



List of Notable Catholic Antipopes

An *antipope* is a person who, in opposition to the one who is generally recognized as the legitimately elected Pope, makes a significantly accepted competing claim to be the Bishop of Rome and leader of the Catholic Church^{[1] [2] [3]}. Throughout Church history, especially from the 3rd to the 15th centuries, there have been more than thirty such figures, often backed by powerful secular or ecclesiastical factions^{[1] [2] [4] [3]}. Below is a list of the most significant antipopes, as recognized by Catholic and historical sources.

Early and Medieval Antipopes

- **St. Hippolytus (217–235)**: The earliest and only antipope to later be recognized as a saint. Opposed Popes Callixtus I, Urban I, and Pontian^{[1] [4] [5] [3]}.
- **Novatian (251)**: Claimed the papacy in opposition to Pope Cornelius^{[1] [5] [3]}.
- **Felix II (355–365)**: Installed during the Arian controversy^[3].
- **Ursinus (366–367)**: Rival to Pope Damasus I^[3].
- **Eulalius (418–419)**: Contested the election of Pope Boniface I^[3].
- **Laurentius (498; 501–505)**: Opposed Pope Symmachus^[3].
- **Dioscorus (530)**: Briefly rivaled Pope Boniface II^[3].
- **Theodore and Paschal (687)**: Both claimed the papacy after the death of Pope Conon^[3].
- **Constantine (767–769)**: Installed by a faction after the death of Pope Paul I^[3].
- **Philip (768)**: Briefly claimed the papacy for one day^[3].

High Middle Ages

- **Anastasius (855)**: Attempted to usurp the papacy following Leo IV's death^{[5] [3]}.
- **Christopher (903–904)**: Deposed Pope Leo V and claimed the papacy^{[5] [3]}.
- **Boniface VII (974; 984–985)**: Twice seized the papacy, involved in the murder of Pope Benedict VI^{[4] [5] [3]}.
- **John XVI (997–998)**: Installed by the Holy Roman Emperor Otto III^{[5] [3]}.
- **Gregory (1012)**: Briefly claimed the papacy^{[5] [3]}.
- **Benedict X (1058–1059)**: Elected by a faction opposing Pope Nicholas II^{[5] [3]}.
- **Honorius II (1061–1072)**: Backed by imperial forces against Pope Alexander II^{[5] [3]}.
- **Clement III (1080–1100)**: Supported by Emperor Henry IV during the Investiture Controversy^{[4] [5] [3]}.
- **Theodoric (1100) and Albert (1102)**: Short-lived claimants^[3].

- **Sylvester IV (1105–1111)**: Supported by a Roman noble faction [5] [3].
- **Gregory VIII (1118–1121)**: Installed by Emperor Henry V [4] [5] [3].
- **Celestine II (1124)**: Briefly opposed Pope Honorius II [5] [3].
- **Anacletus II (1130–1138)**: His election led to a major schism [5] [3].
- **Victor IV (1138)**: Submitted to Pope Innocent II [5] [3].
- **Victor IV (1159–1164)**: Supported by Emperor Frederick I [5] [3].
- **Paschal III (1164–1168)** and **Callistus III (1168–1178)**: Continued the imperial-backed schism [5] [3].
- **Innocent III (1179–1180)**: Brief, little influence [5] [3].
- **Nicholas V (1328–1330)**: Set up by Emperor Louis IV [5] [3].

The Western Schism (1378–1417)

During this period, rival papal claimants were based in Rome, Avignon, and later Pisa, resulting in multiple antipopes:

- **Clement VII (1378–1394)**: Established the Avignon line, opposed Urban VI in Rome [4] [5] [3].
- **Benedict XIII (1394–1423)**: Continued the Avignon line after Clement VII [5] [3].
- **Alexander V (1409–1410)**: Elected by the Council of Pisa in an attempt to end the schism, but only created a third line [4] [5] [3].
- **John XXIII (1410–1415)**: Successor to Alexander V in the Pisan line [5] [3].
- **Felix V (1439–1449)**: Last historical antipope, elected by the Council of Basel [4] [5] [3].

Summary Table of Major Antipopes

Name	Years Claimed	Notable Context/Notes
Hippolytus	217–235	First antipope, later reconciled and canonized
Novatian	251	Early schism over Church discipline
Felix II	355–365	Arian controversy
Ursinus	366–367	Disputed election
Boniface VII	974; 984–985	Twice antipope, involved in papal murders
Clement III	1080–1100	Investiture Controversy
Anacletus II	1130–1138	Major schism, opposed Innocent II
Victor IV	1159–1164	Imperial-backed
Nicholas V	1328–1330	Imperial-backed
Clement VII	1378–1394	Western Schism, Avignon line
Benedict XIII	1394–1423	Western Schism, Avignon line
Alexander V	1409–1410	Pisa line

Name	Years Claimed	Notable Context/Notes
John XXIII	1410–1415	Pisa line
Felix V	1439–1449	Last historical antipope

This list is not exhaustive, but it covers the most historically significant antipopes recognized by Catholic and scholarly sources^{[1] [4] [5] [3]}. For a more comprehensive chronological or alphabetical listing, see the Catholic Dictionary or scholarly resources on papal history^[3].

*
*

of the antipopes listed here how many of them appointed Bishops or Cardinals who were later recognized as legitimate Bishops or Cardinals.

