



## Searching for Papa Luna: A Modern Day Mystery

**Gordon K. Greene**

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*Searching for Papa Luna illuminates a troubled time in Church history and works to restore the legacy of a maligned pope.*

In Gordon K. Greene's *Searching for Papa Luna*, music historian Richard Taylor finds himself embroiled in intrigue, ethnic rivalry, and murder as he uncovers a clue that could lead to the hidden journals of Pope Benedict XIII, one of three claimants to the papal throne during the Great Western Schism.

Taylor has come to Montserrat Abbey, near Barcelona, seeking access to recently revealed fourteenth-century manuscripts. He encounters a message encoded in a poem that is set to music. Written by a man known only as Ramón, the message speaks of the existence of a treasure, including the lost journals of Pope Benedict XIII, hidden in the caves near Montserrat Abbey.

Taylor hopes to find the journals and reveal their contents to the world, but his quest is hampered by others who also seek them—one for personal gain, another who would have them destroyed in the belief that new disclosures about the schism “could tilt accepted history on its head.”

The possibility of hidden treasure, together with implications that the revelations contained in the journals could change Church history, opens up a hornet's nest of hidden motives, greed, and pride in the seemingly peaceful life of the monks of Montserrat Abbey. Set against a background of the ever-simmering tensions between Catalans and Castilians, the book gives a glimpse into how ancient and current ethnic rivalries still matter.

The plot and pacing make for gripping reading as the threats to Taylor's quest and life intensify. Facts related to the history of Barcelona, Catalonia, the ancient Romans, the Catholic Church, and the legendary Knights Templar add depth and color.

Underlying the adventure is a tender love story, as Taylor meets a young woman who is dedicated to his quest and hopes to deepen their blossoming relationship. Unfortunately, the woman does not manage to break through Taylor's characteristic reticence, and this aspect of the story falls flat.

Dialogue stays in character and flows well. Characters are relatable, but it is the strong plot that carries the tale. Some descriptions—such as of someone as “tall, slender, and pale to the point of emaciation”—are odd.

The story is complex and satisfying, bringing history to life with a skillful blending of fact and fiction, ancient and current events, and the gathering of forces on either side of the struggle.

Together with its companion novel, *Papa Luna*, this book illuminates a troubled time in Church history and highlights values like integrity, honesty, friendship, and faith—characteristics exemplified by the maligned pope whose legacy Greene's books may help to restore.

*Searching for Papa Luna* bristles with the excitement of a search for hidden treasure and all the intrigue and danger that comes when powerful people with much to hide fear the exposure of their misdeeds.

KRISTINE MORRIS (December 22, 2017)

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