



CXIIum Conclave

Papal Conclave, 2025

Miami University Model United Nations Conference
February 28–March 1, 2026
Modern Crisis Committee
Conclave '25



Letter from the Chair

Salvēte Omnes,

Welcome to this year's Miami University Model United Nations Conference. I and all of the team here are very glad to host you here in Oxford, Ohio. We've worked very hard to make this committee both enjoyable and immersive, and I encourage you to closely read the guide, but most importantly the section on **Special Procedures**. The section on **Historical Background** contains interesting detail but can be skimmed – though I would recommend reading the blurbs in the grey boxes. The section on **Issues** is essential to understand the debate points you'll be addressing through the committee.

Whomever you are assigned, I recommend you read the bio written in the **Character Biographies** section of this guide, and click on the link in the footnotes to read the College of Cardinals Report about your character. Please take it with a grain of salt, as the Report is somewhat conservative-leaning, but it has good biographical information and a good description of your character's position on the issues.

I hope you come to the conference eager to engage in these theological discussions and liturgical debates, and are willing to suspend your personal beliefs so that you may immerse yourself in the mock Vatican we have crafted for you. The Overton window of acceptable discourse within the Catholic Church is, naturally, rather remote from the sensibilities of American students, and though you may have to defend positions you do not hold or concur with, I implore you to allow yourself to play the character you are given prudently but also to a degree you are comfortable.

I've been told I should include a little about myself, so I'm a senior Diplomacy and Global Politics major here at Miami with a minor in History. I was not raised Catholic nor have I converted but ecclesiastical history has always been an interest of mine, and surely like many of you I have engaged with popular media depictions of the Church eagerly, namely *Conclave* (2024) and HBO's *The Young Pope* (2016).

No matter your religious and cultural background, it is my sincere hope that you are able to enjoy the scheming and politicking that we'll engage with over the course of the conference, and I'll see you there!

Committee Chairman
Ryan Barr



Letter from the Crisis Director

Hello Everyone!

I'm Thomas McCarthy and I will be serving as your Crisis Director for the 2025 Papal Conclave Committee. As a huge history nerd, I find the Catholic Church and its history to be quite fascinating, especially the deeply historical system behind the conclave. Having witnessed the huge surge in interest people had for the conclave last year, we were inspired to replicate our very own within the parameters of Model UN Debate

I will assume a lot of people's knowledge of conclave came from the 2025 Conclave last year or the 2024 film (or maybe you're just Catholic). For anyone who feels like they have very little knowledge, that's completely okay! We have done our very best to include materials to best prepare you. In addition to reading, I especially recommend watching/rewatching *Conclave* (currently streaming on Amazon Prime) before the conference to have the best visual look at a conclave possible.

If you have any questions in the following weeks about crisis in general, your position, or details of the committee please feel free to email me at mccartte@miamioh.edu. Here are some sources I have selected that you may find helpful:

[How to elect a Pope: the papal Conclave explained](#)

[The History of the PAPAL CONCLAVE](#)

[College of Cardinals Traces Its Roots to Middle Ages](#)

On behalf of myself and the crisis team, we look forward to providing you with an enjoyable experience and seeing what you all accomplish in committee!

-Thomas McCarthy

Preface

Sede Vacante

The Holy Father, Pope Francis I, is dead. 1.4 billion Catholics from Norway to Antarctica are leaderless, and the future of the Church, of the faith itself, is at stake. Since 1061 A.D., the cardinals of the Church have held 112 conclaves, in which they elect the successor to the late Vicar of Christ. All cardinals under the age of 80 are eligible to participate in the conclave, and two-thirds of votes cast must be in favor of a single candidate for that person to become Pope.

Special Procedures

Due to this crisis committee not being within the bounds of standard parliamentary procedure and context, special procedures will be utilized for immersive purposes.

Balloting

The main driver of the committee will be the balloting process. Each committee session will have at least one voting session. You will cast your votes on paper, writing the name of the candidate who you support. The votes will be deposited in a pot at the front of the room, and the results will be tabulated and read out by the dais. For the first session, the ballot will be the first order of business. Between ballots, debate will proceed as it normally would in a standard committee. One major exception to standard procedure is that there are no resolutions or directives. Likewise, there is no speaker's list or agenda. Lastly, the ballot to elect a pontiff must have $\frac{2}{3}$ the votes of the College of Cardinals, or it will fail.

Some motions and procedural dialogue will be replaced with their Latin or Italian equivalents.

Motio ad Comitia - is the motion to enter voting procedure and begin balloting. It requires a simple majority to pass and can have for-and-against speakers. No more than four ballots may be held each committee session.¹

Motio pro Conventu Moderato - is the equivalent of motion for a moderated caucus.

Motio pro Conventu Non Moderato - is the equivalent of motion for an unmoderated caucus.

When the results of a ballot are collected and read, they will be read in Italian:

| | |
|--|--|
| The results of the xth ballot are as follows: Cardinal (name), number of votes. | <i>I resultati del (x)o scrutinio sono i seguenti: Cardinale (name) (x)o voti.</i> |
|--|--|

¹ Per *UNIVERSI DOMINICI GREGIS*, the current regulation on the election process. See Appendix A.

As follows are basic Italian numbers:

| | | | |
|----|---------|----|-------------|
| 1 | Uno | 11 | Undici |
| 2 | Due | 12 | Dodici |
| 3 | Tre | 13 | Tredici |
| 4 | Quattro | 14 | Quattordici |
| 5 | Cinque | 15 | Quindici |
| 6 | Sei | 16 | Sedici |
| 7 | Sette | 17 | Diciassette |
| 8 | Otto | 18 | Diciotto |
| 9 | Nove | 19 | Diciannove |
| 10 | Dieci | 20 | Venti |

Upon Successful Election

If a pope is elected by the procedures described above, the designate will be asked by the Dean in Latin:

Do you accept your canonical election as Supreme Pontiff?

Acceptasne electionem de te canonice factam in Summum Pontificem?

The designate will have the chance to decline his election or accept it. If accepted, the Dean will ask:

What name will you be called?

Quo nomine vis vocari?

The new pontiff will then choose his papal name. 81 different papal names have been used since St. Peter, but only 27 have been used more than twice. The most common are John (used 23 times), Gregory (used 16 times), Benedict (used 15 times), Clement (used 14 times), Leo and Innocent (used 13 times), Pius (used 12 times), and Stephen (used 9 times). The selection of a papal name often symbolizes which of his predecessors the new pontiff wants to most closely emulate or evoke.²

“Every cardinal, deep down inside, has already chosen the name by which he would like his papacy to be known!”

-- Cardinal Bellini, Conclave (2024)

² A more comprehensive list of names will be in Appendix B, along with values associated with each of the names.

