Chapter 3
Vatican City (1870–Today)

The Roman Question

After Italian forces captured Rome on 20 September 1870, the pope surrendered all his armed forces (except his household guards), but not his claim to sovereignty or land. Popes had governed the Eternal City since the Roman Empire had ended, and its unproposed seizure—despite Italian promises not to do so—was galling. Rome now became the capital of an Italian king who took over the pope’s Quirinal Palace, while anti-clericalists held state offices flying the tricolor flag promoting the House of Savoy.

The challenge of whether pope or king should rule the city was called the “Roman Question” among vying European powers well before 1870. Afterward they jockeyed to support either Italy, whose unity was fragile, or the Holy See, which distrusted Italy’s ascendancy. The popes viewed their sovereignty as a guarantee of right religion, Rome as Catholicism’s spiritual capital, and themselves as guardians of the martyrs’ tombs.

Indeed, the era’s popes insisted on the return of all papal lands seized during Italy’s Risorgimento. In hindsight that goal seems unrealistic, but at the time it was less clearly so. Three times within a century, popes had lost their state to French or Roman revolutionaries (1796, 1808, and 1848); and each time had recovered it. Since shifting geopolitics had repeatedly vindicated papal claims in the past, why think otherwise now? Hence popes often appealed to foreign powers for the return of the Papal States.¹

By contrast, Italy maintained that Romans preferred Italian rule and held a plebiscite to confirm that claim. The Kingdom initially proposed substantial papal jurisdiction over the “Leonine City”—an area within the two Leonine walls that form a conduit between the Vatican and the Tiber River. Its final position was less generous, as codified in parliament’s “Law of Guarantees”
(1871). Henceforth the pope’s person was deemed inviolable—but not his property. Papal holdings at the Vatican and elsewhere were to be treated with discretion by Italian authorities, and were deemed inviolable—but not sovereign.

Precedent for such discretion was at hand. When Italian General Nino Bixio captured the Papal States port of Civitavecchia on 15 September 1870, he ordered that the papal warship *Immacolata Concezione* remain inviolate as a papal yacht should the pope opt for foreign exile. But he also ordered that it “change its flag from that of the state to the personal [flag] of the Pope.”2 The flags in question are uncertain,3 since only its war ensign and jack are preserved.4

The popes, however, rejected Italian assurances about their personal inviolability as a unilateral concession that could be revoked at will. After all, the king had promised not to seize Rome in the first place, and the Law of Guarantees avoided real questions of sovereign and extraterritorial rights. In protest, the popes cloistered themselves behind the Vatican walls for nearly sixty years, never appearing in public even in St. Peter’s Square (with rare exception). For Catholics worldwide, their absence was painful and required a solution.

The matter was finally resolved in 1929 when the Lateran Accords reconciled the Holy See and Italy, established Vatican City State, and regularized Italian Catholicism. The pontiffs of this era included Pius IX, Leo XIII, Pius X, Benedict XV, and Pius XI; their reigns are listed in Appendix VII.

**Papal Flags: 1870–1929**

During the Roman Question period (1870–1929), several papal flags remained in use at the Vatican. Early references often lack details, or reflect the Swiss Guard flag;5 but never the design eventually adopted by Vatican City. Instead, from at least 1903, such references denote a proto-national papal flag,6 a yellow-white vertical bicolor overlaid by a centered tiara-and-keys emblem, as in a contemporary Swiss postcard (Fig. 3.1).7

Use of this flag reinforced the Holy See’s claims to sovereignty, absent territory.8 It flew over some Papal States forts until 1870 and was considered for adoption by Vatican City in 1929, but was set aside and replaced.9 (For a time it appeared even after 1929—sometimes in square format, like the new Vatican City flag.10) It is pictured at the Argentine papal legation in 1900 (see
Fig. 2.27) and in the Apostolic Palace courtyard, Cortile di San Damaso—apparently first under Pius X (Fig. 3.2). There it appears at papal audiences from 1903 to 1929, as well as other events.

Private collections, such as the Zaricor Flag Collection, hold several specimens of this flag (Fig. 3.3). Though labeled “Pontifical States military color” by a consultant, its provenance is unclear. Its emblem is appliquéd in yellow within a wreath—and only on the obverse of the flag; five yellow ties are attached to the hoist. A museum acquired it in 1912, with no further information about its origins.

Two further specimens are held by the author. Both have ties at the hoist with embroidered tiara-and-keys emblems, and both are nearly square (and thus may date from after 1929). The first is a wool flag with sewn stripes. It belonged to a cardinal who served in Rome, but his name and tenure are uncertain (Fig. 3.4). A larger prototype is shown in an undated photo of Collegio
Figure 3.6. Proto-National Papal Flag, Italian, undated

Figure 3.7. Proto-National Papal Flag, Vatican dinner, undated
Cesare Arici in Brescia, a Catholic school attended by Paul VI in his boyhood (Fig. 3.5). The second specimen is a silk flag with printed stripes (Fig. 3.6). The author also holds an undated photo of the proto-national flag above a bust of Pius XI at a Vatican dinner that included Palatine Guards (Fig. 3.7).

Some flag sources from the Roman Question period report the use of a plain bicolor, presumably as a civil flag in the Vatican area, and supposedly disposed horizontally white over yellow. This corresponds to plain bicolors (vertical or horizontal) used as civil flags in the Papal States. An illustrated postcard from 1925 shows such bicolors flying in the Vatican’s Cortile della Pigna. They hang vertically from crossbars, with stripes running lengthwise, and swallowtails at the bottom.

Papal militia colors during the Roman Question period included those of the Palatine Honor Guard Corps, the Noble Guard Corps and the Pontifical Gendarme Corps. Each flag has been described previously. They were altered with each new pope until September 1970, when they fell into disuse after Paul VI disbanded the first two groups (although the police service was maintained). The Swiss Guard retained its distinctive flags, as described below, along with a recent, new gendarmerie flag. A Standard of the Holy Roman Church appears as late as 1958—a red, swallow-tailed banner bearing the umbrella-and-keys device in gold, amid golden six-pointed stars (see Fig. 9.1). Until 1963, the Marshal of the Holy Roman Church displayed a white flag with his coat of arms at papal conclaves, as their guardian.

Beyond the Vatican, some papal diplomats flew papal flags—perhaps the proto-national design, as in Argentina, where it was lowered when diplomatic relations ruptured (1885) and re-hoisted when they resumed (1900, see Fig. 2.27). Ships carrying church dignitaries flew unspecified papal flags at times. Catholics worldwide flew them too. In Modena a handheld papal flag (ca. 1920) was white (at the hoist) and yellow (at the fly). In France unspecified yellow-white flags flew upon Joan of Arc’s beatification (1909), resulting in arrests for using flags of an unrecognized sovereign (relations between France and the Vatican having ended). U.S. flagmakers offered various yellow-white papal flags for sale during this period—such as the former civil ensign, or a vertical bicolor with the pope’s personal arms centered on the stripes or on the white stripe. A fringed flag of the latter design with the arms of Pius XI, is held by the Vatican. Some Italian flagmakers also sold papal flags.
Figure 3.8  Plain Vertical Bicolor, 12 February 1929, Rome

Figure 3.9  Plain Horizontal Bicolor, 11 February 1929, Milan

Figure 3.10. Artistic Template for Vatican flag drafts, 1929 (Vigevano’s illustration of final Papal States Infantry Color)
Selecting a Vatican Flag

In 1929 the Lateran Treaty resolved the Roman Question: the Holy See recognized Italy, and obtained sovereignty over “Vatican City State” (lo Stato della Città del Vaticano)—along with extraterritorial jurisdiction over several properties in or near Rome, including key papal offices, shrines, and educational institutions. Signed on 11 February at the Lateran Palace, the treaty surprised a delighted public, and awaited certain ratification in June. To celebrate the historic conciliazione, papal flags and banners briefly appeared alongside Italy’s at Roman public buildings. A photo from 12 February shows a plain vertical bicolor flying alongside Italy’s state flag (with the royal arms) at Palazzo Chigi, the contemporary seat of its foreign ministry in Rome (Fig. 3.8). However, in a similar display at Milan’s Central Post Office, the papal bicolor was divided horizontally instead (Fig. 3.9).

