

Beat: Automobiles

POPE FRANCIS HELPED A FIAT 500L TO GET A NEW CACHET DURING U.S. TRIP

CHOICE OF POPE FRANCIS TRIP TO U.S.

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USPA NEWS - The New FIAT 500 became the New Popemobile thanks to Pope Francis. The press were quick to make the link between the pope's humility and the accessible price of the Fiat. The Pontiff reportedly rides in a Ford Focus at home, so his appearance in a Fiat in America was a sign of Italian patriotism...

The New FIAT 500 became the New Popemobile thanks to Pope Francis. The press were quick to make the link between the pope's humility and the accessible price of the Fiat. The Pontiff reportedly rides in a Ford Focus at home, so his appearance in a Fiat in America was a sign of Italian patriotism. Pope Francis's choice also linked him to Pope John Paul II, who, when he returned to his native Poland, appeared in a fiat 130, the first to appear outside of Italy with the SCV licence plate (Status Civitatis Vaticanae).

The Fiat 500, called the Nuova was introduced in 1957, as a successor to the Topolino, an earlier model. Designed by Dante Giacosa, it was meant to be a people's car. Compact and affordable, the fiat 500 was one of the first city cars, a symbol of the postwar recovery.

'Popemobile' is not an official term, but it came into vogue in the 1970s with the creation of a series of white all-terrain vehicle with bubble tops. Through the years, dozens of vehicles have been specially tailored by carmakers like Cadillac, Mercedes and Jeep for the needs of the pontiff.

Fiat presented a vehicle to Pope John Paul II in 1980 during a visit to Turin, Italy. It marked the beginning of the white all-terrain vehicles that have been associated with the popemobile-style vehicle of today. A Ford giant white and yellow bus was made for John Paul II's visit to Ireland, when he became the first pontiff to set foot in the country. General Motors spent \$600,000 and about six weeks to produce a car in papal white for John Paul's visit to Mexico City, where he addresses a stadium full of more than 100,000 people.

Father Renzo Zocca, a parish priest from Verona, Italy, gave his four-speed 1984 Renault with 186,000 miles to Pope Francis in September 2013. Pope Francis reportedly planned to drive it himself on short trips around the Vatican. While his journey in the United States, Pope Francis will be driven in a modified Jeep Wrangler similar to the one he used during his South America trip this summer, according to the Vatican. There will be several available and backups in case of a breakdown. They were shipped in August and are now in the possession of the Secret Service. (NY Times)

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