



# Papal Genealogy: The Families and Descendants of the Popes

By *George L. Williams*

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The papacy has often resembled a secular European monarchy more than a divinely inspired institution. Roman pontiffs bestowed great wealth on their families and forged strategic alliances with other powerful families to increase their power. Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia), for example, forced his daughter Lucrezia into a series of marriages for political reasons. When her marital alliance was no longer advantageous, as was the case in her second marriage, her husband was brutally murdered. Many papal families also intermarried in hopes of forming a hereditary papacy; at least two members of the Fieschi, Piccolomini, Della Rovere, and Medici families served as pope. Papal families since the early history of the church are fully covered in this comprehensive work. Genealogical charts graphically show the descendants of the popes, presenting in many cases the interrelationships between the papal families and their relationships with many of the leading families of Europe. Detailed histories examine the impact of the papacy on each pope's family and how each influenced the history of the church.

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### Editorial Review

From Library Journal

In a sweeping review of papal families, replete with numerous genealogy tables, Williams provides a complex who's who of illustrious kinships, primarily Roman/ Italian aristocracies, as they relate to the popes through the ages. Williams, who has a political science background, has taught in secondary schools and colleges in New York and published on Italian education and local history. To complete this work, he relies on Pompeo Litta's *Famiglie celebri italiane* as well as the standard works of Pastor, Ranke, and Mann and has conducted extensive archival research in Italy. However, Latin sources by Gams and Eubel and the *Regista pontificum romanorum* and *Liber Pontificalis* are not in the selected bibliography. The good and the bad pass through the pages as nepotism, simony, and greed within the families vie with virtue and orderly administration of the church's earthly government. The major focus is on the Middle Ages, the Baroque period, and the Renaissance. The author has done yeoman's service in painstakingly sifting through Italian publications unavailable in English. Not intended to be a readable history, such as Richard McBrien's *Lives of the Popes* (LJ 10/15/97), this work will serve well historians seeking papal lineage links. Recommended for specialized religious and academic collections. Anna M. Donnelly, St. John's Univ. Lib., Jamaica, NY  
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Review

"A sweeping review of papal families, replete with numerous genealogy tables. Recommended." --Library Journal

"Examines the families of the popes, their influence on history, and, in some cases, traces their descendants." --Theology Digest

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About the Author

Historian, educator, and former Fulbright scholar to Italy George L. Williams, of Port Washington, New York, has written numerous scholarly articles.

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