Soon, Vatican authorities were queried about the “correct” papal flag by diplomats, flagmakers, and Italian officials. Deliberations were managed by the papal secretariat of state, as attested by a Vatican Secret Archives dossier. Some queried the precise flag design, especially whether (and where) the tiara-and-keys emblem appeared. Indeed, Italian flagmakers were familiar with the proto-national papal flag attested earlier, as well as a variant divided horizontally. A few asked whether the pope had a personal flag distinct from a flag of state; but most presumed that “the” papal flag was a single, uniform design.

Initially, papal authorities seemed unsure, despite the proto-national papal flag flying at the apostolic palace. Instead the Roman Curia coordinator (Sostituto) first replied that “the” papal flag was a plain vertical bicolor with a special staff and cravat. His description precisely reflected a flag sketch in a recent book on the Papal States army by Attilio Vigevano (the final papal infantry color, Fig. 3.10). But on 24 February, a brief study of papal flags (note the plural) by Pio Pagliucchi instead recommended that Vatican City adopt the ensign flown by Papal States merchant ships until 1870—a yellow-white vertical bicolor with the tiara-and-keys emblem on the white stripe.

A historian, Pagliucchi clearly enjoyed the favor of the authorities. In a twist of fate, his father had commanded the papal fort at Castel Sant’Angelo in 1870 as a papal flag was lowered for the last time. Pagliucchi’s recommendation was apparently accepted, since by 11 March the cardinal secretary himself circulated a draft papal flag design to other pontifical authorities. This likely
followed his review of three sketches based on Pagliucchi’s study (Fig. 3.11). Each imitated Vigevano’s artistic template: a square vertical bicolor with a yellow staff bearing a lance-head and a yellow-white cravat. Artistic flourishes were added to the original staff (golden spiral braid) and finial (an angel’s head). The Vatican City constitutional illustration retained this flag format.

One draft version was a plain bicolor inscribed “military flag” (Bandiera militare)—which had served as the final Papal States infantry color. The second draft overlaid the bicolor with a centered tiara-and-keys emblem—i.e., the proto-national papal flag, a Papal States fort flag that the Vatican had revived. Lacking attestation in Pagliucchi’s study, it was inscribed “inexact” (Non esatta)—as opposed to a bicolor with the emblem on the white stripe that comprised the third draft. It was inscribed “flag of the state” (Bandiera dello Stato)—doubtless due to his recommendation.

(A draft of the pope’s “personal” flag went no further, likely because the Noble Guard color was similar. It was a square white color bearing his personal arms and golden flourishes along the edges, with a suitable staff and cravat.)

Pagliucchi’s logic was flawed but defensible. Seeking a precedent for a flag “of the State”—perhaps as distinct from a personal standard—he relied heavily on an 1855 decree stipulating that merchant marine vessels flying an award

Figure 3.11. Vatican flag design drafts, 1929. 
From left to right: “Bandiera militare”, “Bandiera dello Stato”, “Non esatta”
flag at the masthead, should fly that “of the State” (*dello Stato [Pontificio]*) at the stern—meaning the civil ensign of 1825. He thus concluded that “this and none other” was the flag “of the [Papal] State”.

Here he erred. No particular, exclusive flag “of the State” existed in the 1800s; and there was little distinction between a “personal” or “national” papal flag in the Papal States. Instead the term *bandiera pontificia* referred generically to many flags “of the State”, despite varying designs—whether for merchant ships, coast guard vessels, warships, forts, infantry units, or other militias (see Appendices I & II). Indeed throughout history, a “papal flag” conveyed a symbolic concept (i.e., papal sovereignty) more than a specific or uniform design—despite shared design elements; all were arguably flags of the state.

Reviving a civil ensign was likewise anomalous, since it would henceforth fly mainly at papal offices—a custom rarely seen before 1903. Yet even for a landlocked Vatican state, a former maritime ensign was a reasonable flag. It once flew widely from ships that conveyed papal statehood, its colors were pontifical, and its emblem was unvarying—unlike a pontiff’s personal arms that changed with each pontificate. While this precise design never flew ashore in the 1800s, other yellow-white flags did—including military colors from the time of Gregory XVI and fort flags under Pius IX. Collectively and despite various designs, yellow-white flags had clearly come to symbolize modern papal sovereignty.

Henceforth, however, the term “papal flag” would denote a uniform, unvarying design—a first for the modern era—a design also commonly called “the Vatican flag” (a descriptor previously unknown).

### The Vatican Flag Design

On 7 June 1929 the Lateran Treaty took effect upon the solemn exchange of ratification records. The same day, the Vatican City constitution (*Legge Fondamentale*) was signed by Pius XI and was entered into the Holy See’s official gazette. It revived the former Papal States civil ensign as the new Vatican flag, as counseled by Pagliucchi’s study. Apparently the flag did not fly immediately, probably because it had to be produced, and buildings fitted with flagstaffs; but a month later it is recorded at the new papal embassy to Italy.
Figure 3.12. Constitution, 1929, Annex A
Figure 3.13. Constitution, 2000, Annex A
The flag was reconfirmed in a revised constitution issued in 2000.48 Identical to the 1929 version, the article pertaining to the flag reads:

The Vatican City flag is constituted of two fields divided vertically, a yellow one next to the staff and the other white, and bears on the latter the tiara with the keys, all as seen in the model in Annex A of the present law.49

The original annexes of 1929 also bore black-and-white illustrations of the Vatican City coat of arms, seal, and flag (Fig. 3.12). Later annex printings incorporated slight alterations in the flag’s tiara-and-keys emblem. These were replicated in the annexes of 2000 that provided color illustrations of the state arms as well as the flag (Fig. 3.13). In each version, the inscription on the flag annex reads:

Official Flag of Vatican City State: Yellow and white fabric divided per pale, the white charged in the center with the crossed keys surmounted by the tiara. Yellow staff, striped with gold, surmounted by a lance adorned with a cravat of the same colors as the flag and fringed in gold.50

Of note, the flag annex portrays a square ceremonial flag with a unique staff, finial, and cravat, i.e., an infantry color. A lone corresponding specimen is carried by the Pontifical Swiss Guards for solemn events, such as their procession to St. Peter’s Square for the papal blessing urbi et orbi (“to the city and world”). This occurs at Christmas and Easter, and when a new pope is elected (Fig. 3.14).51 The Swiss Guards assemble with the Vatican infantry color, while opposite them, Italian troops from its military and police assemble with the Italian color (since Italy shares security responsibility for the square). Fanfares from the Pontifical and Italian anthems accompany the event.52 Its staff is never dipped—lowered in honor of dignitaries—except during the Eucharistic consecration. When not in use, it is displayed in a cabinet in the officers’ meeting room of the Swiss Guard’s quarters in Vatican City.