Once the pontiff has chosen his name, he will be announced to the world by the Dean from the balcony of Saint Peter's (Farmer School of Business):

| | |
|---|--|
| I announce to you a great joy: | <i>Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum:</i> |
| We have a Pope! | <i>Habemus Papam!</i> |
| The Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lord, | <i>Eminentissimum ac reverendissimum</i> |
| Lord [baptismal name], | <i>dominum, dominum [baptismal name],</i> |
| Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church | <i>Sanctæ Romanæ Ecclesiæ Cardinalem</i> |
| [surname], | <i>[surname],</i> |
| who takes to himself the name [papal name]. | <i>qui sibi nomen imposuit [papal name].</i> |

After Election

With an elected and anointed pope, the committee can move into a more conventional practice. The pope will consult the curia on the issues, including but not limited to those discussed during the election cycle. The curia may draft resolutions (encyclicals or bulls) on issues of theology or church governance or on global affairs or on any matter seen fit.

During these discussions and deliberations the Pope will have the right to veto any encyclical or bull as without his signature it is not valid, no matter how many cardinals vote for it. The Pope additionally may excommunicate persons, declare canonizations, anoint persons, or issue personal pastoral letters, which have full validity and do not require debate or a vote.

Crisis Procedures

Crisis style committees are a type of committee in which delegates can take action through communication with the backrooms in the form of crisis notes in addition to debate in the front rooms. Each delegate will be given two note pads, at the top of which you will write your characters' names. Periodically throughout the committee during crisis updates, the crisis team will collect one of your pads in order to read and respond to it, while returning the other pad to you with a response so that you may work on your next crisis note.

Crisis notes are to be written in the form of letters addressed to characters who would reasonably exist in the world of the committee and likewise reasonably be in communication with your character. Crisis notes CANNOT be addressed to other delegates. In the case of this committee, you might consider writing to a cardinal not being represented by a delegate, other members of the Catholic clergy or the Curia such as priests, assistants and secretaries operating within the College of the Cardinals or the Vatican, nuns in charge of the upkeep of Casa Santa Marta, or any other figure within the church who may promote your character's interests within the conclave. It is important to note that traditionally, cardinals are sequestered during a conclave and are therefore forbidden to communicate with anyone outside of it. For the purposes of this

committee, then, all of your crisis notes should be considered as discrete discussion and communication in spite of the mandatory sequestration.

For your crisis note to be as efficient and successful as possible, it should feature some key components: whom it's addressed to and their role, what you hope to accomplish with your message to them, when you want this action to be taken, and a TL;DR (short summary of what your note is saying). The more specificity you use, the more likely your note is to be successful in what it seeks to accomplish. Below is an example of an efficient crisis note:

Dear Sister Edna,

As an old friend of mine and a long time nun here at Casa Santa Mara, you have a lot of influence among your peers, which is why I require your help. I have heard whispers that Cardinal Bertello is gaining popularity among my peers and challenging my hopes to hold the papacy. It is for this reason that I am reaching out to you so that we can hurt his growing chances. I intend to do this by spreading rumors of misconduct on his part that hurt the growing confidence our peers have in him. The first of these rumors shall be the mismanagement of diocese funds.

God Bless,
Cardinal Barbarin

TL;DR: Aims to spread rumors that Cardinal Bertello improperly used funds from his diocese

The crisis team will respond to your notes with specific members being assigned to respond to your notes for consistency. During this time you may also be provided with feedback and are welcome to ask the person reading your notes any questions you may have. Taking into account the inherent secret nature of what occurs during the conclave, crisis updates will be delivered by the crisis team under the pretense that they are rumors that have been spread amongst the College of the Cardinals or are events that are otherwise widely evident and known. In rare circumstances updates may involve divine occurrences.

Historical Background

The Early Church

Christianity began as a Jewish religious movement consisting chiefly of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth during the High Roman Empire period. Throughout Jesus' life he faced prosecution from the Romans and the Jewish authorities at the time, and he was killed by the former before his resurrection and ascension.

The anniversary of the ascension is marked by the Pentecost, a festival to the Holy Spirit. In those early years after the death of Jesus, the apostles and missionaries quickly set up networks of faithful underground in the Roman Empire, growing in scale once they opened the gospel to the gentiles. By the 4th century A.D., Christianity had spread across the Empire, with presences as far as Gaul (France) and Africa (Tunisia). Egypt, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Syria had substantial presences, with some cities possibly having Christian majorities. Throughout this process, the Romans had persecuted the Christians heavily, notably under Nero, Septimius Severus, then Diocletian.

In 313, Constantine proclaimed the Edict of Milan, legalizing Christianity in the Empire and he later converted as well. He convened the Council of Nicaea in 325 which would publish the Nicene Creed and formalize many of Christianity's doctrines.³

The Medieval Church

As the Roman Empire fell in the West, the Church was forced to adapt. The toppling of the last Emperor in Rome created a power vacuum in Italy with the succession of Goths, Lombards, and Franks conquering from the north. In Rome itself, the Bishop of Rome began essentially governing the city in the absence of temporal authority.

Simultaneously, the influence of the Church began to spread in all directions from its Mediterranean core. Pagan Germanic kings in Gaul, Germany, Iberia began adopting Christianity. Clovis, King of the Franks, was baptized in 496 and united the Franks just a few years later. With the assistance of the Gallic church, the Merovingian dynasty established stability and medieval institutions, becoming one of the most powerful medieval states in Europe.⁴

³ [History of early Christianity | Beliefs, Characteristics, Organization, & Map | Britannica](#)

⁴ Evans, GR. (2017) A Short History of Medieval Christianity. 1st edn. I.B. Tauris.

In Iberia, the Visigothic kings ousted the Vandals and brought their Arian⁵ beliefs to the predominantly Catholic population of Iberia. King Reccared renounced Arianism and joined Catholic Christianity in 587, later hosting the Third Council of Toledo in which the bishops condemned Arianism.

Charlemagne, the second of the Carolingian Kings after his father Pepin who was himself raised by monks with an ecclesiastical education, aided the Pope in defending Italy from invading Lombards in 774. In gratitude, the Pope crowned Charlemagne as Emperor, the first Emperor in the West since the fall of Rome three hundred years prior. With the support of the increasingly interconnected apparatus of the Western Church, Charlemagne was portrayed as the continuation of the Western Roman Empire, and he repaid that support by aiding the reforms and missionary work of the medieval church.

