**The Joke about the Pope and the Chief Rabbi**

Several centuries ago, the Pope decreed that all the Jews had to leave Italy. There was, of course, a huge outcry from the Jewish community, so the Pope offered a deal. He would have a religious debate with a leader of the Jewish community. If the Jewish leader won the debate, the Jews would be permitted to stay in Italy. If the Pope won, the Jews would have to leave.

The Jewish community met and picked an aged Rabbi, Moishe, to represent them in the debate. Rabbi Moishe, however, could not speak Latin, and the Pope could not speak Yiddish. So it was decided that this would be a 'silent' debate.

On the day of the great debate, the Pope and the Rabbi sat opposite each other for a full minute before the Pope raised his hand and showed three fingers. Rabbi Moishe looked back and raised one finger.

Next, the Pope waved his finger around his head. Rabbi Moishe pointed to the ground where he sat. The Pope then brought out a communion wafer and a chalice of wine. Rabbi Moishe pulled out an apple. With that, the Pope stood up and said, "I concede the debate. This man has bested me. The Jews can stay."

Later, the cardinals gathered around the Pope, asking him what had happened. The Pope said, "First I held up three fingers to represent the Trinity. He responded by holding up one finger to remind me that there was still one God common to both our religions. Then I waved my finger around me to show him that God was all around us. He responded by pointing to the ground to show that God was also right here with us. I pulled out the wine and the wafer to show that God absolves us of our sins. He pulled out an apple to remind me of original sin. He had an answer for everything. What could I do?"

Meanwhile, the Jewish community crowded around Rabbi Moishe, asking what happened. "Well," said Moishe, "first he said to me, 'You Jews have got three days to get out of here.' So I said to him, 'Not one of us is going to leave.' Then he tells me the whole city would be cleared of Jews. So I said to him, 'Listen here, Mr Pope, the Jews… we stay right here!"

"And then?" asked a woman.

"Who knows?" said Rabbi Moishe. "We broke for lunch."

*From ‘The Autograph Man’ by Zadie Smith*