The Vatican ceremonial flag was created around 1970, when the Palatine Honor Guard Corps was disbanded and its own color no longer represented the papal forces that assembled jointly. The square flag has two sewn stripes composed of heavy silk-like fabric, and a cravat with two tails divided vertically, white over yellow. Since 2012 its emblem follows the pattern of the 2000 constitution, but previously it followed the template in the 1929 constitution
Figure 3.14. Infantry Color, Christmas 2012, Piazza San Pietro

Figure 3.15. Infantry Color, ca. 1970–2009, Swiss Guard Quarters
Figure 3.16. Vatican state flag, 1938, Palazzo del Governatorato
Golden metal spiral braid surrounds its yellow staff, which is surmounted by a golden-bronze lance-head with an angel inside. At one time this finial also adorned some civic flagpoles within Vatican City.

State flags flown by Vatican buildings follow the basic constitutional design, but vary widely in details such as proportions, color shades, and emblem details. Though Vatican authorities presume that state flags be square, like the constitutional illustration and early state flags (Fig. 3.16), this is not regulated and occurs rarely today (Fig. 3.17). Instead, since the 1960s or so, Vatican
Figure 3.18. State flag variants, Vatican City, 1980s
Figure 3.19. State flag variants, Vatican City, 2013
buildings fly oblong state flags that follow Italy’s flag proportions (2:3), probably because they are mass-produced there (see Figs. 0.1–12). As shown here, other details also vary among different flagmakers (Figs. 3.18–19); and in only one version does the emblem follow the actual constitutional template today (Fig. 3.20). The shade of the yellow stripe ranges from the standard color “FM-yellow” (frequent) to orange-yellow (less frequent); and the emblem’s precise colors, features, and size relative to the overall flag are subject to artistic license.

Such variations suggest that Vatican authorities could clarify the flag’s details more precisely. Many nation-states issue detailed specifications that enhance their flag’s dignity, prevent confusion, and provide clarity for production—e.g., defined proportions, precise color shades, and a standard emblem template. Such details exceed a constitution’s scope. The flag’s proportions deserve clarification (at least for Vatican sites) because the constitution’s square infantry color might be considered distinct from state flags for public buildings. Indeed in the Papal States, Italy, and elsewhere, square military colors have often diverged from oblong civil and state flags. Moreover, Catholics worldwide also use the papal flag, although local flagmakers often rely on questionable sources (e.g., Wikipedia). Absent uniform specifications, Vatican flag reproductions will diverge widely, both at home and abroad.

**Vatican Flag Customs**

Little ceremony attends the papal flag at the Vatican, where its use is purposeful and unassuming (see Figs. 0.1–12). Unlike flags elsewhere, it is rarely raised or lowered to fanfare, erected indoors at offices, spread atop caskets, or subject to display codes, apart from appointed days to fly it.

Flag days are set forth by the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State, its legislative body, and follow various Papal States precedents. They include papal anniversaries, holy days of obligation, and state occasions (see Appendix V). When a pope dies, flags fly at half-staff or bear mourning streamers, until the conclusion of the novemdiales, the nine days of mourning after his burial (Figs. 3.21–22).

Within Vatican City the flag flies from a dozen buildings or so. Typically, angled flagstaffs adorn windows or balconies near doorways. Vatican Gendarmes, Swiss Guards, or building porters manage its display.
Figure 3.20. State flag variant, 2016, Residenza Paulo VI (Extraterritorial Zone)

Figure 3.21. Vatican flag, 1939, at half-staff (death of Pius XI, Porta Sant’Anna, detail)

Figure 3.22. Vatican flag, 2005, with black streamer (death of John Paul II, Pont. Teut. Inst. of S. Maria dell’Anima)
The Holy See’s extraterritorial zones also fly the Vatican flag. These non-contiguous enclaves lie beyond Vatican City and are governed by it—comprising about 2 square miles of Rome and its environs. They host over 100 pontifical entities, such as major basilicas, curial offices, educational establishments, and headquarters of religious orders. The Lateran Treaty granted diplomatic immunity to these sites, along with any future Holy See offices (and indeed, any Italian church when a pope visits). Further pacts confirm this, resulting in 17 extraterritorial zones today. Nearly half adjoin Vatican City, others lie deeper into Rome, and two lie beyond it: the papal villas at Castel Gandolfo, and a large transmission site for Vatican Radio at Santa Maria di Galeria (see Appendix VI).

Several other pontifical establishments in Rome have more limited privileges, such as exemption from Italian taxes or seizure, and fly the papal flag more rarely. Foreign embassies to the Holy See, located throughout Rome, are also asked to fly their national flags on Vatican flag days.

Technically, Vatican City could also charter ships under its flag. Landlocked nations enjoy this right under the 1921 Barcelona Convention on Navigation. Indeed the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State has published a decree “Concerning Maritime Navigation under the Flag of Vatican City State” and the Vatican owns dock space at the Mediterranean port of Civitavecchia. To date, however, the Vatican has not actualized its right, and the papal merchant register remains blank.

Since the Holy See freely deploys the Vatican flag, a brief word on its structure is in order. Led by the pope, it governs the Catholic Church through four branches. An executive cabinet, the Roman Curia, directs church life and practice. A legislative-judicial arm codifies and adjudges Catholic canon law. A financial arm manages the See’s investments and real estate, and offers banking services for Catholic entities. A civil arm, Vatican City’s administration, governs the See’s territory. All this is overseen by the Secretariat of State, along with the See’s foreign relations. Its diplomatic posts deal with both the host church and state.

Papal diplomats fly the Vatican flag abroad at their apostolic nunciatures (where diplomatic relations exist) and apostolic delegations or other missions (where they do not); and it also flies at international organizations alongside those of other accredited states (alphabetically for “Holy See” in the local language). This is of note because diplomacy is conducted in the name of the Holy See, not Vatican City State (except at global organizations of a purely temporal
and their two sovereignties are technically distinct. However, since papal authorities view the microstate as the sign and guarantee of the Holy See’s sovereign status, the Vatican flag logically serves both entities, and is commonly referred to as “the papal flag,” like its predecessors of old. Here it is shown at the Apostolic Nunciatures in Havana, Prague, and London (Figs. 3.23–25).

The latter once flew a papal flag variant, to be examined presently.
Figure 3.26. Proposed Vatican flag design by Archbishop Bruno Heim

Figure 3.27. Vatican City State coat of arms

Figure 3.28. Holy See insignia (variant)  
Figure 3.29. Roman Curia logo
Other Papal Flags and Arms

Irregular papal flags are also seen at times. Around 2000 the flag at the Apostolic Palace had a counterchanged border and obverse side, as featured in a news photo and television documentary. Or sometimes the yellow-white stripes are overlaid by a centered papal emblem. Thus an erroneous Vatican flag flew at Amman airport in 1964, when Paul VI visited the Holy Land—the first modern pope to travel abroad: a vertical bicolor overlaid by a centered dark tiara-and-keys emblem within a ring. Later it was wrongly cited by a flag expert as the “Holy See flag”.

Another variant was proposed by an Italian flag expert in 1929. It surmounted the stripes with a small red oval shield bearing the tiara-and-keys emblem, reminiscent of Papal States infantry colors. A striking design in this vein was also advocated by Archbishop Bruno Heim, a brilliant herald who designed the coats of arms for several popes. As papal emissary in London, he (and others elsewhere) flew a vertical bicolor surmounted by Vatican City’s state arms, a red shield bearing the tiara-and-keys emblem (which he stylized; see Figs. 3.25–27). Heim saw his design as more heraldic than the official flag with a silver key on a white field, which he deemed inapt because the two hues are heraldic correlates, and the emblem is less distinct.

Precisely for the same reason, in the constitution Vatican City’s coat of arms places the emblem on a red shield instead of a white background (Fig. 3.27). This stems from a 1929 study by Alberto Serafini, commissioned by the papal Secretariat of State. He explained that heraldic aptitude precluded a white background for the tiara-and-keys emblem, and also cited the red color’s antiquity; for in previous centuries the keys often appeared on a red shield or banner to represent the papacy (as examined previously).