Catholicism, with the support of these converted and inborn Kings, Dukes, etc, became itself an institution of power in medieval Europe. While in the East, the Byzantine Emperors maintained a degree of power over the Greek Church, the rudderless Western Church consolidated its leadership behind the Bishop of Rome, who in the person of Leo I solidified its position as the chief bishopric of Christianity, calling it the “Apostolic See,” in reference to its establishment by none other than Saint Peter, regarded in Catholic orthodoxy as the first among the apostles.⁶ The influence held by the Byzantine Emperors over the patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem (the latter three later conquered from 630 to 660 by the First (Rashidun) Caliphate) helped contribute to the centralization of power by the Bishops of Rome, in part to escape the influence of the Emperors, whose interests were often not aligned with those of the Church. The Emperors additionally saw it as their prerogative to meddle in the affairs of the Church, including appointments and theological disputes, based in part on the example of Constantine. Pope Innocent I set Rome as the seat of final appeal for theological disputes, and his successor Boniface I referred to Rome as “the head of its members.”

Note on Nomenclature

The term “**Catholic**” originally means “universal,” and in the context of “Catholic Church” only originally meant the universal church of all Christians in communion with the succession of the original church of the apostles. As major splinters broke away from the main succession (e.g. **Eastern Orthodoxy** and **Protestantism**), Catholic came to refer to only that primary lineage of churches based in Rome.

⁵ Named for Arius, Arianism considers Jesus as separate from God, having been created by the latter rather than being an aspect thereof. Arianism is considered heretical by all Nicene Christian denominations.

⁶ It is worth noting that the primacy of Rome was established as early as around 250, and that the Council of Nicaea established Constantinople as the second-highest seat. Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem were all held in similarly high regard after Constantinople and Rome. Together, the five are considered the “Pentarchy” of the five primary ecclesiastical seats.

Great Schism

The disagreements between Rome and Constantinople had, for some years prior to the formal schism in 1054, undermined inter-Christian relations. Discrepancies in their practice, like the use of leavened or unleavened bread in communion, iconoclasm,⁷ trinitarianism,⁸ and the dispute over Roman primacy escalated intercommunal tensions to the point of rupture. In 1053, Patriarch Michael I of Constantinople ordered the Latin churches in Constantinople be closed, followed the next year by Pope Leo IX sending a legation to negotiate with the Byzantine Emperor for help defending southern Italy from the invading Normans. When the entreaty was refused, Leo excommunicated the Patriarch and vice-versa.⁹

In 1204, when the Fourth Crusade was called against Ayyubid Egypt, the Byzantine Empire seemed to be still a powerful, prosperous, and cosmopolitan realm in the Orient, yet it had little role in the wars against the Muslim Caliphates. As such, for a series of complicated reasons, to finance the war the Crusaders invaded Constantinople to depose the Emperor Alexios III and replace him with Alexios Angelos, the Emperor's nephew. The sacking of Constantinople calcified the severance of the two Churches, leaving a divided Christendom as the High middle ages became the late Middle Ages.¹⁰

The Changing Church

With the influence of the western Church only growing as Europe fractured into feudal domains, the Church's temporal power became its primary strength. Monasteries governed entire (and very prosperous) estates and rulers answered to their Rome-appointed bishops - though the Investiture Controversy should be noted as one of the moments of greatest contention in medieval christianity.¹¹

Temporal vs. Ecclesiastical Power

For much of the church's history, the Pope wielded both **temporal** and **ecclesiastical** power. **Temporal** power is the power to dictate earthly affairs: management of land and people; or in politics to direct laws or manage the Papal States, which was the territory directly governed by the Papacy.

Ecclesiastical power is the spiritual power of the church: drafting doctrines, canon law, sacraments, encyclicals; governing and teaching the faithful.

⁷ Whether or not art depicting Jesus, Saints, and the Apostles constituted idolatry.

⁸ Whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son or the Father alone.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Nicolle, D. and Hook, C. (2011) *The Fourth Crusade 1202–04*. 1st edn. Osprey Publishing.

¹¹ The Investiture Controversy was the dispute between rulers of feudal states and the Church of who was allowed to appoint bishops within these feudal realms. Prior to the dispute, the rulers were generally allowed to appoint successors to bishops and in many cases appointed relatives, unholy men, or corrupt persons who funneled the wealth of the bishopric's estates to the Crown. It was eventually resolved through a series of settlements, the majority of which favored the Church's right to appoint bishops.

There was another prolonged schism in the West from 1378 to 1406, but over primarily political differences rather than theological. For a period starting in 1309, the French-born Pope Clement V moved the seat of the Papacy to Avignon, in southern France. Following its return in 1378, there arose a period where two separate curias and popes co-existed, one in Avignon and the other in Rome.

The Reformation

The greatest test of Roman Catholicism after the Schism was undoubtedly the Protestant Reformation. Of note here is that the plagues damaged the prestige and stability of the Church profoundly. For one, the failure of the Church to stem the tide of disease or dampen its effect weakened trust and faith in the Church's ability to effect earthly events. Secondly, the Black Death ravaged the clergy more so than almost any other class of persons during the period. With great vacancies in the priesthood, there arose a need for replacements, which led to the loosening of standards for new priests. Much of the clergy that was joining the Church through monastic orders or the standard priesthood was from wealthy noble families, and those neophytes to clerical life liked to keep some of the luxuries from their old lives. Monks hunting, wearing adorned robes, silken hats, not to mention priests who had but a cursory understanding of Latin all plagued the Church bureaucracy and contributed to the growing sense among the laity that the Church was bloated, corrupt, self-indulgent, and extortionate. Combined with a growing and most dangerously literate bourgeois class, the hour of change was nearing.

Starting with the criticisms of Wycliff and Hus, religious movements in favor of Church reform flared up in England and Bohemia respectively. The reformers challenged the structure of the Church and the corruption they saw as entrenched in its institutions, but also presented different theological and liturgical positions. Despite their differences, the Protestants remained within the greater family of Nicene Christians, unlike later separatist movements like the Latter Day Saints and the Jehovah's Witnesses.¹²

Among the major differences in Protestantism vs. Catholicism are the belief in the latter that salvation is achieved through both faith and good deeds, while the former focuses only on faith; and the former's support of vernacular bibles being published, most notably with the aid of Gutenberg's printing press. The Vatican through this tumultuous period supported the Counterreformation from the Council of Trent, which included such reforms as the formation of the seminaries and the increasing use of personal devotion as a means of redemption. Another result of the Council of Trent was the decision to reinvigorate the missionary spirit of previous centuries, sending missionaries to the New World, India, China, and Africa to evangelize and spread the Universal Church.¹³

¹² Ibid.