Most antipopes who appointed bishops or cardinals saw their appointments declared invalid by the legitimate papacy, and these appointees were generally not recognized as legitimate bishops or cardinals by the Catholic Church. A clear example is Antipope Anacletus II: after his death, the Second Lateran Council (1139) convened by Pope Innocent II explicitly annulled Anacletus's anti-papacy, reversed all laws he enacted, and deposed the bishops and priests he had ordained, declaring their orders and appointments invalid^[9].

This pattern was typical for other major antipopes as well. When an antipope's rival papacy ended, councils or legitimate popes usually invalidated their acts of ordination and appointment. There are no well-documented cases among the major historical antipopes where bishops or cardinals appointed solely by an antipope were later recognized as legitimate in those offices by the Church, unless they were reappointed or re-ordained by a recognized pope after the schism ended.

Therefore, among the antipopes listed, those who appointed bishops or cardinals did not have those appointments recognized as legitimate by the Catholic Church, unless the individuals were subsequently reconciled and reappointed by a legitimate pope^[9].

*
*

Were there any notable bishops or cardinals who were initially appointed by antipopes but later recognized as legitimate

There are a few notable cases where individuals appointed by antipopes were later recognized as legitimate bishops or cardinals, but these instances are rare and often surrounded by ambiguity or later papal reconciliation.

- **Sylvester III:** John, bishop of Sabina, was elected pope as Sylvester III during a period of papal turmoil in 1045. After being expelled from Rome, he returned to his original position as bishop of Sabina and continued to serve in that capacity until 1062. While his papacy was

declared illegitimate by many and he was deposed as antipope, he nonetheless continued as a bishop, and some modern lists even include him as a legitimate pope, reflecting the ambiguity of his status^[28].

- **Pseudo-cardinals of Felix V:** Antipope Felix V (1439–1449) created several cardinals, including Johann Grünwalder, Otón de Moncada y de Luna, Wincenty Kotz Dębna, and Bartolomeo Vitelleschi. These individuals were initially considered "pseudo-cardinals" because their appointments were made by an antipope. However, after the end of the schism, some of these men were later reconciled with the legitimate papacy and, in some cases, had their cardinalate recognized or were reappointed by the legitimate pope^[29].

In summary, while most appointments by antipopes were not recognized, there are rare cases—such as some bishops and cardinals appointed by Felix V—where individuals were later legitimized, often through formal reconciliation or reappointment by a recognized pope^[29] ^[28].

**

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_antipopes
2. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/antipope>
3. <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/dictionary/index.cfm?id=31865>
4. <https://www.medievalists.net/2015/01/top-10-antipopes/>
5. <https://www.catholicfidelity.com/apologetics-topics/papacy/list-of-anti-popes-by-sean-m-brooks/>
6. <https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Antipope>
7. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/papacy/List-of-popes-and-antipopes>
8. <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/anti-popes-10685>
9. <https://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/50467/in-catholic-understanding-when-there-is-more-than-one-pope-who-decides-which-po>
10. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antipope>
11. <https://www.historyskills.com/classroom/year-8/anti-popes/>
12. <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/who-can-be-pope-13803>
13. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/popes-and-antipopes>
14. <https://www.usccb.org/offices/public-affairs/how-new-pope-chosen>
15. https://www.reddit.com/r/neoliberal/comments/1i9riur/the_reallife_conclave_the_factions_within_the/
16. <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Antipope>
17. https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib2-cann330-367_en.html
18. <https://sacredwindows.com/the-incredible-story-of-the-first-anti-pope/>
19. <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/holysee/cardinals>
20. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qctlaDqOS9A>
21. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papal_appointment
22. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/antipope>
23. https://www.reddit.com/r/Catholicism/comments/x3ozmi/cardinal_electors_by_papal_appointment_and_country/
24. <https://www.papalartifacts.com/a-word-about-antipopes/>

25. <https://www.pillarcatholic.com/p/tuesday-pillar-post>
26. https://www.reddit.com/r/AskHistorians/comments/455ddf/is_there_a_historically_accurate_unbroken_line_of/
27. <https://www.medievalists.net/2025/05/antipopes/>
28. <https://www.medievalists.net/2025/05/antipopes/>
29. <https://cathnews.co.nz/2015/03/27/historys-former-cardinals/>
30. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antipope>
31. https://www.reddit.com/r/todayilearned/comments/pvkfpg/til_that_during_the_western_schism_of_the/
32. <https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/conflict-of-investitures-the>
33. <https://www.pillarcatholic.com/p/tuesday-pillar-post>
34. <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01582a.htm>
35. <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03128c.htm>
36. <https://cardinals.fiu.edu/consistories-xv.htm>
37. https://onepeterfive.com/deposing_popes-historical-review/
38. <https://www.historyskills.com/classroom/year-8/anti-popes/>
39. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/antipope>
40. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papal_appointment
41. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cardinals_created_by_Francis
42. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Investiture_Controversy
43. <https://study.com/academy/lesson/antipope-history-list-facts.html>
44. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concordat_of_Worms
45. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qctlaDqOS9A>
46. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudocardinal>
47. <https://www.catholicfidelity.com/apologetics-topics/papacy/list-of-anti-popes-by-sean-m-brooks/>