



"God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong" (1 Cor 1:27). These words of St. Paul come alive in one of the most astonishing episodes in Church history: the **Conclave of 1241**, also known as the *"Miracle Conclave,"* where divine Providence intervened in an extraordinary way through the innocent voice of a child.

In a time of crisis, division, and power struggles, God reminded His Church that He—not men—steers the ship of Peter. This story, forgotten by many but filled with eternal lessons, speaks of humility, trust in the supernatural, and the power of prayer.

I. Historical Context: A Church in Crisis

To grasp the magnitude of this event, we must travel back to 13th-century Europe. The Church was living through turbulent times:

- **The Conflict Between the Papacy and the Empire:** Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor, was locked in a bitter struggle with Pope Gregory IX, who had excommunicated him for breaking his Crusade promises.
- **The Threat of Schism:** The College of Cardinals was deeply divided between those who favored a hardline stance against Frederick II and those seeking reconciliation.
- **The Urgency for a Pope:** Gregory IX had died on August 22, 1241, and the vacant See of Peter needed to be filled quickly to prevent the collapse of papal authority.

Amid this tension, **19 cardinals** locked themselves inside Rome's **Septizodium Palace** to elect the next successor of Peter. But what should have been a swift process turned into a months-long ordeal.

II. The Most Dramatic Conclave in History

The Conclave began in September 1241 but quickly deadlocked due to political infighting. Frederick II, fearing a pope who would continue opposing him, **imprisoned two cardinals** and pressured others. The stifling heat, unsanitary conditions, and lack of consensus led several cardinals to fall gravely ill.

The situation was dire:

- **One cardinal died** during the confinement.
- Others became seriously ill.
- The factions remained divided, unable to reach the required two-thirds majority.



Then, according to chronicles of the time (such as those of **Matthew Paris** and the *Annals of Rome*), **the unexpected happened**.

III. The Miracle of the Election: A Child Guided by the Holy Spirit

Faced with deadlock, the cardinals decided to turn to **an act of humility and faith**: they asked God for a sign. Tradition holds that they agreed that **the next man to enter the room would choose the new pope's name**.

At that moment, **a child** (some accounts say a young monk or a sacristan) walked into the chamber. The cardinals, keeping their vow, asked him:

"Who should be the new pope?"

Without hesitation, the child replied with a name: **"Celestine."**

The cardinals, stunned, interpreted this as divine inspiration. But there was a problem: **none of them was named Celestine**.

After some reflection, they remembered that among them was **Goffredo da Castiglione**, an elderly and pious cardinal who, in his youth as a monk, had taken the religious name **Celestine**.

Moved by what they saw as a supernatural intervention, **the cardinals elected him unanimously**. Thus, on October 25, 1241, **Celestine IV** became the new pope.

IV. Theological Meaning: God Speaks Through the Smallest

This extraordinary event teaches us profound lessons:

1. Humility as the Path to Divine Power

- The cardinals, in their desperation, humbled themselves before God, acknowledging that without Him, they could not govern the Church.
- As the Gospel says: *"For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted"* (Lk 14:11).

2. The Infallibility of Providence



- God does not abandon His Church. In the darkest moments, He acts in unexpected ways.
- The child, a symbol of purity, became the instrument of the Holy Spirit, reminding us that *"the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these"* (Mt 19:14).

3. **Authority Comes from God, Not Men**

- Though conclaves are subject to human tensions, the final choice rests in God's hands.

V. What Does the 'Miracle Conclave' Teach Us Today?

In our own time, as the Church faces division, secularism, and a crisis of faith, this story is a **call to trust in Providence**.

- **Amid Internal Struggles:** We must remember that God can work miracles when men submit to His will.
- **In Times of Discouragement:** Just as in 1241, Christ still guides His Church, even through storms.
- **Against the Temptation of Power:** True greatness lies in holiness, not political influence.

Conclusion: A Message for Today

The *Miracle Conclave* is not just a historical anecdote—it is **an invitation to believe that God still writes the Church's story with strokes of the impossible**.

Today, as then, He can work through the most unexpected means: **a child, a dream, an act of humility**. For, as St. John Chrysostom said:

"The Church is Christ's, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18).

Are we willing to listen, like those cardinals, for God's voice even in the smallest things?

May the Conclave of 1241 inspire us to trust, to pray, and to believe that in the darkest hours, God has a miracle prepared.

"Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17).

Will we hear His voice?