

Pope drops traditional titles, including ‘Vicar of Christ’

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April 03, 2020

In the latest Vatican yearbook, the *Annuario Pontificio*, the title “Vicar of Christ” does not appear on the listing for Pope Francis.

In the 2020 edition of the *Annuario*, the page devoted to Pope Francis is headed simply by his name: Jorge Maria Bergoglio. Past editions have always been headed by the titles accorded to the Pope, beginning with “Vicar of Jesus Christ.” Other titles have been “Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman province, Sovereign of the Vatican City-State.” In the 2020 edition, these titles appear at the bottom of the page devoted to Pope Francis, identified only as “historical” titles.

Such a change would undoubtedly have required the approval of the Pontiff.

In 2006, Pope Benedict XVI dropped another traditional title: “Patriarch of the West.” The Vatican explained that the elimination of this title “could prove useful to ecumenical dialogue.” The statement also noted that the significance of that title “was never very clear, and over history has become obsolete and practically unusable.”

The title “Vicar of Jesus Christ,” on the other hand, has a clear and unmistakable theological significance. Cardinal Gerhard Müller, the former prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, said that downgrading the title was a “theological barbarism.”

To date the Vatican has not issued any explanation for the change.

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- [Pope Francis drops ‘Vicar of Christ’ title in Vatican yearbook \(LifeSite News\)](#)

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Pope Francis drops 'Vicar of Christ' title in Vatican yearbook

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The title 'Vicar of Jesus Christ' stems from Holy Scripture where Jesus grants St. Peter the power of the keys in the Church



Pope Francis holds his General Weekly Audience in St. Peter's Square on August 29, 2018 in Vatican City, Vatican.

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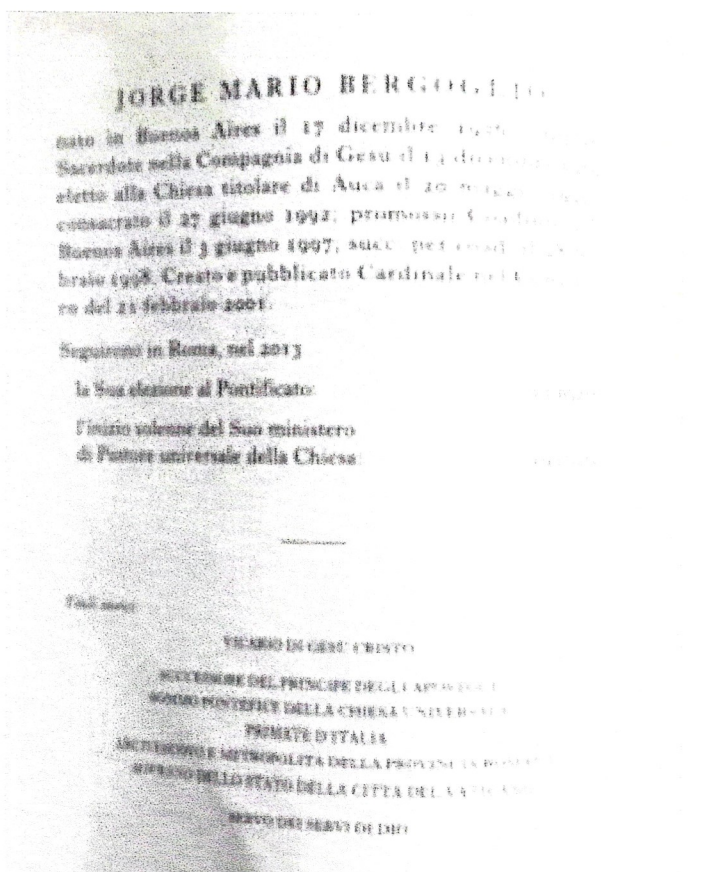
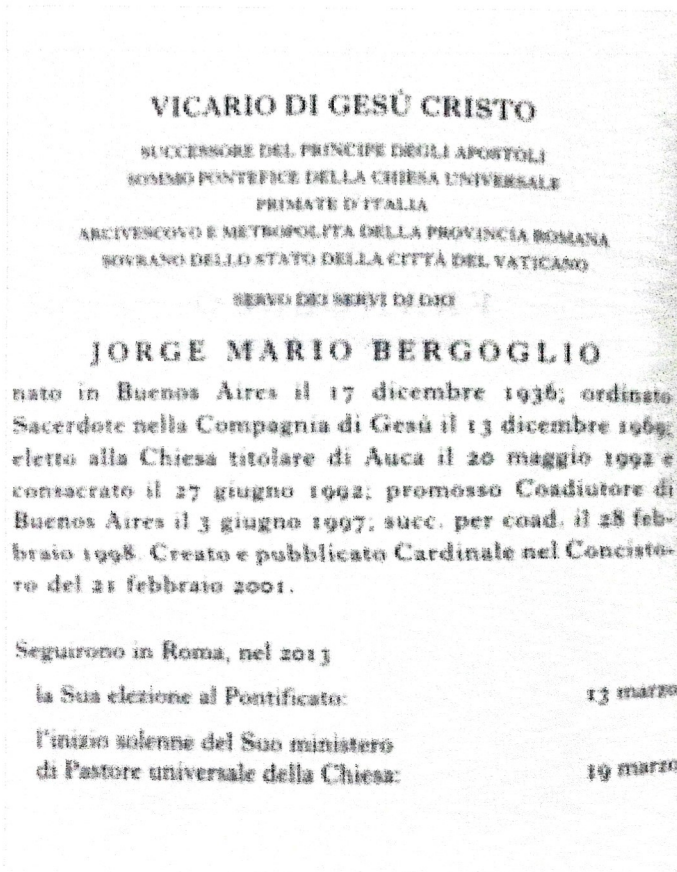
Maïke Hickson

Thu Apr 2, 2020 - 4:32 pm EDT

April 2, 2020 (LifeSiteNews) – In a surprise move, Pope Francis has dropped the historic and essential title “Vicar of Christ” from the 2020 Pontifical Yearbook, the Holy See’s annual directory, relegating the title to a footnote, calling it a “historical title.”

