

Did You Know...



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



Christ Child Catholic Church

Dedicated to Growth in Christ and to the Challenges of Loving Service

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Why does the Pope wear a yamaka?

Or perhaps more correctly, why do Jews wear zuchetti?

OK, let's back up a bit.

Both of these religions have the custom of wearing a skull-cap style of hat. So who was first? And of greater interest, why did the customs begin?

The origin of Jewish headware is not well documented, and probably began around the 8th century AD; however, those caps were likely cone-shaped. The advent of the rounded yamaka took place in the 16th century, when Rabbi Karo made a Talmud interpretation that resulted in a decree.

Catholic history is no more precise in this regard, but frescoes show the familiar headgear in place as early as 1290. So Catholicism gets the bow as to the first religion to embrace this style.



So the word "yamaka", and its variation "yarmulke" both translate to "skull-cap", quite appropriate. But the word "zuchetto" (the Pope's 'hat') translates to "little pumpkin". Well, in fact the cap does look a bit like the top of a pumpkin, and the nickname took hold in the 16th century when the big gourd began to be imported. So what was the original name for the garment? It was called a *pileolus* -- Italian for "skull-cap".

With 800 years of history behind it, the Pontiff's hat has come to be an important part of tradition and daily ritual. In fact there are actually "rules" that surround that tiny little fedora.

- **Colors** -- Zuchetti are colored according to 'rank'. The Pope wears white, Cardinals' are red, bishops wear amaranth, and all lesser clergy wear black.
- **When and where** -- The rules for donning and doffing one's cap vary with time, location, and activity. Indoors, outdoors, in the liturgy, whether the Pope is present or not -- a seemingly endless list of requisites. (There must be a special class in seminaries on this topic.)

Despite all this long history and extensive guidelines, the white hat is not taken overly seriously -- this video of a small child, whisking it off the head of the Pontiff, will surely put a smile on your face.

[Stealing the Pope's Hat](#)

Overall, it's a distinctive and charming custom, rich in tradition. Just the mere appearance of that white 'beanie' can give us a warm, connected feeling, as if Jesus were right there in the room with us. Which of course, He is.

Still Curious? See these links ---

[Yamaka vs Zuchetti](#)
[Pope's hat named "little pumpkin"](#)

--- *Karin and Greg Ills*

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