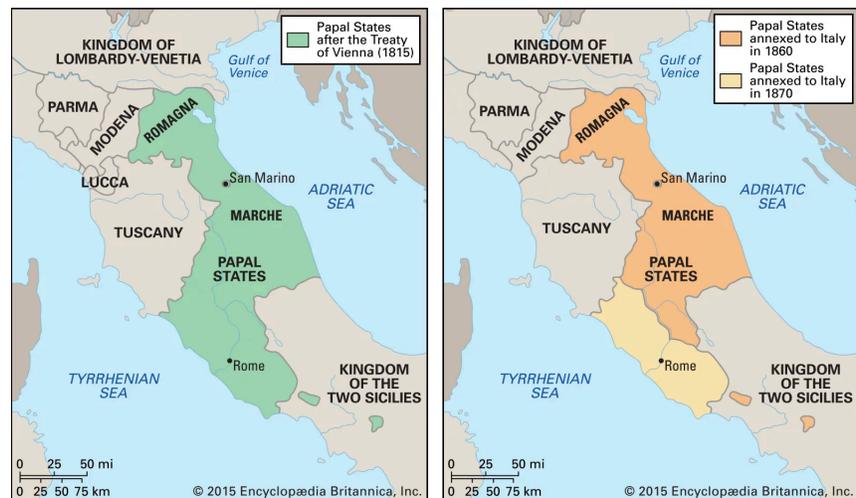
¹³ Gosselin, E. (2011) *The Reformation: History in an Hour*. HarperPress.

The Modern Church

The Church's influence waned after the Reformation and the bloody European Wars of Religion. Rising commercial powers in England, the Netherlands, and Germany undermined the hold the clerical class once held, and even the pre-eminent Catholic power at the time, France, turned to commerce and trade instead of the church as its primary focus. Spain and Portugal, two of the great colonial powers, retained their focus on the Catholic mission, and even now their former colonies provide some of the greatest numbers of Catholic faithful.

The French Revolution and the ousting of the Church from France was a major blow to the Papacy, and though Napoleon would later draft the Concordat of 1801 and allow the Church to return to France, the influence of Rome in France was forever broken. Napoleon would later undermine the church even further with his occupation of Rome in 1809. While the Papal States¹⁴ were restored after Napoleon's fall, their power had been so weakened that when the forces of the newly-united Kingdom of Italy invaded in 1870, the Papacy relied on French support to retain the city of Rome. When the French troops withdrew to focus on the war with Prussia, Rome fell and was annexed to unified Italy, beginning the period wherein the Pope was

described as a “prisoner in the Vatican.” In part a petty vengeance against Italy, Pope Pius IX issued *Non Expedit*, an 1868 order barring Catholics from voting or running for office in Italy. Combined with the isolating effects of the Industrial Revolution and the rise of liberalism and socialism, the Church had never been so weak as when Leo XIII took the papacy in 1878.



An intellectual and reformer, Leo promulgated the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*.¹⁵ The encyclical called for workers' rights, including fair wages, forming unions, and safe working conditions. In opposition to both the rising force of communism and the old force of *laissez-faire* capitalism, Leo charted the course for modern Catholic social teaching, creating the ideology of distributism and forerunning what would become Christian Democracy and the concept of social justice. Further, as the first pope to never govern the Papal States, Leo changed the nature of the church from one which had both ecclesiastical and temporal power to one which focused almost entirely

¹⁴ The territories in Central Italy that the Pope directly controlled like any other country.

¹⁵ [Rerum Novarum \(May 15, 1891\)](#)

on the latter. His successors, especially Benedict XV during World War I, continued the trend of shaping the church to an advocate and spiritual authority. Benedict notably used the papacy to advocate for peace and to organize humanitarian efforts during the war.

As part of these shifts, the Lateran Pacts were signed between Fascist Italy and the Vatican in 1929, regulating the relationship of the Church and Italy, wherein the Vatican would be recognized as an independent entity under the sovereign jurisdiction of the Holy See, and Italy would pay compensation to the Holy See for the annexation of the Papal States. The Holy See, for its part, relinquished its temporal claim on Italy.¹⁶

In part due to the relinquishing of papal Italian territories, the Church shifted to a global focus as part of the re-centering that took place after the Risorgimento. With its new pastoral, spiritual perspective, the Church essentially had become what it is today.¹⁷ Through the inter-war years, Cold War, and to the modern day, the Church has continued this primarily spiritual, humanitarian, and diplomatic purpose, notably during the fall of the communist government in Poland.

Structure of the Church

The Catholic Church, one of the longest continually-existing institutions in world history, naturally has an immense bureaucracy to sustain it.

Papacy - at the head of the Catholic Church is His Holiness the Pope. He is the absolute authority in the Catholic Church and governs it with zero oversight or removal mechanisms.

College of Cardinals - comprises all the Cardinals, a title awarded by the Pope to senior clergy to serve as advisors and to elevate their stature. Members of the College below the age of 80 collectively elect the Pope.

Vatican vs. Holy See vs. Papacy vs. Catholic Church

The **Papacy** is the office of the Pope. The **Papacy** governs the **Holy See**, which is in its own right a sovereign entity under international law despite not being a “country.” **Vatican City** is the physical territory that constitutes a country under international law, referred to as the **Vatican City State**. The **Vatican City State** is governed by the entity of the **Holy See**, like how the United States is governed by the Federal Government. Similarly, as the Presidency is the head of the Federal Government, the **Papacy** is the head of the **Holy See**. In addition to governing the **Vatican City State**, the **Holy See** governs the **Catholic Church**, which refers to the body of all the Catholic faithful, the properties, and the clergy. The term **Vatican** can be used metonymically as a substitute for the **Holy See** or for the **Vatican City State**.

¹⁶ The surrendering of the claims to Italy in the Lateran Pacts has become a point of contention for particularly conservative or politically-aggressive Catholics, who often support irredentist claims for the Papacy to restore its temporal control. HBO’s *The Young Pope* (2016) uses this as a conflict.

¹⁷ Father de Souza, Raymond J. (2020) *The Demise of the Papal States Was a Gift to the Church*. National Catholic Register.

Roman Curia - all of the officials, bureaucrats, secretaries, etc that serve as the administrators of the Holy See under the direction of the Pope.

Secretariat of State - serves as a *de facto* head of government for the Holy See. The Secretary coordinates the affairs of the Roman Curia and operates on behalf of the Pope. Within the Secretariat are three sections:

- **S. for General Affairs:** Oversees the Curia as a whole and coordinates administration;
- **S. for Relations with States:** Manages diplomatic policy;
- **S. for Diplomatic Personnel:** Oversees the diplomatic corps;

Dicasteries - are the departments subordinate to the Secretariat of State that each specialize in a specific area of spiritual or ecclesiastical life:

- **D. for the Doctrine of Faith:** Organizes and defense doctrine;
- **D. for the Service of Charity:** Organizes and administers charitable aid;
- **D. for Bishops:** Administers the selection of bishops;
- **D. for the Clergy:** Administers the non-bishop ordained ministers;
- **D. for Promoting Christian Unity:** Administers relations with other Christians;¹⁸
- **D. for Interreligious Dialogue:** Facilitates dialogue with other faiths;
- **D. for Culture and Education:** Runs Catholic educational institutions;
- **D. for Integral Human Development:** Promotes social justice and human development;
- **D. for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments:** Regulates the liturgy;
- **D. for Legislative Texts:** Interprets canon law.

