



Victor, Melchiades, Gelasius

Did you know that among the 266 Popes of the Catholic Church, between St Peter and the current Pope Francis, are three Popes known to be of African descent?

St Victor was a deacon when he became the first Black and the 14th Pope in 189 A.D. He established a set date for the yearly celebration of Easter. He was the first bishop of Rome born in the Roman Province of Africa—probably in Leptis Magna (or Tripolitania). He was later considered a saint. Saint Victor died a martyr for the faith in 199. His feast day was celebrated on 28 July as "St Victor I, Pope and Martyr".

St Melchiades (mel-KY-uh-des), known as Melchiades the African, reigned as the Church's second Black and 32nd Pope, from 311 to 314. He signed the Emperor Constantine's laws that ended persecutions and made Christianity the established religion of the Roman Empire. Being the first Pope under Constantine, his pontificate coincided with the peace Constantine gave to the Church. In February 313, Constantine and Licinius, emperor of the eastern part of the Roman Empire, agreed to extend tolerance of Christianity to Licinius' territory, proclaimed by the Edict of Milan. Consequently, Christians not only attained the freedom of worship, but also all places of Christian worship were restored, and all confiscated property returned. The Pope also received the palace of Empress Fausta where the Lateran Palace, the papal seat and residence of the papal administration, would be built.

St Gelasius the First was the Church's third, and final, Black and 49th Pope from 492 to 496. He was known then for saving Rome from famine, composing a book of hymns, and clarifying Church teaching on the Eucharist. During his pontificate he called for strict Catholic orthodoxy, more assertively demanded obedience to papal authority, and, consequently, increased the tension between the Western and Eastern Churches. He was the first Pope to be called "Vicar of Christ." Among his acts, in 494 he changed the Lupercalia, a Roman pagan festival, into the Feast of the Purification (now known as the Presentation of the Lord, or Candlemas).

www.ncronline.org-Black Saints (National Catholic Reporter)

[En.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)-Pope Victor I

[En.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)-Saint Melchiades

[En.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)-Pope Gelasius

www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Gelasius-I