



# PANS Eaglet

The official newsletter of the Polish-American Numismatic Society

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## **Sede Vacante: The Coins Minted During Papal Vacancy**

By Christina Słobodnik

In honor of the passing of the late Pope Francis,  
266th pope of the Catholic Church

When a pope has died or resigned from office and the College of Cardinals is focused on electing a new pope, the Church enters a time period called the *Sede Vacante*, during which the Vatican mints special coins called *Sede Vacante* coins.

*Sede Vacante* is a Latin phrase which means “vacant seat”, referring to the empty papal seat, the seat of the pope.

For a short history lesson on the *Sede Vacante*, the tradition of producing coinage to mark *Sede Vacante* first came into use in the early centuries of the Church, when the *Sede Vacante* usually lasted longer than it does today. This was mainly due to the new foundation of the Church and the chaos of persecutions in Rome.

But because of the influence of politics and society, the *Vacante Sede* could last up to many months.

The longest *Sede Vacante* in history occurred in the 13th century, lasting from 1268 to 1271 (2 years, 9 months and 2 days, to be exact).

According to coffeewithdamian’s article *Sede Vacante: Meaning, History and Canon Law*, “the longest vacancy in church history occurred between the death of Pope Clement IV in 1268 and the election of Pope

Gregory X in 1271. The impasse was so severe that in Viterbo, where the cardinals were gathered, the local authorities locked them inside the building (the first real conclave) and even removed the roof to speed up the process. This crisis forced Pope Gregory X to implement the rules for conducting conclaves, aimed at preventing such long vacancies in the future.”

Eventually, this tradition of minting coins to mark the time of *Sede Vacante* spread beyond the Vatican to other countries, including Germany.

Following tradition, *Sede Vacante* coins are usually minted in precious metals such as silver and gold. Depicted on these coins are religious emblems or coat-of-arms, and a Latin or Italian phrase.

“Following the death of Pope John Paul II in April 2005, Vatican City issued special coins during the period of *Sede Vacante* depicting the emblem of the Apostolic Chamber (two crossed keys beneath an umbraculum, or umbrella) and the coat of arms of the Camerlengo of the Holy Roman Church, at the time Cardinal Eduardo Martínez Somalo.” (Wikipedia, Vatican Euro Coins)

As shown below, the obverse of the gold *Sede Vacante* piece minted in the time period after Pope John Paul II’s death shows the umbraculum and the crossed keys. Included is the year 2005 in Roman numerals “MMV”. The phrase “*Sede Apostolica Vacante*” translates from Latin to “the Apostolic See is Vacant”. In small print

on the right bottom side of the coin, “V. Deseta” refers to the engraver.

The phrase on the reverse side makes note of Cardinal Martinez’ coat-of-arms, which include on the lower section the common Latin phrase “Caritas et Veritas”. This translates to “Love and Truth”.



While similar to Sede Vacante coins of 2005, in 1963, the Sede Vacante coin, as shown below, was minted in silver. 200,000 coins in the 500 lire denomination were produced, following Pope John XXIII’s death.



The obverse shows a descending dove before a sun, with the value of the coin beneath. The Italian phrase “stato della citta del vaticano”, which translates to “state of the Vatican City”.

The reverse depicts the coat-of-arms of Cardinal Benedetto Aloisi-Masella, who at the time was Cardinal Chamberlain of the Church. Encircling the coat-of-arms are the words Sede Vacante, and “MCMLXIII”, which is the year 1963 in Roman numerals.

To conclude, the Sede Vacante coins are a significant tradition within the Church, as well as an important part of both religious



While we have yet to see what the Sede Vacante coins of 2025, following the death of Pope Francis, will be, we may guess what they will look like based upon past Sede Vacante coins.