Usually Vatican City’s coat of arms is employed by its state agents alone, and not by the Holy See’s agents (unlike the Vatican flag, which is used by both). For insignia, Holy See agents use only the tiara-and-keys emblem (or the pontiff’s own arms) on plaques, stationery, and the like, both in Rome and abroad. Such use predates Vatican City’s founding; and the Holy See website calls the insignia its own “coat of arms”—technically a misnomer, since it lacks customary heraldic elements such as a shield (Fig. 3.28). The emblem is subject to wide artistic license, as in the Roman Curia logo (Fig. 3.29).
Figures 3.30–32 (from top). Car pennants: Paul VI, John Paul II, Francis

Figure 3.33. Papal bicolor, Latin Patriarchate Chancellery Complex, Old Jerusalem
The fender pennants (*bandierine*) on papal automobiles are semi-official flags that often bear the pontiff’s personal arms. Pius XI—the first to use cars—flew a yellow-white pennant with his arms bisecting the stripes.\(^8\) This pattern was followed through Paul VI (Fig. 3.30).\(^8\) John Paul II placed his arms on the white portion (Fig. 3.31), as did Benedict XVI. The latter also used an oblong yellow-white car flag with his arms on the white. For new popes the plain tiara-and-keys emblem appears on the pennant’s white stripe, or the regular Vatican flag is used until a personal device is created. However, Pope Francis eschews car flags altogether, except when abroad, when his car flies the regular Vatican flag or pennant (Fig. 3.32).

Unofficial, handheld flags in both Rome and Poland during the pontificate of John Paul II bore his own coat of arms on the white stripe. Similar flags bearing the arms of successive popes have appeared in various places, but never fly from Vatican buildings.

During a vacant see, the Vatican flag does not change, contrary to occasional myth, but the papal insignia does: the tiara is replaced by the ceremonial umbrella of the Roman Church—representing the *camerlengo* (cardinal-chamberlain) who administers the vacant see.\(^8\) This emblem appears on special coins, stamps, medallions, and the like—but not flags.

A further myth arises from the distinct sovereignties held by Vatican City and the Holy See: namely, that each uses a different version of the papal flag (such as reversing the gold and silver keys). This is not accurate. Only one version of the Vatican flag is official, and it serves the affairs of both Vatican City and its holder, the Holy See.\(^8\)

At times papal flags lack any emblem at all. Indeed, throughout the Catholic world a plain bicolor of yellow and white (usually vertical) often flies in honor of the papacy or Catholicism (Fig. 3.33).\(^8\) Such flags lack legal sanction but enjoy a simple, low-cost appeal. Moreover, as early as 1929 a Roman myth held that the Holy See’s extraterritorial properties were to fly such a bicolor instead of the regular Vatican flag.\(^8\) On the contrary, Vatican City’s governorate directs such sites to fly the regular Vatican flag.\(^8\)

Finally, large draperies with the pontiff’s personal arms adorn windows or balconies from which he addresses open-air gatherings at the Vatican or Castel Gandolfo.
Figure 3.34. Swiss Guard Color, Gregory XVI

Figure 3.35. Swiss Guard Color, Pius IX

Figure 3.36a. Swiss Guard Color (obverse), Pius IX in exile

Figure 3.36b. Swiss Guard Color (reverse), Pius IX in exile
Armed Corps

The Pontifical Swiss Guard Corps, which has guarded popes continuously since 1506, carries a striking flag based on elements from previous flags. For some centuries these flags included stripes in the blue-red-yellow colors of the Medici popes—the same colors which today are reflected in their dress uniform.87

Striped flags appear early. In the 1500s two frescos show a striped flag bearing the papal coat of arms. A fresco from the era of Pius IV (1560–65) shows it with twenty horizontal stripes of red alternating with yellow, emblazoned with the papal arms of the Medici. It is shown with red, blue, and yellow stripes in a fresco showing the coronation of Sixtus V in 1585.88 The order of the stripes is uncertain, as is their number. In a 1736 painting, a flag with nine horizontal stripes and bearing the papal arms, is shown flying from the pope’s Quirinal Palace, and is also confirmed by documents later in the century—apparently in the order blue-yellow-red89 (see also Fig. 1.24).

From at least the early 1800s, the nine stripes instead appeared in the thrice-repeated order of blue-red-yellow, and bore the pope’s arms at the top and those of the commander at the bottom (as in Fig. 3.34, showing the arms of Gregory XVI). The earliest such flag preserved at the Guard’s Vatican quarters probably dates from the reign of Pius VIII (1829–30)—although his arms were subsequently painted over with those of his successors, Gregory XVI (1831–46) and Pius IX (1846–78), whose arms remain. It is preserved today at the Guard’s quarters (Fig. 3.35); the bottom section is lost.90 Photos of the era show it flying in Piazza San Pietro (see Fig. 1.25).

A second Swiss Guard flag from the reign of Pius IX is also preserved in their quarters (Fig. 3.36).91 It was apparently used during his exile in Gaeta (1848–50), where he blessed it. It is a square flag with only three horizontal stripes: cobalt blue, red, and golden-yellow. On the obverse, the center stripe bears Pius’s arms surmounted by the tiara-and-keys emblem, and within a gold wreath. The top stripe bears (at the hoist) the Swiss arms surrounded by the gold motto SCHWEIZERISCHE EIDGENOSSENSCHAFT (Swiss Confederation) within a green wreath, and (at the fly) a gold wreath. The gold wreath was designed to surround the captain commander’s coat of arms, but they were never added because a definitive command was not then granted. The reverse of this flag is the same except that in place of Pius’s arms, the tiara-and-keys emblem (with both keys gold) appears beneath the arched inscription in gold, GUARDIA SVIZZERA PONTIFICIA.92
Under Leo XIII (1878–1903), the flag changed to horizontal stripes of white-red-gold (i.e., with white instead of blue). This was due to confusion over the faded shade of blue being proposed, which appeared white; but Leo saw the combination as a symbolic mingling of the papal and Swiss colors, and authorized it anyway. The flag is preserved at the Guard’s quarters (Fig. 3.37).93

Under Pius X (1903–1914) the flag returned to the blue-red-gold motif, with his coat of arms at the top and those of the commander at the bottom.
That flag is also preserved at the Guard’s quarters, bearing the arms of Commander Leopold Meyer von Schauensee (1901–1910) (Fig. 3.38).

The current pattern of the Swiss Guard flag was introduced by Commander Jules Repond (1910–1921), who also refined their uniform. It was designed by Robert Durrer, a Swiss archivist, whose sketch was approved by the papal Secretariat of State on 1 November 1913. Subsequently, the actual flag was produced at a Swiss convent in time for its blessing on 5 May 1914. In that year it is pictured bearing the arms of Pius X (Fig. 3.39).

The flag’s design and size is codified in the Swiss Guard Rules. It is square and bears a large white cross, recalling flags carried by Swiss troops in centuries past. The resulting quarters bear the arms of the reigning pope and those of the Guard’s founder, Pope Julius II (1503–1513), counterposed with stripes in the colors of the Guard—red, gold, and blue. These also appear in their dress uniform, and recall the colors of Pope Clement VII, who was saved by the Guard at great sacrifice during the sack of Rome in 1527. The commander’s arms appear in the center, encircled by a green wreath and mounted upon a background in the colors of the Swiss canton from which he hails.