While previous yearbooks listed the title “Vicar of Christ” and the name of the reigning Pope under that title, this year’s annual directory simply lists the name “Jorge Mario Bergoglio,” the name of the man who became Pope Francis in 2013. A photo of this year’s yearbook was published by Rome-based journalist Marco Tosatti.

Cardinal Gerhard Müller, former prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, called the change “theological barbarism.”



As the German Rome Correspondent, Guido Horst, reported today for the newspaper *Die Tagespost*, this new entry has astonished well-informed Vatican experts. He writes that this year's *Annuario Pontificio* has “banned” the Pope's title 'Vicar of Christ,' making it a “historical title” that now belongs to a footnote.

The *Annuario Pontificio* is published every year. It updates statistical data concerning the Catholic Church. Usually, the presentation of the members of the Church's hierarchy – College of Cardinals, bishops of the world and the Vatican's dicasteries – starts with the Roman Pontiff, under the title “Vicar of Jesus Christ” (“*Vicario di Gesù Cristo*”). Then follow the additional titles of the Pope, all of which carry a “different or even no dogmatic significance” as does the first title, according to Horst. These are: Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman province, Sovereign of the State of the Vatican City, and Servant of the Servants of God.

The title “Vicar of Jesus Christ,” however, “stems from Holy Scripture, in which Jesus has granted St. Peter the power of the keys in the Church,” Horst explains.

After these additional titles, there usually then would come the name of the current pontiff, a short biography of him, as well as the dates of his election and inauguration.

However, the new entry about the Pope starts now – instead of the title “Vicar of Jesus Christ” – with the following title: “Jorge Mario Bergoglio.” This title is followed by a short biography and the dates of his election and inauguration. Finally – and this after a line indicating that the “footnotes” (in the words of Guido Horst) are now coming – there come, under the subtitle “historical titles”: Vicar of Jesus Christ, Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman province, Sovereign of the State of the Vatican City, and Servant of the Servants of God.

According to Horst, such a change of the presentation of the Roman Pontiff in the *Annuario Pontificio* “could only have happened upon request by Francis himself.”

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The German cardinal goes on to speak about the “embarrassment” that the *Annuario Pontificio* has “demeaned essential elements of the Catholic teaching on the primacy [of the Pope] as mere historical appendix.” He insisted that it is “a theological barbarism to demean as historical burden the titles of the Pope 'Successor of Peter, Representative of Christ, and visible head of the entire Church.’” He stated that the bishops, as successors of the Apostles, “together with the 'Successor of Peter, Representative of Christ, and visible head of the entire Church, rule the house of the Living God.” (*Lumen gentium* 18)

“No Pope or Ecumenical Council,” the German prelate continued, “could, with reference to their highest authority over the Church, do away with the primacy, the episcopacy, or the Sacraments, or to re-interpret them in their essence.”

A commentator quoted by Guido Horst noted that the change in the yearbook denotes a “defective understanding of the office,” pointing out that important titles such as “Successor of the Prince of the Apostles” have also been downgraded as mere historical titles.

Professor Armin Schwibach, the Rome Correspondent for the Austrian website Kath.net, commented on Twitter: “It seems that they continue to dismantle everything.”

In 2006, Pope Benedict made a change to the usual presentation of the Roman Pontiff in the *Annuario Pontificio* when removing altogether the papal title “Patriarch of the West.” At the time, this decision was interpreted as an act of “evidently hoping to eliminate one possible obstacle to ecumenical progress with the Orthodox world.”

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by Cindy Wooden, CNS



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The 2020 Annuario Pontificio, the official Vatican yearbook, has made the same emphasis typographically by listing other descriptions of the papal office as "historic titles".

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his election March 13, 2013, were: "Brothers and sisters, good evening. You all know that the duty of the conclave was to give a bishop to Rome. It seems that my brother cardinals have gone almost to the ends of the earth to get him ... but here we are."

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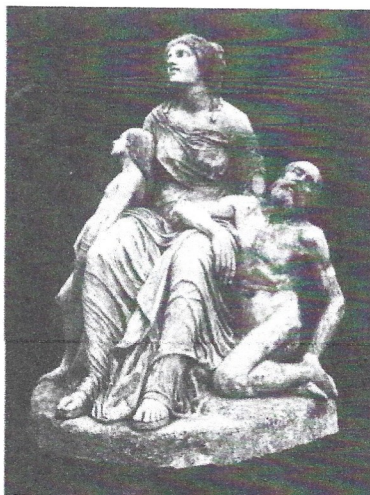
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Did Pope Francis really drop the vicar of Christ title?



Cindy Wooden

📅 April 3, 2020 at 10:28 pm

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