Archbishops - are senior clergy who usually oversee an archdiocese, which usually is the chief see within an Ecclesiastical Province, within which multiple sees reside.

Bishops - are clergy who usually oversee a diocese and in doing so are part of an Ecclesiastical Province but do not necessarily report to the provincial Archbishop. Bishops may be curial, which means they are assigned to administrative positions rather than a diocese.

Priests and Deacons - are members of the clergy who are ordained ministers but are not bishops, and often run parish churches.

Cardinals and Archbishops are titles given to regular bishops, and do not necessarily constitute a separate type of official, but merely a revocable designation made to a bishop.

Episcopal Conferences - are gatherings of bishops within a certain region with the primary responsibility of setting liturgical norms and standards within the confines of Papal directive.

¹⁸ A practice known as ecumenism.

Current Issues

Synodality

Synodality as is relevant now derives from Pope Francis' efforts to hold dialogues with laity and clergy alike. The principle generally means to have more open ecclesial discussions and "be docile to the breath of the Holy Spirit," in the form of these open discussions. This "Synod on Synodality," which comprised a series of meetings held across the world over the course of three years, is intended not to change dogmas or doctrines, but to find new ways to share the Gospel and foster participation. Francis emphasized that his vision for the Synodal church was one that engaged speaking and listening to revitalize the church and turning away from its historical "culture of exclusion."¹⁹

Opponents claim the synods undermine the primacy of Rome, the traditional structure of the Church which is said to mirror the body of Christ with the pope at its head, the ordained clergy as its organs, and the faithful as the limbs. Conservative opponents argued that the synods would push for radical changes to doctrines, morals, and institutions.²⁰

Vetus Ordo

Pope Francis in 2021 ordered the suppression of the practice of the *Vetus Ordo*, or the Old Latin Mass. The Old Mass was the traditional way of celebrating Mass prior to the 1962 Vatican II Conference²¹, when it was replaced with the *Novus Ordo*. Among other changes, the *Novus Ordo* was allowed to be read in the vernacular language of the congregation instead of Latin. A number of churches that only celebrated the *Vetus Ordo* closed rather than change their Mass.

Supporters of *Vetus Ordo* say that the old Mass had a greater focus on sacrifice, adoration, and transcendence that was removed in the *Novus Ordo*. The connection to traditional means of worship is another argument that supporters make in favor of the *Vetus Ordo*. They argue that the old way allows for a continuity of worship to past generations, and that the tradition increases the spiritual connection of the present worshippers to the lineage of the past.

Opponents of restoring the Old Latin Mass have a myriad of arguments, including that the Old Mass is inaccessible due to being in Latin, that all churches in communion should practice the same Mass, and that rejection of *Novus Ordo* is a rejection of Vatican II, which along with preceding ecumenical councils is regarded as absolute.²²

¹⁹ [Ceremony commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops \(17 October 2015\)](#)

²⁰ [Archives: Issues - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

²¹ [Vatican II | Carroll College](#)

²² [Archives: Issues - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

Female Deacons

As stated by John Paul II in 1994, only baptized men can receive ordination. Francis, through his pontificate, has concurred with the established teaching, but discussions on the possibility of female deaconship have continued through recent years. It remains a fairly fringe position even for progressives, but some consider it necessary to reinvigorate ecclesiastical life and draw in female faithful.

Blessing Same-Sex Couples

Pope Francis, in 2023, issued *Fiducia Supplicans*,²³ which authorized non-liturgical blessings for “irregular” couples. While the document specified that this does not constitute marriage rituals or endorsement of same-sex relations, conservatives argue that it muddles the church doctrine on marriage which remains strict terms of one-man and one-woman.

Progressives within the church support the measure as a means by which the Church should show compassion and closeness to people, as well as a measure by which inclusivity can be achieved within the Church. Opposition has naturally been widespread, especially among conservative parishes in Africa, South America, and North America.²⁴

Humanae Vitae

Issued by Pope Paul VI in 1968, the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*²⁵ refers to any form of artificial contraception as “intrinsically evil.” Throughout the late 1900s and especially the AIDS crisis, discussions became prevalent on the harm reduction that contraception provided for the proliferation of sexually-transmitted diseases. Francis has alluded to possible flexibility on the topic, but debates are far from settled on the topic and remain highly contested.

Opponents of the encyclical focus mostly on harm reduction, while proponents stick to strict traditional interpretations of the sinful act.

Climate Change

In his advocacy, Francis I placed high priority on climate change and the role of the Catholic community in addressing it. Echoing Leo XIII’s teachings on social justice, Francis describes protection of the Earth as an ethical and moral duty. Within the framework of the liberation theology,²⁶ Francis also considered the degradation of the environment an act against the poor. Opponents of this focus consider it outside the scope of the Church or even deny it wholesale.

²³ [Dichiarazione “Fiducia supplicans” sul senso pastorale delle benedizioni del Dicastero per la Dottrina della Fede](#)

²⁴ [Archives: Issues - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

²⁵ [Humanae Vitae \(July 25, 1968\)](#)

²⁶ [Liberation theology - Wikipedia](#)

Factions within the Curia

Moderates

The Moderates are those in the Curia that aim to keep the Church from either radically changing its shape or stagnating in a changing world. They keep their heads down and try to court a path of compromise and pragmatism. While they may on certain issues favor one side or another, their priority tends to be stability. In cases where the Church is benefited by change, they will support reforms or modernizations, but generally they will shy away from structural overhauls or major doctrinal shifts. For better or worse, no candidate can be elected without support of the Moderates, and so their skills of compromise will come in handy when it comes to electing the Supreme Pontiff.

Conservatives

The Conservatives are those in the Curia who support, over all else, tradition. Status quo is the order of the day for those who would preserve the ancient ways of the Church over all else. Under Francis, they have seen their influence wane. On hot-button issues of culture and social relations, the conservatives often find themselves in front of a microphone to defend what they perceive as the original, holier practices. For some issues, they may be willing to accept reforms, but only when those reforms aren't in opposition to established doctrine or morals.

Progressives

The Progressives are those in the Church who see change as not only necessary, but desirable. Driven by their principles, Church doctrine to them is more malleable, less absolute. Values like inclusivity, social justice, and equity influence their decisions, which they often frame as being necessary to “modernize” the Church. Under Francis, their influence has swelled, and some of the more ambitious among them even talk about recognizing same-sex marriage or the ordination of females. Most are more moderate, but hold similar aspirations of change.