The flag is altered upon selection of a new pope or unit commander. The current version was blessed on 1 May 2015 by the papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin. It bears the arms of Pope Francis along with those of a new commander, Christoph Graf of Lucerne (Fig. 3.40). Under Francis two further changes have appeared in the flag. Since May 2013 his arms are rendered with the use of a miter instead of a tiara (which was not done under Benedict XVI even though his arms initiated the use of the miter); and since May 2015 the corner stripes follow the same order (whereas previously the second quarter reversed the red and blue stripes).

In some cases a transition period is too brief for a new flag to be introduced. This transpired during the pontificate of John Paul I (1978) and the command of Colonel Alois Estermann (1998), both of whom suffered untimely deaths. In John Paul’s case no flag was produced; in Estermann’s case one was completed but never used. The fabric is always silk damask, the same material as the famous “Julian banners” that were conferred upon Swiss cantons in 1512 to acknowledge their loyalty to the pope during his wars against France. The flagstaff has often been surmounted by a spearhead finial bearing an image of the Guard’s patron, St. Nikolaus von Flüe. A yellow and white streamer hangs from the top of the pike as a commendation for service to the papacy, granted after the restructuring of the various Vatican security forces by Paul VI.
Figures 3.41–42. Swiss Guard color, Bronze Door entry, color of Pius X (left) & Benedict XVI (right)

Figure 3.43. Swiss Guard color, St. Peter’s Square, Pius XI
On Vatican flag days, the Swiss Guard flag is posted near the Bronze Doors adjoining St. Peter’s Square—usually indoors, rarely outdoors (Figs. 3.41–43). On 6 May it is carried to Cortile di San Damaso for the annual induction of new recruits. There it becomes the focus of the swearing-in known as the Fahneneid (flag oath), as each new recruit grasps the banner, raises his right hand, and pledges to protect the pontiff (Fig. 3.44). Later the flag is carried to the Swiss Guard’s barracks courtyard, where the Vatican and Swiss flags are displayed, along with those of the Swiss cantons. When not in use, the flag hangs in the commander’s office.

The Vatican City State Gendarme Corps received a distinctive unit flag on 27 September 2008. Designed by Cardinal Andrea Cordero Lanza di Montezemolo, its pattern resembles the Pontifical Gendarme Corps color retired in 1970 (i.e., a blue field with the pontiff’s arms, Fig. 3.45). The new flag uses a lighter blue and bears the Vatican state arms instead of the pontiff’s (Fig. 3.46). The shield is stylized as a red heptagon edged in yellow. The arms are framed by golden branches, at whose base is the motto FIDES ET VIRTUS. The flag is hemmed in a gold border and bears gold fringe. Its staff—colored spirally in yellow and white—bears a statuette finial of St. Michael the Archangel. The corps also carries an oblong Vatican parade flag fringed in gold. It has a spirally-colored staff (yellow-white) whose finial is the tiara-and-keys emblem.
Figures 3.45–46. Gendarmerie, ca. 1950 (top) & since 2008 (bottom)
Papal Flags Today

As the Petrine keys span the millennia, the pope’s modern colors have now begun their third century, having first appeared in 1808, in a yellow-and-white papal cockade opposing Napoleon’s seizure of Rome. Born that year from the pope’s symbolic protest, the colors inspired an enduring legacy. Although the Papal States have passed, their yellow-white flags became a persistent sign of papal sovereignty throughout the European revolutions of the 1800s—a claim codified today in the Lateran Accords of 1929. It was none too soon. With the rise of fascism and the Nazi occupation of Rome, the papal flag quietly reminded the world once again that other empires would never usurp the papacy’s mission.

Indeed, under John Paul II the reverse seemed to unfold. Upon returning to his native land for his first visit, the Marxist red flag, which usually accompanied Poland’s in town squares and city centers, was replaced by the papal flag (Fig. 3.47). Though its display was brief, it heralded the impending peaceful downfall of communism in Europe, aided and abetted by the pope. As a new millennium beckoned, the Vatican flag greeted many such symbolic moments, flying alongside scores of national flags in distant lands as popes pursued dialogue and understanding.
Figure 3.49. Scotland, 2010, Visit of Benedict XVI

Figure 3.50. U.S.A., 2013, Election of Pope Francis, Cathedral of St. Peter & Paul, Indianapolis
Important among these are its historic displays at the United Nations, where popes appealed for “war no more”; in the Holy Land on either side of disputed borders; at the Italian parliament for a papal visit that a century earlier was unthinkable (Fig. 3.48); and in lands of every creed and race. When Benedict XVI retired to Castel Gandolfo’s papal palace in 2013, the closing of its doors and the lowering of its flag signaled the first resignation of a pope in six centuries. Truly, the papal flag has come of age as a symbol of the Sovereign Pontiff, and the moral suasion of his global office (“soft power”).

In the world of symbols, flags are preeminent; and among them, the Vatican’s is unique in two ways. First, no other national flag is yellow and white. These distinctive colors reflect the Petrine keys of gold (yellow) and silver (white)—and thus the pope’s authority to “bind and loose” the communion of faith (see Matthew 16). Second, and paradoxically, the Vatican flag is among the most widely flown globally, despite serving a microstate—for it symbolizes Catholic identity worldwide. It often appears at Catholic churches, schools, offices, and charities, with the host nation’s banner. When a pope travels, his colors are fêted by throngs of well-wishers (Fig. 3.49); and when a pope is elected, yellow-white bunting adorns church lintels in every land (Fig. 3.50)—a striking legacy, indeed.

As the modern papacy has evolved globally, so has its flag. With this book, its deserving story is finally told. Amazed by its display at a remote Irish farmstead, G. K. Chesterton once called it “a tower of crowns and a parade of keys”; for it points to a kingdom that embraces all creation—even its remotest corners—striving toward the fullness of God. Unlike other flags, few have died for this one; but many have labored faithfully for the shepherd it represents, or the peaceful mission of the church that he heads. Perhaps in that light, all people of good will can honor the Bishop of Rome, and the banner with his keys.
Notes, Chapter 3


2. Andreotti, insert, p. VI.

3. *Roma nelle fotografie della Raccolta Ceccarius*, p. 92, reports that its flag was “discovered” in 1920. But which flag? Might the jack have been preserved separately from its ensign (see Fig. 1.15)? If so, one might surmise that it flew from the moored ship when Civitavecchia surrendered, and was subsequently struck in favor of its ensign. Indeed Ziggio reports an 1876 chart showing only two flags for the papal yacht: the former Papal States war ensign (white with the effigies of Peter and Paul, surmounted by the tiara-and-keys emblem) and the former Holy See ensign (white with a crucifix) used to signify the personal presence of the pope—but not the jack (“Le bandiere degli stati italiani”, part II, p. 98; also part I, p. 123, n. 30).

4. For the naval flags, see Figs. 1.15 & 1.19 and Appendix III, for Museum Deposits at the Vatican Historical Museum. The ship was donated to a boys’ school later in the decade (Bouquet; Alvarez, p. 258).

5. References to a papal flag at the Bronze Doors likely concern the Swiss Guard flag, as evidenced by photos or illustrated accounts: Pesci, p. 16; and “El Jubileo de León XIII”. See also Hart, p. 189 (who references white and yellow stripes—found in the Guard flag under Leo XIII); Special Correspondent, p. 784. Krieg, p. 448, reports that the Swiss Guard flag flew there on special occasions from the pontificate of Gregory XVI. However during papal conclaves the marshal’s flag is reported there: cf. Richards, p. 116.


7. Illustration from “Päpstliche Flagge—Drapeau Pontifical”, illustrated color postcard, H. Guggenheim & Co., Zurich, no. 10489, author’s archives, undated (publisher flourished in the early 20th century; antique postcard dealers at eBay online auctions report the flag series dates from 1906–1919; a postmarked version in author’s digital archives dates from 1913).

