

THE HOSTILE TAKEOVER OF HEAVEN

The letter sent to the Pope on August 11, 2026, received a confirmation of receipt within a timeframe that no religious institution had ever officially promised.

There were only three possible explanations.

1. The Holy See does not accept emails.
2. The Holy See does not provide a dedicated address for ordinary believers.
3. The Holy See prefers paper correspondence delivered through traditional mail.

Yet something told me I did not belong among the faithful.

I belonged among colleagues.

Perhaps from another century. Without a cassock. Without a collar. Without any visible badge of authority.

After eight years inside a convent school run by nuns, however, I still considered myself a practicing Catholic with a reasonable amount of faith left in stock.

The following morning, my home telephone behaved as if it had been possessed.

Calls arrived from every direction.

Everyone repeated the same question.

"Have you seen it?"

Seen what?

"You're first."

First where?

"On the web. Everywhere. Above the Vatican. Above the newspapers. Above Wikipedia. The only thing higher than you is the footer."

The information sounded ridiculous.

Unfortunately, it was also true.

By lunchtime, I found myself facing the real Tribunal of the Holy Office:

my wife and my daughter.

The interrogation began immediately.

"If the Pope invited you to the Vatican, what would you tell him?"

I smiled.

As a narrator, a salesman, a writer, and an occasional professional fraudster, I have rarely suffered from a shortage of answers.

Then my bank manager, who also happened to be a friend, appeared unexpectedly at my house and provided the necessary narrative acceleration.

I finally answered.

"I would explain to His Holiness that the time has come for him to make history three separate times."

Silence.

Everybody listened.

"First, by becoming Pope."

A pause.

"Second, by officially acknowledging that Jesus Christ was clean-shaven and therefore the first colleague Gillette ever had."

Nobody interrupted.

Encouraged by the absence of immediate arrest, I continued.

"Third, by bringing Gillette back home and placing the company under Vatican protection."

The room exploded.

Everyone laughed.

Everyone except my daughter.

She was calculating the probability that the idea was serious and even worse, trying to understand where it had originated.

The strategy itself was quite simple.

The Church would become the most powerful marketing organization in human history.

Every package of blades.

Every razor.

Every leaflet.

Every display.

Every advertisement.

The image of Jesus.

Brand loyalty would immediately become a theological issue.

Nobody would ever change brands again.

The faithful would buy Church blades.

The Church would gain consumers.

Consumers would become faithful.

The faithful would fund charity.

Charity would generate goodwill.

Goodwill would generate more faith.

The flywheel would become eternal.

Then came Phase Two.

The Pope would launch a hostile takeover.

Not against another religion.

Against Wall Street.

Gillette would leave the stock market forever.

No more shareholders.

No more quarterly panic.

No more analysts explaining reality to people who had actually built it.

The company would become part of humanity's protected heritage.

Managed by twelve fishermen selected directly from the clergy.

The original management model.

Tested two thousand years ago.

Results are historically significant.

Naturally, the detergent people would never understand what had happened.

One day they would own a golden goose.

The next day they would believe they owned a goose without eggs.

What they would fail to notice was that the goose had suddenly acquired two billion additional customers.

Revenue would triple.

Management costs would collapse.

Entire layers of executives would quietly disappear.

Many of them highly compensated.

A few of them are competent.

The correlation had never been conclusively established.

For my part, I saw only one personal risk.

The Pope might agree.

And if he agreed, he might ask me to return to work for Mother Gillette.

Just long enough to relaunch the startup.

That would immediately create a familiar problem.

His Holiness would already know my price.

One dollar.

Not because that was the value.

Because that had always been the joke.

And like every dangerous joke, it contained far more truth than comfort.

Ferdinando