Clarification on Titles

Nowhere in the official titles of the Head of the Catholic Church is the term ‘Pope.’ Pope is informally used as a colloquial term to refer to the Head of the Church, whose full style is:

His Holiness, the Bishop of Rome, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the Successor of the Prince of Apostles, Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church, Patriarch of the West, Primate of Italy, Metropolitan Archbishop of the Roman Province, Sovereign of the Vatican City State, Servant of the Servants of God.

For most purposes Pope, Bishop of Rome, or Pontiff are sufficient.

Character Biographies

The Bureaucrats

His Eminence Cardinal-Bishop

Pietro Parolin (70)

Vatican Secretary of State

Nationality: Italian

Type: Curial

Born to a hardware-store manager and elementary school teacher in Northern Italy in 1955, Cardinal Parolin was by no means likely to assume the high office he now holds. A career diplomat for the Holy See, Cardinal Parolin served with distinction, navigating Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria, secularist tendencies in Mexico, nuclear proliferation with visits to North Korea and Viet Nam, and the opening of official Vatican relations with China. Regarded generally as a **moderate**, Parolin walks the line on sensitive issues, generally taking a pragmatic approach to most issues including China policy, Israel policy, celibacy, and internal affairs. On certain issues like climate change, Parolin has staked out an activist role for the Church, while on some like homosexual marriage and euthanasia, Parolin has remained closer to the Church orthodoxy.²⁷



His Eminence Cardinal-Bishop

Luis Tagle (68)

Pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization

Nationality: Filipino

Type: Curial

Formerly the Archbishop of Manila from 2011 to 2020, Cardinal Luis Tagle rose from a Tagalog-Chinese family to the priesthood in 1982. Studying under esteemed theologian Joseph A. Komonchak, Tagle was celebrated as “one of the best students” he had ever had. Most of his career was spent in the Diocese of Imus until 1997, when he was appointed to the International Theological Commission by Pope John Paul II. At the ITC, he worked with the future Pope Benedict XVI, who nominated him as Archbishop of Manila in 2011 and made him a cardinal in 2012. Pope Francis later elevated Tagle to chair the Congregation for Evangelization, later merged into the Dicastery of Evangelization. Tagle is known as one of the most **progressive** Cardinals, with liberal stances on homosexuality, divorce, immigration, China, but not abortion and euthanasia.²⁸



²⁷ <https://collegeofcardinalsreport.com/cardinals/pietro-parolin/>

²⁸ <https://collegeofcardinalsreport.com/cardinals/luis-antonio-gokim-tagle/>

His Eminence Cardinal-Bishop

Fernando Filoni (79)

Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem

Nationality: Italian

Type: Curial

Cardinal Filoni, even more so than Vatican Secretary of State Parolin, embodies the diplomatic service of the Holy See. Starting in 1981, Filoni was stationed in Sri Lanka, Iran, Brazil, and the Philippines. In Iran, Filoni witnessed the bloody Iran-Iraq war, shaping his moderate stances. In 1992, he was sent to Hong Kong, where he witnessed the chaotic change from British to Chinese sovereignty. He was appointed in 2001 the apostolic nuncio to Iraq, where he witnessed the Iraq War, even staying in Baghdad as the United States bombed the city. After Saddam was toppled, Filoni continued to advocate for peaceful co-existence before he was reassigned to the Philippines. In 2007, Pope Benedict XVI appointed Filoni to serve as Substitute for General Affairs, a prestigious administrative position in the Curia where he served as a de facto chief of staff for the entire Vatican administration. After only four years, he was reassigned to serve as Prefect for the Congregation of Evangelization and made a cardinal the next year by Benedict XVI. In most areas a **moderate**, Filoni has staked out pragmatic stances on diplomatic and theological issues.²⁹



His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

Kurt Koch (75)

Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity

Nationality: Swiss

Type: Curial

A lay theologian and academic until age 32, Koch joined the priesthood late, becoming bishop of Basel in 1995. In the priesthood, he continued his academic works, publishing numerous writings and studies on theological matters. Elevated in 2010 as President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and made cardinal that same year, Koch has continued in that role ever since, surviving numerous upheavals in the administration of the Holy See and becoming Prefect after the Council was reformed to a Dicastery. Having once supported ending priestly celibacy and even women's ordination, the oft-overlooked Koch understands that compromise and flexibility is necessary for surviving in the cut-throat Vatican politics. An experienced theologian and political **moderate**, he supports ecumenism and modest reform for keeping the church relevant in the modern age.³⁰



²⁹ <https://collegeofcardinalsreport.com/cardinals/fernando-filoni/>

³⁰ <https://collegeofcardinalsreport.com/cardinals/kurt-koch/>

His Eminence Cardinal-Bishop

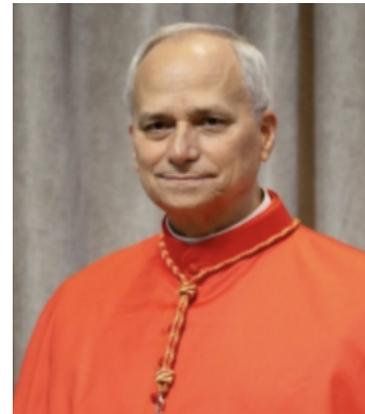
Robert Francis Prevost

Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops

Nationality: American

Type: Curial

The Chicago-born Augustinian Robert Prevost took his vows in 1981, becoming a priest the next year. His career started with the Augustinians, serving in various prioral roles until 1999 when he was elected as provincial prior. In 2001, he was elected Prior-General of the Augustinians, serving in Rome until 2013. In Rome, he met the future Pope Francis – a meeting which reportedly went poorly, though Prevost and the Pope reconciled by 2015, when Francis appointed Prevost as Bishop of Chiclayo. As Bishop, Prevost became a Peruvian citizen and quickly grew in popularity amongst his diocese as an advocate for refugees, trafficked persons, and victims of natural disasters. Francis appointed Prevost in 2023 to the powerful Dicastery for Bishops, making him a cardinal later that year. A **moderate**, Prevost’s reputation spans the continents from his international role.³¹



His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

James Michael Harvey

Archpriest of the Papal Basilica of St. Paul Outside-the-Walls

Nationality: American

Type: Curial

With the undoubtedly awesome title of “Archpriest,” James Harvey is a low-profile American ordinary with a long ecclesiastical career starting with his ordination in 1975. A diplomat for the Holy See for many years, Harvey represented the Holy See in the Dominican Republic before moving to the prestigious Secretariat of State, advising Pope John Paul II and serving as councilor of the Secretariat of State. He was appointed then as prefect of the Pontifical Household, a position very close to power in the Holy See. In 2012, he was promoted by Benedict XVI to administer the Papal Basilica of St. Paul Outside-the-Walls, where he languished for some years, especially after a member of his staff was convicted for leaking documents. Though he is known to insiders as a staunch **conservative**, Harvey is famously reticent. His administrative abilities and control of the Curia is respected, having served in the Pontifical Household for 24 years.³²