8. An early case in point was the rupture of the Holy See’s relations with France, occasioned by the exchange of state visits between its President and the King of Italy, in October 1903 (Paris) and April 1904 (Rome). During the latter, Pius X refused to meet French President Émile Loubet, because no Catholic nation’s head of state had previously visited the Italian monarchs who had “usurped” the pope’s temporal sovereignty. The message conveyed by Pius’s refusal was likely amplified by flying a proto-national bicolor flag at the apostolic palace—apparently for the first time since 1870 (at least officially). Indeed prior to 1870 there is no record of such a flag at the palace (although the Swiss Guard flag flew at the Bronze Doors, either indoors or outdoors).

9. For Papal States forts, see p. 53; for the 1929 design process, see p. 96.

1933, 1940, 1942, 1944. An Italian encyclopedia also carried it into the 1930s: Rangoni-Machiavelli, pl. 2 (separate editor). It flew in May 1929 at Montecassino Abbey in honor of its 14th centenary celebrations; cf. “La processione religiosa nell’abbazia di Montecassino in occasione del 14° centenario”, Giornale Luce A0329, video footage at 0:42 retrieved online (21 June 2018) at: <www.youtube.com/watch?v=6JaBn8px45o>.

11. “La bandera pontificia en Buenos Aires”. For more on papal diplomats, see p 93.

12. Illustration from “Waiting for the Holy Father [i.e., Pius X]—throngs of the faithful in the Court of San Damaso in the Vatican, Rome”. Underwood & Underwood Publishers, Arlington NJ (USA), no. H 38688, registered with the Library of Congress 1 December 1903 (entry 76440), author’s archives. A similar photo (with the emblem obscured) is titled, “The Holy Father is speaking! Eager throngs in the Court of San Damaso in the Vatican”. Stereoview photography (dual stereoscopic photos), Underwood & Underwood Publishers, Arlington, New Jersey (USA), nos. H 38710–H 38714, original photos registered with the Library of Congress 1 December 1903 (entry 76409–76413), author’s archives. Cf. Catalogue of Title Entries, p. 839/1009. A fixed flagstaff does not seem attested before Pius X, and may have been erected due to his regular public audiences in the courtyard.


16. Illustration from author’s collections. Flag acquired by author in 2007 from belongings of an unidentified cardinal whose goods were being disposed by his grand-nephew through an antique dealer in Bassano, near Brescia; 142 x 140 cm (56 x 55 in.).

17. Illustration from Barrett, p. 96b; Giovanni Battista Montini studied there from 1903–1914. The flag is square in format and appears to be at half-staff.
18. Illustration from author’s collections. Flag acquired by author in 2017 from an online auction in Baffadi, Italy, 140 x 140 cm (55 x 55 in.). The emblem resembles that found in the Rupoli Papal Fort Flag (Fig. 2.21).

19. The location may be the Palatine Guard Quarters, since their monogram appears on the trumpet banners, and they used ceremonial rifles. The three young guards appear to wear a service uniform of the corps: cf. the website of their successor association, online (retrieved 21 June 2018) at: <pietroepaolo.org/incontro18.html>. Major Peter Hasler, Swiss Guard archivist, suggests the man sitting between the two clergymen might be Alois Hirschbhül, the Swiss Guard commander from 1921 to 1935 (email to Rev. Richard Kunst, 1 March 2018).

20. Cf. Rosenfeld (1883), pl. 11 (1883—"Päpstliche Flagge: Hausflagge"). Martin et al., pl. 2 (1896—"flag of the Holy See"). Grand Larousse Illustré (1929). Ziggioto, “Le bandiere degli stati italiani”, part II, p. 98. Less likely is that the former white fort flag with the papal arms remained in use, although some flag sources report it anachronistically: cf. Rosenfeld (1883), pl. 11, with arms of Leo XIII.


23. “Drapeaux pontificaux”, pp. 100 & 102, presents a standard with six-pointed stars and the coat of arms of Pius X, but this is uncorroborated elsewhere. News photos and footage (author’s archives) shows a Noble Guardsman holding a standard bearing the umbrella-keys insignia when Pius XII took possession of the Lateran Basilica (1939) and upon the coronation of John XXIII at St. Peter’s Basilica (1958). Though misnamed, the standard is pictured online (retrieved 21 June 2018) at <marcellinonews.blogspot.com/2012/10/lepanto-bandiera-pontificia.html>.

24. Richards, p. 116. Wire photos, author’s archives: International News Photos, 22 February 1939, no. F0868962; and Associated Press Photo, 19 June 1963, no. 07022704293. The large flag was square and disposed vertically, bearing the marshal’s princely arms, attached to a staff which was mounted diagonally to a wall or balustrade. One such flag is preserved by the Vatican Historical Museum (unnumbered; flag of Prince Chigi della Rovere). The hereditary position belonged to the Chigi family in modern times, but was abolished with the restructuring of the Pontifical Household on 28 March 1968.

25. See pp. 59, 90–91, and also “La bandera pontificia en Buenos Aires”. Memoria que el Ministro de Estado, “Santa Sede”, p. 3, records the apostolic delegate in Lima, announcing the flag at half-staff in 1878 upon the death of Pius IX. Lafort, p. 728, reports a papal flag flying at France’s nunciature to honor the state visit of the Russian Czar in 1896, “for the first time since 1870”, but it is unclear whether the reference implies use of a flag before the fall of Papal Rome (cf. also Semaine religieuse, 1896, p. 583). Pierconti, p. 596f., also reports a flag there in 1903 upon the death of Leo XIII and the elevation of Pius X (cf. also Semaine religieuse, 1903, p. 229). Portugal’s nunciature hoisted a papal flag for protection during local unrest in October 1910 (cf. “Religious Orders Exiled”).


27. Museo Civico del Risorgimento di Modena, No. 792, 41 x 38.5 cm (16 x 15” in.), ca. 1900–1925. Retrieved online (18 June 2018) at: <bbcc.ibc.regione.emilia-romagna.it/pater/loadcard.do?id_card=67603>. 

29. Cf. flag catalogs of the American Flag Company from about 1912 (p. 128) and 1916 (p. 106, anachronistic arms of Pius X); and Annin & Company from 1914 (Annin & Co. Makers of Fine Flags... [New York, Annin, 1914]).

30. Commercial flag catalogue, 1897 (Cincinnati: The National Flag Company, 1897), p. 25, bearing the arms of Leo XIII.

31. The yellow-white flag is fringed and bears the arms of Pius XI on the white stripe. It was exhibited at festivities marking the 80th anniversary of Vatican City State in 2009. Presumably held by the Vatican, its provenance and use are unclear to the author—and it may have been a gift of some kind: cf. J. P. Sonnen, Orbis Catholicus Blog, 12, 13, & 15 February 2009, retrieved online (21 June 2018) via <orbiscatholicus.blogspot.com/2009/02>; and email to author, 7 July 2009.


33. Illustration from news photo, 11 February 1929, Argo Agenzia Fotografica, Milan, author’s archives, inscribed: “L’accordo fra lo Stato Italiano e la Santa Sede avvenuto in Roma il 11/2/1929. La bandiera papale che dal 1870 non venne più esposta ricompare oggi unita a quella dello Stato al Palazzo della Posta Centrale colla bandiera Papale e quelle dello Stato”. The bicolor is white over yellow.


36. “Bandiera Pontificia”, ASV, Segr. Stato, An. 1929, Rubr. 240, fasc. 1, folios 243, 246, 252, 253. The Italian description refers to a square yellow-white vertical bicolor attached to a yellow staff with a lance-head finial bearing a yellow-white cravat.

