

Did You Know...

✠ News and trivia from our parish and the Catholic Church ✠
-- contributed by the Christ Child Church Women's Club --

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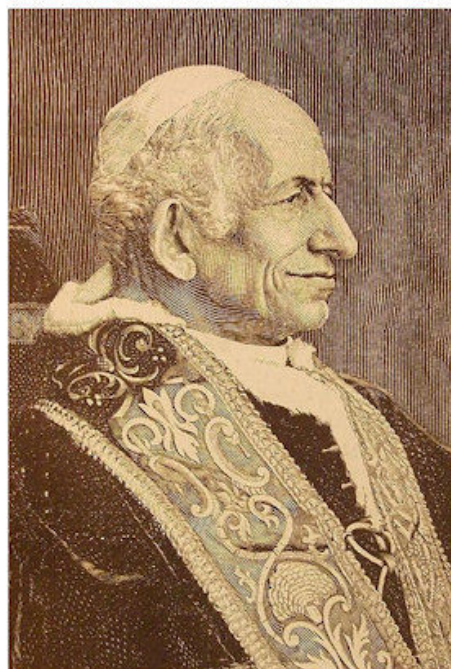
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How Did Buffalo Bill meet the Pope?

Imagine being invited to the Vatican, for a personal meeting with the Pope. Imagine being ushered into the Papal presence, and screaming at the top of your lungs -- receiving the blessing -- and screaming at the top of your lungs again.

On March 3rd, 1890, this is exactly what took place, in one of the most bizarre occurrences in Vatican history.

The year 1890 was the first time that Buffalo Bill took his then-world-famous Wild West Show to Europe. Due to his fame, and perhaps also his P.T. Barnum-style showmanship, Mr. Cody managed to wrangle a Papal visit, not only for himself, but for a sizable portion of his "entourage".



The visiting melange included typically "wild west" bands of Cowboys and Indians, all fully costumed and armed. The Indians in particular were festooned with feathers, war paint, axes and knives.



The entire party proceeded within the austere Vatican walls, past the frescoes of timeless artists like Michelangelo, and into the heart of ancient Roman Catholic aristocratic tradition.



At that point, Buffalo Bill acknowledged the Camerlengo with a broad sweeping gesture. It's easy to picture the grand showman doffing his hat in a courteous half-bow. One look at a typical promotional poster is enough to understand the "presentation" of Buffalo Bill Cody.



Upon the Pope's entrance, the fearsomely bedecked Indians uttered shrieking yells before kneeling and receiving the pontiff's blessing, then rose and resumed their howling.

It's not clear whether the Pope knew that most of the Indians were Catholics. Different chroniclers reported that the Pope allowed himself a slight/puzzled smile, or became briefly pale -- perhaps it was both?

After the visit, Buffalo Bill made good press from the event. He also played down a later contest with local Italian "cowboys", riding and roping -- a contest which his famed Wild West cowboys badly lost. (I guess they'd been riding too long within the confines of the show arenas. This should be yet another lesson for us all on the differences between 'show' people and real working folks. <grin>) The Italian challengers were led by Augusto Imperiali, and a monument was immediately erected in his honor -- such was the impact of Buffalo Bill and his Wild West presence, even across continents.

Buffalo Bill received some prized gifts from the papal meeting (which are still on display in the Denver museum). But perhaps the greatest gift from Pope Leo XIII was evidenced by William Cody's later request for baptism and conversion to Catholicism, just before he died in 1917.

Still Curious? See these links ---

<https://aleteia.org/2017/01/13/the-day-buffalo-bill-met-pope-leo-xiii/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffalo_Bill

--- Karin and Greg Ills

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