April 8, 2025detroitd\_pans Announcements  
By Les Rosik

A man in a dark suit and tie is standing at a podium, speaking into a microphone. He is smiling and looking towards the audience. The podium has a small logo on it. Behind him is a large screen displaying a presentation slide with a crest. The audience is seen from the back, with their heads in the foreground. The setting appears to be a formal event or conference.

The event was presented with support from the MotorCities National

A photograph of four people standing in front of a display case. From left to right: a man in a dark suit and patterned tie, a man in a brown blazer and red shirt with a striped tie, a woman in a blue blazer and white turtleneck, and a man in a light blue suit and blue tie. They are all smiling. The display case behind them contains informational panels, one of which is titled "THE HISTORY OF THE...".

Staff and leaders from the Detroit Historical Museum welcomed guests and supported the event from start to finish. Coin collectors and curious visitors from across the area came to enjoy the moment and exchange their cash for the newly released Michigan Innovation Dollar.

Polish-American Numismatic Society meets monthly at: American Polish Cultural Center, 2975 E. Maple Rd., Troy, MI 48083



A few photos and memories of our Michigan Innovation Dollar release ceremony. Thanks to Mike Rosik for the photos, and to Steve Bieda for organizing the event.



Inside the Detroit Historical Museum



One glorious moment with big money



As much fun as pirate treasure?



Our organizer and fearless leader, the Hon. Steve Bieda



Steve fields the tough questions from the press.



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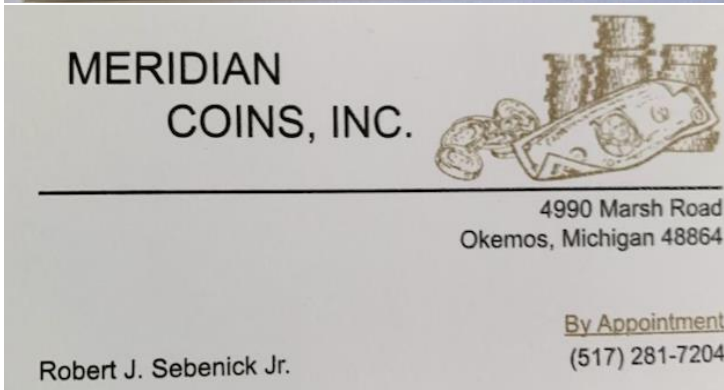
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### Join Our Club

We meet on the first Saturday of the month at 12:00 PM at the American Polish Cultural Center located at 2975 East Maple Road (15 Mile Road) at Dequindre Road in Troy, Michigan. Visit the PANS Club website at [www.pans-club.org](http://www.pans-club.org) for details. We currently have 10 meetings per year (August through May) with 2 months off during the summer. The Polish American Numismatic Society also plans a Christmas Oplatek Dinner during the Holiday Season. Meeting agendas include business matters and informative lectures from renowned guest speakers on topics including error and variety coins, significant coins in Polish history, Hamtramck scrip, coin photography. Open and lively member discussions about US and Polish numismatics are encouraged. Of course, the meeting would not be complete without coffee and delicious Polish pastries. The Polish American Numismatic Society hosts two very successful public coin show at the American Polish Cultural Center. Our primary show always takes place on the third Sunday of February. PANS also hosts a second show in August. Shows have been co-hosted with other clubs in the region. If you have any interest in numismatics, please attend a meeting and sign up as a member. PANS dues are only \$20.00 per year or \$30 per year if you would like the PANS Eaglet newsletter sent to your mail on a quarterly basis. PANS Club Membership is a great way to meet collectors with similar interests and knowledgeable dealers willing to share their experiences in a hobby that we all enjoy. To become a member-in-good-standing, plan to attend a minimum of 5 meetings per year and perform club-related duties at PANS Club sponsored Coin Shows.

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Membership Application *I hereby make application for membership in the Polish American Numismatic Society, subject to the rules and regulations set forth in the Constitution and By-laws.*

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

PRINT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

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Attend a meeting or mail to: PANS, PO BOX 80515, ROCHESTER, MI 48308