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

Pio Nono & Edgardo Mortara

Michael Sean Winters | Feb. 7, 2011 Distinctly Catholic

My colleague Gerelyn Hollingsworth has a great post [1] up today about Blessed Pope Piux IX, Pio Nono, and many of the controversies of his long reign.
Pius IX was beatified by Pope John Paul II who will himself be beatified on May 1.
One of the most important books I have ever read was David Kertzer's "The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara." [2] Edgardo was a young Jewish boy who lived in the Papal States. Like many Jewish families, the Mortaras employed a Christian maid, especially to help out on the Sabbath when Jews were forbidden from working. When young Edgardo took ill, the Christian maid baptized him. He recovered, but when the Mortaras terminated the maid's employment, she went to the papal authorities. It was against the law for a Christian child to be raised by Jews. Pius connived in the kidnapping of the child who was brought to Rome to be raised by nuns. Edgardo eventually became a priest but the crisis of his baptism and kidnapping exposed the papacy to well-earned ridicule and horror and helped seal the fate of the temporal claims of the Pope. Kertzer's book is very readable, and it shows better than any book I have read, why church-state separation is a good thing, how pervasive anti-Jewish sentiment was in the mid-nineteenth century, and how theology, unchecked by common sense and common decency, can lead one to evil.

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Links:
[1] http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/day-bl-pope-pius-ix
[2] http://www.amazon.com/Kidnapping-Edgardo-Mortara-David-Kertzer/dp/0679768173/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1297086648&sr=1-1