

Alton author's new book offers a guide to Papal conclaves

BY BRENDAN BERUBE
Staff Writer

ALTON — After exploring what lies behind the selection of Papal names in his last book, Alton resident Anura Guruge has turned his attention to the selection of popes themselves in his latest work, "The Next Pope."

Guruge, a Sri Lankan native whose first foray into Papal history (2008's "Popes and the Tale of Their Names") was widely praised by historians as the first attempt by an author to apply the tools of statistical analysis to the tradition of popes re-christening themselves upon election, said during an interview at his home on March 4 that he designed "The Next Pope" as a handbook of sorts for laypeople on what takes place during a Papal election, or Conclave, and what factors play into the selection process.

Offering a detailed look at every aspect of the process, from a demographic analysis of the current College of Cardinals to a synopsis of every Conclave since 1903, "The Next Pope" also includes a list of high-ranking church officials who Guruge considers to be the "Top Ten" candidates at this point in time for election as the Catholic Church's next Pontiff.

Believing that the next Pope will most likely come from Latin America, the only part of the world that has seen a growth in Catholicism in recent years, Guruge has selected Cardinal Odilo Pedro Scherer, the 61-year-old Archbishop of Sao Paulo, Brazil, as the leading contender.

A native of Brazil (which currently has a larger Catholic population than any other country on earth), Scherer was named a cardinal in November of 2007 by Pope Benedict XVI, whom he befriended during his residency in Rome from 1994 to 2001, during which time he worked for the Congregation of Bishops.

Since his appointment, Scherer has been given a number of what Guruge described as "fast track" assignments — high-profile positions (such as papal envoy to a special ceremony on the Chilean/Argentinian border in December of 2008) that, according to Guruge, were designed to bring his name to the attention of the church hierarchy and establish him as Benedict's hand-picked successor in the eyes of the College of Cardinals.

Another key factor working in Scherer's favor, Guruge said, is his family's German ancestry, which might make it easier for some of the older, more conservative members of the College to

embrace the idea of electing a non-European.

Other leading contenders for the Papacy, according to Guruge, are Italians Ennio Antonelli (the 74-year-old President of the Vatican's Council for the Family), Angelo Scola (the 69-year-old Patriarch of Venice), and Agostino Vallini (the 70-year-old Vicar General of Rome); Canadian Marc Ouellet, the 66-year-old Archbishop of Quebec; Philippe Xavier Barbarin, the 60-year-old Archbishop of Lyon, France; Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga, the 68-year-old Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras; Christoph Schonborn, the 65-year-old Archbishop of Vienna, Austria; and Jose Da Cruz Policarpo, the 74-year-old Patriarch of Lisbon, Portugal.

Wilfrid Fox Napier, the 69-year-old Archbishop of Durban, South Africa (who was viewed as a favorite heading into the last Conclave in 2005), also made Guruge's "Top Ten" list.

Guruge suggested, however, that the election of Barack Obama to a position of leadership on the world stage may have taken the pressure off the Vatican to make a "statement" by electing an African pope.

An American pope, he said, is also highly unlikely given the recent spate of sexual abuse allegations against American clergymen and declining support for the Catholic Church among U.S. citizens.

263, 264, 265, or 266?

One of the most difficult and controversial aspects of researching "The Next Pope," Guruge said, was determining exactly how many popes have served since the days of St. Peter — 263, 264, 265, or 266.

The debate, he explained, centers on two men: Stephen II, who died four days after his election to the Papacy in the year 752, and Benedict IX, one of only a few laymen ever named pope, who was first elected in 1032 and was forced to abdicate in 1044.

Benedict IX returned for a brief 52-day reign in 1045 before being forced out of the Vatican once again, and reigned for a third and final time during an eight-month period between November of 1047 and July of 1048.

While the obvious prob-

lem with Benedict IX, Guruge said, is whether to count him once or three times (as the Vatican does), the controversy over Stephen II stems from the Vatican's seemingly arbitrary decision to drop him from its official list of popes in 1961.

"My argument is that you can't do that," he said, suggesting that every pope should be counted, no matter brief their reign.

Dissecting the Constitution

One aspect of the book that Guruge said he is particularly proud of is the 27-page chapter devoted to his analysis of the Apostolic Constitution issued by Pope John Paul II in 1996, which outlines the process by which popes are to be elected.

Until now, he said, most Papal historians have been reluctant to take a hard, critical look at the document, which he claims is riddled with inconsistencies, such as its assertion that a pope can resign, a statement contradicted in a later passage.

