

The ring of the fisherman. The ring of the fisherman is so called because it represents St Peter as a fisherman. It's origin is unclear but it was used as the personal seal of the pope from the time of Clement IV, in 1265. The oldest surviving seal, of red wax, dates from the pontificate of Nicolas III (1277-1280). Up to the pontificate of Nicolas V (1447-1455) the ring represented the apostle Peter, on a boat, pulling in the nets. Up until the seventeenth century, the seal was placed on the lower part of the document; from the 17th century however it was placed on the dorse. From Leo XIII to John Paul II it ceased to be customary to wear the ring. Benedict XVI lay down rules for its use. After the death of a pope, the ring is to be broken by the Cardinal Camerlengo at the start of a conclave. In our own times it is only scratched, so that it cannot be used after the end of the pontificate.

Bibliografy: E. WATTERTON, «On the Annulus piscatoris or Ring of the Fisherman», in *Archeologia*, 40 (1866), p. 138; N. DEL RE, «Anello del pescatore», in N. DEL RE (ed.), *Mondo Vaticano*, Vaticano, 1995, p. 58.

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