NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Jan. 22, Pope Benedict XV

Gerelyn Hollingsworth | Jan. 22, 2010 NCR Today

"I wanted to be called Benedict XVI in order to create a spiritual bond with Benedict XV, who steered the Church through the period of turmoil caused by the First World War. He was a courageous and authentic prophet of peace and strove with brave courage first of all to avert the tragedy of the war and then to limit its harmful consequences."

--Pope Benedict XVI at his first General Audience, April 27, 2005 [1]

Today is the anniversary of the death of Pope Benedict XV, [2] born Giacomo della Chiesa in 1854. He reigned as Pope from September 3, 1914, until his death on January 22, 1922.

Father della Chiesa served as secretary to Cardinal Mariano Rampolla, [3] Cardinal Secretary of State, and to Cardinal Rafael Merry del Val, [4] who succeeded him. (Click on their names for accounts of the tumultuous Conclave of 1903 at which Pope Pius X was elected.)

Pius X consecrated Giacomo della Chiesa bishop in 1907, and in May, 1914, created him cardinal. That summer, World War I began, and in August, Pius X died. On September 3, Cardinal della Chiesa was elected Pope.

Much of *Benedict XV: The Unknown Pope and the Pursuit of Peace,* [5] by the Cambridge historian, John F. Pollard, published by Burns & Oates in 2005, can be read online. The Index [6] provides reminders of some of the events that occurred during the seven years of Benedict's reign.

"Benedict has never been considered for beatification or canonization, unlike his successors Pius XII and John XXIII. Yet, though his human defects were very evident -- irascibility was his besetting sin, offset by immediate remorse -- he was also full of human virtues, the most conspicuous of which was undoubtedly his boundless charity."

Click here [7] to see pictures of the Monument to Benedict XV by Pietro Canonica at St. Peter's Basilica.

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Links:
[1] http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20050427_en.html
[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Benedict_XV
[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mariano_Rampolla
[4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rafael_Merry_del_Val
[5] http://tiny.cc/3MTyD

[6] http://books.google.com/books?id=e5jyyCMnRTIC&pg=PA233&lpg=PA233&vq=index&ie=ISO-8859-1&output=html
[7] http://www.saintpetersbasilica.org/Monuments/BenedictXV/BenedictXV.htm