roman Empire to Charles II the Bald; the following year, John excommunicated Formosus, whom he accused of treason. John readmitted Formosus to lay communion in 878 on the condition that Formosus stay in exile. Pope Marinus I restored Formosus to the see of Porto.

In September, 891, Formosus was elected to succeed Stephen. Under Stephen V the political horizon had become very threatening. Charles the Fat had reunited the Frankish kingdom in 885, but after his deposition and death in 887, Arnulf of Carinthia, was unable to preserve its unity. Duke Guido of Spoleto, who thereupon took possession of Lombardy, assumed the title of king. Ruling now over the greater portion of Italy, Guido was a very dangerous neighbor for the papal states, especially as the Archdukes of Spoleto had been on many occasions engaged in conflict with the popes. Stephen V had unwillingly crowned Guido emperor, as King Arnulf had been unable to accept the pope's invitation to come to Rome. Consequently Formosus, after he had been unanimously elected pope by clergy and people, found himself compelled to recognize Guido's dignity and to crown him and his son Lambert Roman Emperor on April, 892. Important ecclesiastical questions claimed the pope's attention immediately after his elevation. Formosus insisted on a distinction of persons; indulgence might be readily shown in the case of the laity, but in the case of clerics such a course was attended with difficulties; the rule that Photius neither had been nor was a bishop, and all clerics ordained or appointed by him must resign their office.

A matter of a pressing character, affecting the Church in Germany, next called for the papal decision. A quarrel had broken out between Archbishop Hermann of Cologne and Archbishop Adalgar of Hamburg. Formosus decided, in accordance with the decrees of the Synod of Frankfort (892), that Bremen should remain under the Archbishop of Hamburg until new dioceses were erected. Formosus viewed with sorrow the political troubles that disturbed the old Frankish kingdom of the Carolingian dynasty. In the contest between Udes (Odo) of Paris and Charles the Simple for the French crown, the pope, influenced by the Archbishop of Reims, sided with Charles and called on Arnulf, the German king, to support him. The political position in Italy directly affected the pope as head of the ecclesiastical estates, and consequently his independence as head of the Church. Emperor Guido of Spoleto, the oppressor of the Holy See and the papal territories, was too near Rome; and the position of the papacy seemed very similar to its condition in the time of the Lombard kingdom, when Stephen II summoned Pepin to his assistance. Formosus secretly persuaded Arnulf to advance to Rome and liberate Italy; and, in 894, Arnulf made his first expedition, subjugating all the country north of the Po. Guido died in December of the same year, leaving his son Lambert, whom Formosus had crowned emperor, in the care of his mother Agiltrude, the implacable opponent of the Carolingians. In the autumn of 895 Arnulf undertook his second Italian campaign, and in February, 896, stood before the walls of Rome. Agiltrude had fortified herself in the city, but Arnulf succeeded in entering and was solemnly crowned by the pope. The new emperor thence marched against Spoleto to besiege Lambert and his mother but was struck with paralysis on the way and was unable to continue the campaign. Shortly afterwards (April 4, 896) Formosus died.

*Source: catholic.com, excerpts from Catholic encyclopedia*

### **113. Boniface VI (896)**

Boniface VI was a Roman, elected by the Roman faction in a popular tumult, to succeed Formosus. He had twice incurred a sentence of deprivation of orders, as a subdeacon and as a priest. At the Council of Rome, held by John IX in 898, his election was pronounced null. After a pontificate of fifteen days, he is said by some to have died of the gout, by others to have been forcibly ejected to make way for Stephen VI, the candidate of the Spoletan party.

*Source: catholic.com*

#### **114. Stephen VII (896-97)**

Stephen was a Roman, and the son of John, a priest. He had been consecrated Bishop of Anagni, possibly against his will, by Formosus, and became pope about May, 896. Whether induced by evil passion or perhaps, more probably, compelled by the Emperor Lambert and his mother Ageltruda, he caused the body of Formosus to be exhumed, and in January, 897, to be placed before an unwilling synod of the Roman clergy. A deacon was appointed to answer for the deceased pontiff, who was condemned for performing the functions of a bishop when he had been deposed and for passing from the See of Porto to that of Rome. The decision was that the deceased had been unworthy of the pontificate, which he could not have validly received since he was bishop of another see. All his measures and acts were annulled, and all the orders conferred by him were declared invalid. The corpse was then stripped of its sacred vestments, deprived of two fingers of its right hand, clad in the garb of a layman, and ultimately thrown into the Tiber (which a monk rescued). Fortunately, it was not granted to Stephen to have time to do much else besides this atrocious deed. The basilica of the Lateran collapsed not long after this bizarre event, and many credited divine judgement. Fifteen months after his election, Stephen was ousted and imprisoned; he was strangled in prison. Rumors abound that he was insane.

*Source: newadvent.org*