37. Illustration from Vigevano, pl. 1; cf. pp. 75–76 (published in 1920). Repeated in Fig. 2.16.

38. Pagliucchi, ‘Bandiere pontificie di stato e militari,’ in “Bandiera Pontificia”, ASV, Segr. Stato, An. 1929, Rubr. 240, fasc. 1, folios 269–273 (typewritten) & 279–284 (handwritten). Supplements include papal flag decrees from 1825 (maritime ensigns) and 1855 (award ensigns), and several illustrations. Vigevano seems to be a key study source, since Pagliucchi appends his illustration of the final Papal States infantry color (Vigevano, pl. 1).


40. Illustration from “Bandiera Pontificia”, ASV, Segr. Stato, An. 1929, Rubr. 240, fasc. 1, folios 285–287 (all rights reserved, used with permission). Flagmakers attested to their manufacture of plain bicolors and/or the proto-national design with the emblem bisecting the stripes, whether vertical or horizontal (folios 260–264).
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42. See Appendix IV, p. 41, and Fig. 2.8.

43. See pp. 11 & 59.

44. Atti del Sommo Pontifice Pio IX, vol. II, pp. 6–10: treaty between the Papal States and Tuscany governing “reciprocal equal treatment” of ships bearing their respective flags in the other’s ports.

45. See Appendix I and Chapter 2 (“Yellow-White Ensigns”, “Infantry Colors”, “Fort, State, & Civil Flags”, “Civic & Palatine Guard”). Zara, p. 136; Ziggio, “Le bandiere degli stati italiani”, part I, p. 117. Some sources erroneously suggest that the Papal States civil ensign was flown on land in the 19th century: cf. Tabet, pl. 4–7, followed by Smith, Flags, p. 57. Geoffrey Briggs, in an addition (Plate VIII) to Galbreath’s Papal Heraldry, erroneously claimed it was “adopted as the Papal Banner by Pope Pius VII in 1809”.

46. “Legge fondamentale dello Stato della Città del Vaticano”, 7 June 1929. It was entered into a supplement of the Holy See’s gazette on 7 June along with several other legal provisions; but the whole supplement was only released on 8 June (including one provision entered that day). Although article 21 provided that the constitution entered into force upon publication, 7 June is considered its effective date.

47. See “Credenziali presentate da S. E. Borgoncini Duca a S. M. il Re: La bandiera del Vaticano sventola su Villa Maria Pia”, 8 July 1929, Archivo Luce, photo retrieved online (21 June 2018) at: <fondoluce.archivioluce.com/LuceUnesco/avanzata/scheda/foto/IL0000026680/12/ La-bandiera-del-Vaticano-sventola-su-Villa-Maria-Pia.html>. Also, “Il nunzio apostolico si reca al Quirinale per presentare le credenziali al re”, video retrieved online (21 June 2018) at: <www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2IMRAYAZ8s>.


49. Article 19 (1929 version), and article 20 (2000 version).

50 Illustrations and citation from Annex A in both the 1929 and 2000 versions. The caption “bandiera ufficiale” parallels those at the bottom of the design drafts of 1929 (Fig. 3.11). See also Becker, “Vatican Flags”, p. 217–218; Becker, “The Flag of Vatican City”, Fig. A; Arias Pérez, pp. 21–27.


53. Illustrations from Pontifical Swiss Guards. The flag measured 116 cm (46 in.) square, and was double-sided—such that the silver key handle appeared on the dexter on both sides of the flag. The image shown here was adjusted by the author from a reverse image. The emblem followed the format found in the Legge Fondamentale of 1929 which is slightly different from that of 2000. The keys were embroidered in metallic gold and silver thread, connected by a golden cord. The tiara was white with golden crowns on which were embroidered red jewels—but not on the bands at their bases. The tiara’s infuiae were gold
on their obverse and silver on their reverse, and its inner lining (visible at its base) was white. (Swiss Guard Major Peter Hasler, emails to author, 17 May 2005, and 30 March 2009 with photos.) From Easter 2009 to Christmas 2012 the silk flag was unused because of wear. Instead an oblong polyester flag (100 x 150 cm [39 x 59 in.]) with a lemon-yellow stripe, as shown at the top of Fig. 3.19) without a cravat was attached to the ceremonial staff, which is approximately 2.6 m (8.5 ft.) tall (author’s observations on site, April 2009).

54. Archbishop Paul J. Marcinkus, President of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State, asserted that Vatican state flags should be square like the infantry color in the constitutional illustration (letter to Whitney Smith, 14 January 1986, Flag Research Center files). Cf. also, Ceresa. However, since the Vatican flag design process in 1929 incidentally employed a square infantry color illustration as a draft template, it is not clear to this author whether the designer had state flags for public buildings in mind: see pp. 95–96.

55. Illustration from *L’Osservatore Romano* photo no. 397798, 10 July 1938, captioned “Piazzalle del Governatorato: Annual feast of the Palatine Guard. Msgr. Amleto Tondini reads the ‘Guards Prayer’; in the group to the left, Msgr. Montini, Sostituto of the Secretariat of State, who presided over the solemn ceremony; and the commanders of the Armed Pontifical Corps.” This author’s archives include other photos of square Vatican state flags: 8 July 1929 at Italy’s new papal nunciature, Villa Maria Pia (“Credenziali presentate da S. E. Borgoncini Duca a S. M. il Re”, Archivo Luce); 11 February 1932 in Cortile di San Damaso (Mussolini visits Pius XI, Critical Past); February 1939 at the Holy Office (Death of Pius XI, British Pathe); 10 February 1939 at the Cancello Sant’Anna (Death of Pius XI, Vedo News Service); 10 October 1958 at Castel Gandolfo’s Pontifical Palace (Death of Pius XII, British Pathe and Associated Press).


57. Illustrations from author’s photos while present in Rome; the more recent templates reflect emblems appearing at the Holy See’s current or former website (as in Figs. 3.13 & 3.28–29).


59. *Giornale militare officiale*, pp. 839–845 (fortress flag protocols). Vatican custom probably mirrored that of Italy, where public buildings likewise flew the tricolor on appointed days—both in 1929 and today.


61. Illustration in Figure 3.21 from Foto Vedo, Rome, 10 February 1939: “Subito dopo la comunicazione ufficiale della morte di Papa Pio XI, in tutti gli edifici vaticani è stata esposta la bandiera pontificia a mezz’asta, in segno di lutto. Bandiera a mezz’asta negli edifici che costeggiano l’ingresso al Cortile di S.Anna”; full photo online (2 July 2018) at: <vatflag.tripod.com/1939-halfstaff.jpg>. Illustration in Figure 3.22 from user Anthony Majanlahti (antmoose) at flickr.com, retrieved online (21 June 2018) at: <www.flickr.com/photos/antmoose/83530706>. Cf. also the death of Pius XII at Castel Gandolfo, in “A Simple End to a Pope’s Splendid Life”, *Life* 45:16 (20 October 1958), p. 23 (“Lowered papal flag at half mast was fixed in place at 4:03 a.m.”); as available online (21 June 2018) at: <images.google.com/hosted/life/0308a90530b4538d.html> and <www.gettyimages.com/license/50578038>. 
The papal flag routinely flies atop the Vatican Museums and at entry points like the Teutonic College (technically extraterritorial) or Porta Sant’Anna, where it flies from the Swiss Guard Commander's apartment and St. Anne's Church. Deeper within it flies from the Gendarmerie Quarters, the Fire Station, Vatican Radio headquarters, the Governorate, Palazzo San Carlo, Casa Santa Marta, the Gendarmerie Command, the Judiciary, the Canonicate Palace, and the courtyards of the Swiss Guard as well as the Apostolic Palace (Cortile di San Damaso). Other buildings occasionally fly it too, especially when the pope visits them.