³¹ [Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost, O.S.A. - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

³² [Cardinal James Michael Harvey - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

The Peacemakers

His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

Pierbattista Pizzaballa

Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem

Nationality: Italian

Type: Diocesan

Just 60 years old, Pizzaballa has an air of distinction that exceeds his years. He spent nearly twenty years in theological academia, excelling by all reports and joining the Franciscan Order. In 1999 he joined the administration of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, the order's province over Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, and Egypt. Just five years later, he was elected the order's Custodian of the Holy Land, a position where he fostered cross-community understanding for twelve years until he was ordained a bishop and appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. In 2020, he was raised to the prestigious position of Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. Three years later, he was made Cardinal. In his contentious and violent parish, Pizzaballa has charted a **moderate** course on theological and doctrinal issues, while pursuing a vocal advocacy of peace and reconciliation in Palestine. He recognizes the need of modernity and yet understands caution and respect for tradition.³³



His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

Charles Maung Bo

Archbishop of Yangon

Nationality: Burmese

Type: Diocesan

Ordained a priest in 1976, Bo served his mission in some of the most violent regions of conflict-ridden Myanmar until 2003, when he was made Archbishop of Yangon. Throughout his early career, Bo had to face ethnic tensions, cleansing, and war in the turbulent regions of northern Myanmar. Once he was posted to the most populous city, Yangon, he rose in stature quickly through the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Myanmar and the Federation of Asian Bishops. Made in 2015 Myanmar's first-ever cardinal, Bo is regarded generally as a **moderate** despite his affinity and support for orthodox liturgy and doctrine. A renowned compromiser, Bo was close to Pope Francis and especially on his stances of Synodality, mercy, environmental issues, and ministry to the poor. On issues like same-sex marriage and female inclusion in the church, he is thought to be more hesitant.³⁴



³³ [Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

³⁴ [Cardinal Charles Bo - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

Fridolin Ambongo Besungu

Archbishop of Kinshasa

Nationality: Congolese

Type: Diocesan

Cardinal Ambongo, ordained in 1988, taught at the Catholic University of the Congo and later the Mazenod Institute before he was finally appointed Bishop of Bokungu-Ikela in 2004. He was later appointed Archbishop of Mbandaka-Bikoro in 2016, before being moved to Kinshasa in 2018. Made a cardinal the next year, Ambongo rose very quickly to prominence amongst the church at large and in Africa in particular. He is viewed as the leading **progressive** of the African bishops in contrast to the leading conservative Robert Sarah. Ambongo's focus is heavily inspired by Francis's interpretation of liberation theology and social justice, and is also consequently heavily involved in local politics, where he is considered a leading opposition figure to the government of Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo. His stances include opposition to resource exploitation, wealth inequality, corruption, and environmental abuse; but on theological and doctrinal concerns, he is a noted orthodox voice, resisting *Fiducia Supplicans*, defending priestly celibacy, and promoting family virtues.³⁵



His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

Anders Arborelius

Bishop of Stockholm

Nationality: Swedish

Type: Diocesan

Raised Lutheran, Cardinal Arborelius converted to Catholicism at age 20, joining the Carmelites just two years later. He was made a priest in 1979 and eventually consecrated as Bishop of Stockholm in 1998, the first Swede to hold that post since the Reformation. On several committees and councils he held senior roles, and he was later made the first-ever Cardinal from Scandinavia in 2017. As far as the issues facing the Church go, Arborelius is a relative **moderate**. He criticizes German Synodality and has orthodox views on most social issues including priestly celibacy and female ordination. On other issues, Arborelius aligns closely with Francis and the progressives. He is a vocal and prominent supporter of both environmental protections and migration, both hot-button topics in his native Sweden. Further, he is a strong opponent of the old Latin Mass (*Vetus Ordo*).³⁶



³⁵ [Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo Besungu - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

³⁶ [Cardinal Anders Arborelius - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

Kazimierz Nycz

Metropolitan Archbishop Emeritus of Warsaw

Nationality: Polish

Type: Emeritus

A relatively low-profile Cardinal from Poland, Nycz's heyday is mostly over. Once a senior assistant to Pope John Paul II, Nycz served as Auxiliary Bishop of Krakow, Bishop of Koszalin-Kolobrzeg, and later Metropolitan Archbishop of Warsaw and Ordinary of the Eastern Rite. Promoted to Cardinal in 2010, Nycz worked with the Polish Bishops' Conference and in the Curia before retirement from primary responsibilities in 2024. Though he is, by Polish standards, a relative progressive, the staunch conservatism of the Polish church leaves him as a moderate **conservative**. Most of the reforms considered relevant topics find him in opposition, but he rarely takes vocal stances against. Respected for his advocacy and service during the Pontificate of John Paul II, Nycz is known as an incorruptible and austere figure, and most discussion about him in this conclave revolves around what role he will choose in supporting the next Pope, rather than if he would serve as it. Yet, his adaptability and moderation on many issues while remaining a relative traditionalist allows him to remain in the running for the See of Saint Peter.³⁷



His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

Willem Eijk

Metropolitan Archbishop of Utrecht

Nationality: Dutch

Type: Diocesan

In the secular and cosmopolitan Netherlands, Willem Eijk finds himself often misplaced. A physician by trade, Eijk is a leading voice on medical ethics and Christianity's role therein. Made archbishop in 2007 then a cardinal in 2012, Eijk has made a name for himself as one of the sternist **conservatives** in the Church, in severe discord with the milieu of his native Netherlands. His support for *Humanae Vitae* and opposition to same-sex marriage and blessings, female ordination, and other Catholic cultural issues make him a popular face for conservatives seeking to put a competent, respectable face on their movement. He has called for compassion for refugees, but has spoken about the "obligations" migrants have to their home and host countries. During the COVID pandemic, Eijk was a leading religious voice in favor of vaccination, and as a doctor drew additional credence. If he can consolidate conservative and moderate support by promising to value stability in his pontificate, he could be in the running for the next papacy.³⁸



³⁷ [Cardinal Kazimierz Nycz - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

³⁸ [Cardinal Willem Eijk - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

The Crusaders

His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

Péter Erdő

Metropolitan Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest, Hungary

Nationality: Hungarian

Type: Diocesan

Having been born in communist Hungary, Erdő learned early on that he would be served well by keeping quiet on contentious issues. For much of his career starting with his ordination in 1975, he kept a low profile and didn't wade into the issues. This policy served him well and he steadily rose the ranks, becoming Primate of Hungary in 2003, the same year he was made a cardinal. Since bearing the red robes, Erdő has increasingly staked out his vocally **conservative** positions on moral doctrines. He rejects communion for remarried Catholics, female ordination, and same-sex marriage, but has moderated some of his other positions like on the liturgy, for which he accepts both the old and new Latin Mass. On secularism, and Islamic relations, he leans cautious and skeptical, but is an enthusiastic supporter of reconciliation with the Eastern Orthodox.³⁹



