

THE VATICAN AND THE HOLY SEE

I was talking to a friend who had just returned from a holiday in ROME when he mentioned that while on a tour of the Vatican, he found out that it is not the HOLY SEE. I was surprised because I'd always thought they were the same thing.

While investigating the differences between these two, I found many titles and organisations operating from within the Vatican, all with strange Latin names. Here are three examples:

1. ECCLESIASTICAL - means belonging to a Christian religion.
2. An APOSTOLIC NUNCIO, sometimes called PAPAL NUNCIO or just NUNCIO is an envoy or permanent diplomatic representative of the Holy See, not the Vatican. The Holy See has diplomatic relations with around 180 countries It is the government of Catholicism.
3. LEGATE - A legate is a **personal representative of the Pope** to foreign nations and is empowered on matters of Catholic faith and to settle ecclesiastical matters. The legate is appointed directly by the Pope.

These and other titles made it difficult for me to understand some things, so please excuse my simplification of these matters as I cover the Vatican and the Holy See separately, but remember:

THE VATICAN was founded in 1929.

St Peter and St Paul founded THE HOLY SEE in the first century.

THE VATICAN

Its official title is THE VATICAN CITY STATE. It's a microstate within the Italian city of ROME and became independent from Italy in 1929 after the Lateran Treaty between the Catholic Church and Italy.

It has the smallest land area, around 121 acres and the smallest population of any state in the world. There are around 500 people who live there and another 500 who work there. It is ruled by the POPE who is also the BISHOP of ROME and head of the Catholic Church.

Within the Vatican City State is the most well-known church on earth called St. Peter's Basilica. There is also the famous Sistine Chapel, the Vatican Library the Palace and the Museum, which contain some of the world's most famous paintings and sculptures. It even has its own railway system that can link to the Italian railway system.

The city's revenues come from donations from the worldwide church, charges for visiting the various areas within the Vatican and the sale of stamps and souvenirs. It has no taxes and items are duty-free.

The famous St. Peter's Basilica was planned in the 15TH century by Pope Nicholas V followed by Pope Julius 11. Building began on 18TH April 1506 and was completed in 1626.

It was designed mainly by Bramante, Michelangelo, and Maderno with the colonnade by Bernini, and has the largest interior of any church in the world. It is regarded as the greatest of all Christian churches.

Tradition has it that it is the burial place of St. Peter who Jesus Christ selected as the first head of his church, the first Pope. His tomb is said to be directly below the high altar, known as the Altar of the Confession. St. Peter's is a **BASILICA**. it is not a **CATHEDRAL**.

THE HOLY SEE

The Holy See is the government of the Roman Catholic Church, which is led by the Pope as the bishop of Rome.

Holy See refers specifically to the position of the Holy Father, who "because of his office as Vicar of Christ, has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered."

The word SEE comes from the Latin word SEDES which means SEAT. It is the chair occupied by a bishop and the area over which he has responsibility.

Where the Holy See is concerned it is the "seat of government" of the Catholic Church, having jurisdiction over the worldwide Catholic Church and sovereignty over the Vatican City.

The term Holy See is used when referring to the area governed by the Pope who is the Bishop of Rome. This includes the Vatican and the entire Catholic Church.

If the Vatican ceased to exist, the Catholic Church would still be ruled as normal by the Holy See as it can exist anywhere. The Vatican does not have foreign diplomats to deal with foreign countries, the Holy See has around 180.

In very simple terms:

The Vatican is an independent state, ruled by the Pope and exists within the Italian city of Rome.

The Holy See is the government of the Catholic Church and has the Pope as its head. It has diplomats dealing with around 180 states around the world.

I found it fascinating, interesting and informative to delve into this matter, and if you want to be surprised about what goes on in these two areas and how they are organised, I urge you to do the same.