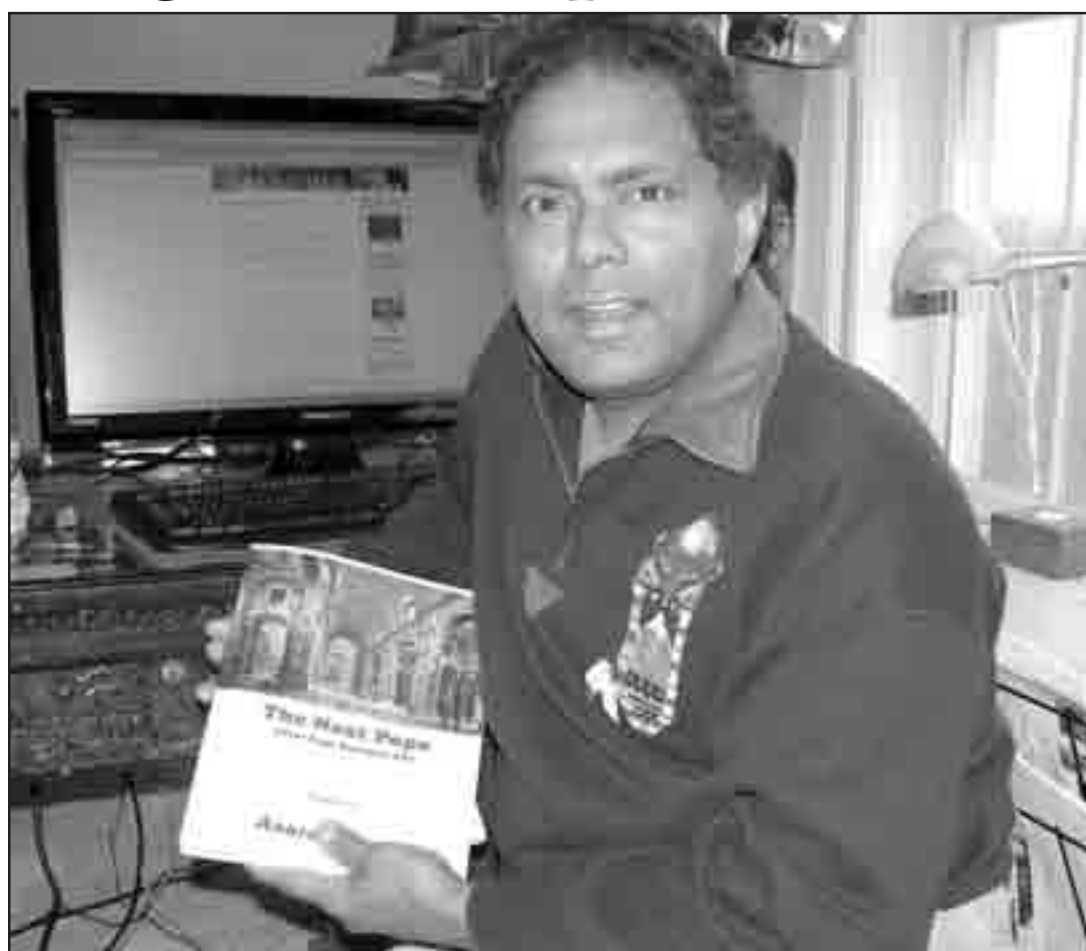
One of the most troubling revisions made to the Constitution by John Paul II, he said, was the decision to modify a provision restricting membership in the College to cardinals under the age of 80 (which was written into the document by Pope Paul VI in 1970 in the hope of promoting a younger and more open-minded College).

John Paul II, he explained, re-worded that section of the Constitution to state that cardinals must be 79 or younger on the day prior to the start of the sede vacante (the 15-day transitional period between the death of the previous pope and the start of Conclave) in order to participate in the election process.

With the College of Cardinals spread out across 24 time zones, Guruge said, the question of whether or not a cardinal who turns 80 the day before or after the sede vacante begins is eligible to join the College could become a matter of interpretation.

Given the fact that older cardinals tend to hold more conservative views, he added, such a dispute could ultimately affect the outcome of the election.

It is those largely unexplored aspects of Papal con-



BRENDAN BERUBE ■

ALTON AUTHOR ANURA GURUGE'S new book, "The Next Pope," offers readers an in-depth look into the Papal election process.

claves that Guruge hopes readers will take away from "The Next Pope," which he describes as "the definitive, no-stones-left-untorn-ed handbook for the next

Papal election."

"The Next Pope" is currently available through Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com, or through Guruge's Web site, www.

popes-and-papacy.com.

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Alton man arrested for drug possession receives suspended sentence

BY BRENDAN BERUBE
Staff Writer

ALTON — An Alton resident arrested in November for possession of marijuana received a suspended prison sentence and was ordered to pay a hefty fine last month.

According to information released by the Alton Police Department on March 11, David Turner was arrested Nov. 12, 2009 and charged with one Felony count of Cul-

tivation of a Controlled/Narcotic Drug after a team of officers led by then-Sgt. Richard Vanderhoof (who is now a lieutenant) seized a cache of marijuana plants valued at \$10,000 during a search of his home at 318 Frank C. Gilman Highway (Route 140) on Sept. 10.

After pleading "No Contest" to the charge during a court appearance on Feb. 9, Turner was ordered to pay a

\$1,000 fine and serve a six-month sentence at the Belknap County House of Corrections, which was suspended (along with half the fine) for one year, pending good behavior and successful completion of an alcohol and drug evaluation within the next 60 days.

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Seniors planning spaghetti supper April 8

ALTON — Prospect Mountain High School seniors are hosting a spaghetti supper to raise funds for their senior trip, project graduation, senior banquet, and class gift. Come join the seniors for dinner at the

Prospect Mountain High School cafeteria April 8 from 5 to 8 p.m.

The all you can eat supper will feature spaghetti, lasagna, salad, beverages and dessert.

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