Cf. the Lateran Treaty, 11 February 1929, article 13, 14, and 16, and the tables in Annex 3; and the 2007 “Note Verbali”, Section III.


At the United Nations Organization, where the Holy See is a non-member observer state, the papal flag flies under “Holy See” after the voting member states, in accordance with General Assembly resolution A/RES/69/320, “Raising the flags of non-member observer States at the United Nations”, 10 September 2015. At the New York site its inaugural hoisting took place on 25 September to coincide with the visit of Pope Francis; at the Vienna site on 9 October; and at the Geneva site on 13 October. At the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (Vienna) the flag flies in alphabetical order under “Saint-Siège”. In the U.S. State Department lobby in Washington, the flag stands between those of Haiti and Honduras (i.e., “Holy See”).

69. Illustration (Havana) from *Nunciatura Apostólica en Cuba*, retrieved online (24 April 2012) at: <www.nunciaturacuba.net/contacto> and (21 June 2018) at: <static.wixstatic.com/media/80fb2a08722609da9e0efcbf146c9b7.wix_mp_1024>. Illustration (Prague) from *Wikipedia*, retrieved online (21 June 2018) at: <commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Praha,_apo%C5%A1olsk%C3%A1_nunciatura,_port%C3%A1l.JPG>. Illustration (London area) from *Wimbledon News*, 7 April 2005, email and photo to author 14 December 2005; the flag was at half-staff after the death of John Paul II.


72. Luigi Rangoni-Machiavelli, letter to unnamed Monsignor, 26 February 1929, in “Bandiera Pontificia”, ASV, Segr. di Stato, An. 1929, Rubr. 240, fasc. 1, folio 266. Rangoni-Machiavelli proposed several flag options, including a yellow-white vertical bicolor overlaid by a centered red oval-shield, fimbriated in gold and bearing a tiara-and-keys emblem. He pointed to the papal infantry colors of the mid-1800s as precedents: see Figs. 2.11–12.


76. Cf. Fig. 1.6. To ensure visibility, heraldry requires that metals (gold and silver, or their correlates yellow and white) should only be charged upon tinctures (red, blue, green, etc.), and vice versa, unless the charge is “fimbriated” (i.e., prominently bordered) in a contrasting hue.


la_prima_papamobile> and <www.fcaspace.com/media/images/papamobile/20110728_benvenuta_la_fiat_024.jpg>.


82. See Figures 1.26, 2.5–6, and accompanying text.

83. For example, it has been said that, when representing one or the other, the keys are juxtaposed differently on the flag. In fact, no symbolic difference attaches to the juxtaposition—as can be seen from the Vatican website, which shows the coats of arms of both entities with the gold key-handle on the dexter—and the Vatican flag, as well. The confusion may arise because the gold key-handle appears on the sinister in individual papal arms, but on the dexter in the constitutional illustrations of the Vatican flag and arms. The difference is merely a matter of custom. In actual flags, however, artistic liberty freely juxtaposes the keys, at times.


85. Lovell: “Now that the Italian Government has recognized the State of the Vatican City (June 7, 1929), there will be two flags for the Papal States [sic]: one to be used only within the borders of the Vatican City, and the other to be used by Catholic buildings in the city of Rome.... The colors of the ... [latter] flag will be white and yellow only [i.e., without the emblem]. This flag will be displayed by buildings in Rome, which have been granted diplomatic privileges under the treaty of February 11, 1929”. Cf. also Ziggioto, “Le bandiere degli stati italiani”, part II, p. 100. A plain bicolor dating from circa 1950, donated to the Clarence R. Rungee Museum by a Vatican official, is now held by the Flag Heritage Foundation in Winchester, Massachusetts.


89. Ales, pp. 85–86, 374–375 (pl. 102), who shows a 1732 version with the nine stripes in the order of blue-yellow-red (thrice repeated) and bearing the arms of Clement XII. The 1736 painting is by Salvatore Colonelli-Sciarra, “Scenes of an Elegant Procession in the Piazza del Quirinale ...”

90. Illustrations from Pontifical Swiss Guard archives, Major Peter Hasler, email and photos to author, 28 August 2006, who states that the flag as preserved is missing a stripe. Oertle, p. 4. Pirol, ms. 71/25 (dated 1825, but showing the arms of Gregory XVI who reigned from 1831). Pirol, ms. 77/7 (1851). Pirol, ms. 78/9 (1825) & 78/14 (1850). Also, “Bandiera”, watercolor number Ved10d4, held at the Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento Italiano, Museo Centrale del Risorgimento, Sezione Iconografica, Rome. It bears the stripes in the (mistaken) order of blue-yellow-red, with the arms of Gregory XVI toward the top; at the bottom appear the arms of the Pfiffer von Altishofen family who commanded the Guards from 1712–1847. Repeated by Ales, pp. 90–91, 388–389 (pl. 109). Commanders’ arms are displayed on a chart in the Swiss Guards quarters, Vatican City. Cf. roster retrieved online (21 June 2018) at <flagspot.net/flags/va-swiss.html>.
91. Illustrations from Pontifical Swiss Guard archives, Major Peter Hasler, email and photos to author, 30 March 2009.
95. Illustration from “Die Neue Fahne der Schweizergarde”. Walpen, pp. 112, 114, pictures and explains the original sketch; also pictured online (23 July 2018) at: <www.loutan.net/olivier/archives/2016/04/13/drapeau-de-la-garde-suisse-pontificale-du-vatican/>. Oertle, p. 3. Krieg, pp. 447–448, who states that the original flag was 222 cm (87 in.) square, with the cross 32 cm (13 in.) wide.
96. The Rules state: “The flag of the Pontifical Corps of the Swiss Guards is divided by a white cross in four fields, the first of which (at the top, nearest the pole) has the coat of arms of the reigning Pope and the fourth has the arms of Julius II. Both of these are on fields of red. The second and third quarters bear the colors of the Swiss Guards that are blue, red, and yellow. At the point the arms of the cross intersect, there is the coat of arms of the Commandant in charge.” Cf. Rules of the Swiss Guards, Article 3 (“The Guard—The flag”, retrieved online [9 August 2010] via <www.schweizergarde.org>). The rules also state that the current flag is 2.2 m (86.6”) square. Additional information on Swiss Guards flags can be found at Flags of the World retrieved online (21 June 2018) at <www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/va-swiss.html>.
101. Illustrations from Begni, p. 11; from David, retrieved online (26 June 2018) at <www.flickr.com/photos/bigkitty/3485845272/>; and from contemporary postcard in author’s archives. Krieg, p. 448, reports that before 1870 the flag flew outdoors in St. Peter’s Square, near the guard-post windows inside the Bronze Doors; and afterwards, indoors only. Since 1929, it occasionally flies outdoors, but usually indoors.
102. Illustration from contemporary postcard, author’s archives.
104. Illustration from postcard, “Gendarmeria Pontificia, Bandiera con scorta”, Edizione “Ecclesia”, ca. 1950 (arms of Pius XII), author’s archives. See also Chapter 2 (“Other Flags”).


106. Illustration from Spink, p. 87.


111. Chesterton, p. 43 (originally published in 1932): “It is part of the picturesqueness of the thing that the Papal Flag is not a devotional or delicate thing; it is a tower of crowns and a parade of keys. Above all, its white and yellow are meant for silver and gold; and that …. gold-and-silver standard of the triple crown really is in one sense an imperial flag ….”