His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

Malcolm Ranjith

Metropolitan Archbishop of Colombo

Nationality: Sri Lankan

Type: Diocesan

Ordained in 1975, Malcolm Ranjith remained close to his native Sri Lanka, helping the poor of his parish even before he was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo. He was soon after appointed Bishop of Ratnapura, then sent to Rome as secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. Right after that, he was sent to Indonesia as Papal Nuncio and appointed Archbishop. Just another year later, he was returned to Rome as secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. He returned four years later to Colombo in 2009 as its Archbishop and was made Cardinal the next year. On most issues a **conservative**, Ranjith has broad experience in Curial administration, Diocesan administration, evangelization, and diplomacy, making him a strong contender for leadership in the Vatican. His stances on most social issues are strictly conservative, even going as far as to ban girls from serving the altar.⁴⁰



³⁹ [Cardinal Péter Erdő - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

⁴⁰ [Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

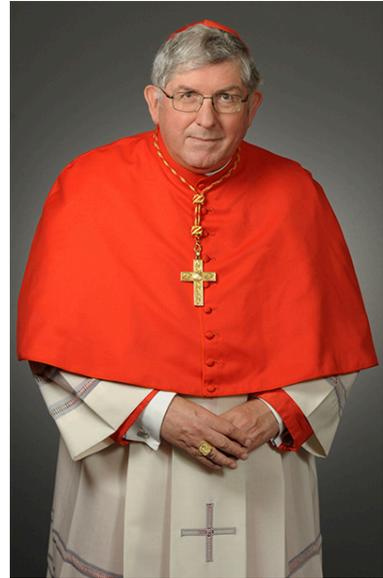
Thomas Collins

Metropolitan Archbishop Emeritus of Toronto

Nationality: Canadian

Type: Emeritus

Ordained in 1973, Cardinal Collins has a long history with the Church. After his lengthy schooling, he was for ten years a diocesan Bishop in Saint Paul and later Edmonton. Starting in 2007, he served as Archbishop of Toronto and assisted the academic operations of the Church, as Chancellor of the University of St. Michael's College and the Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies. Elevated to Cardinal in 2012, he waded into controversies over same-sex marriage and abortion, both relevant topics in his native Canada. A known **conservative**, Collins has the theological background and educational acumen to posit himself as a compromise candidate for those willing to accept his more traditional views. His advanced age may help if the conclave runs long, as he could portray his candidacy as a “caretaker” pontificate while these issues are debated more seriously.⁴¹



His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

Giuseppe Betori

Metropolitan Archbishop Emeritus of Florence

Nationality: Italian

Type: Emeritus

Cardinal Betori was ordained in 1970 before serving as Dean of the Theological Institute of Assisi and later Director of the Catechistic Office of the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI). In 2001 he was appointed as the Secretary-General of the CEI and promoted to Bishop. In 2008 he was reassigned to serve as Archbishop of Florence, and just three years later he was promoted to cardinal. He supports interfaith dialogue and even sold Church lands in Florence to a Muslim group in order to build a mosque. Vocally supportive of freedom of worship, Betori drew ire from conservatives but praise from progressives and secured his position as a leading **moderate**. On other issues, he has stuck to a more traditional line, refusing to support same-sex men being ordained. In a controversial homily in 2024, Betori castigated the city of Florence as “sick” with vice, reproaching the city’s poverty, drug use, and gambling. Betori could be a potential candidate on account of his diocesan and curial experience and from a desire to return the Papacy to an Italian.⁴²



⁴¹ [Cardinal Thomas Christopher Collins - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

⁴² [Cardinal Giuseppe Betori - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

Timothy Dolan

Metropolitan Archbishop of New York

Nationality: American

Type: Diocesan

A vocal and well-known face of American Catholicism, Cardinal Timothy Dolan was ordained in 1976 and served as a pastor in rural Missouri for many years before working at the Apostolic Nunciature in Washington D.C. He was later appointed rector of the Pontifical North American College in Rome, serving there until 2001. As Archbishop of Milwaukee he was involved in a scandal where he approved payments to priests accused of abuse in order to “speed up” the process and minimize publicity. In 2009 he was appointed Archbishop of New York, the highest profile Catholic priest in the United States. He was promoted to the Cardinalate in 2012. With a savvy media personality that regularly appears on U.S. talk shows, the cardinal has been a highly-visible **conservative** advocate for Catholic orthodoxy in one of the countries most historically hostile to “papists.”⁴³ While on liturgical and many theological issues a conservative, Dolan has been fairly liberal with respect to tolerating homosexuality though he disapproves marriage and blessings. On issues like abortion and contraception, Dolan tacks orthodox, putting him in the unique position of being a traditionalist with modernist moderation. Unfortunately for him, they’d never elect an American Pope. Right?



His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

Pablo Virgilio Siongco David

Bishop of Kalookan

Nationality: Philippines

Type: Diocesan

Cardinal David was only ordained in 1983, and spent many of his early years protesting against the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. Bouncing between various institutions, David eventually settled in diocesan work starting in 2006. In the ecclesiastical conferences, David has excelled with his politicking, receiving high appointments in his native Philippines and the Federation of Bishop Conferences of Asia. As Bishop of Kalookan, David has embodied much of Catholic Social Teaching and the principles of social justice cherished by Francis and Leo XIII. He is a **progressive** proponent of synodality, respect for homosexuality, charity for the poor, and an activist church. Having gone out into the violent urban areas of his mission to evangelize and deliver aid, David established himself in opposition to the government of President Duterte.⁴⁴



⁴³ [Cardinal Timothy Michael Dolan - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

⁴⁴ [Cardinal Pablo Virgilio Siongco David - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

The Reformers

His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

Matteo Zuppi

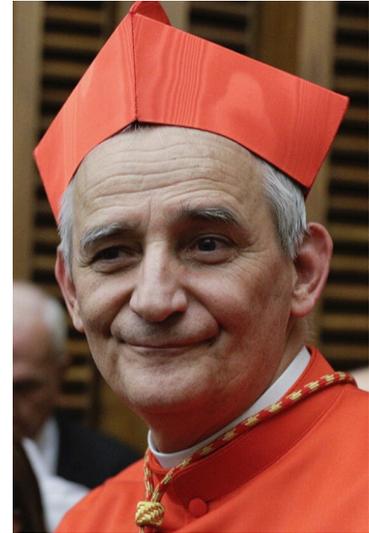
Archbishop of Bologna

Nationality: Italian

Type: Diocesan

A native Roman, Zuppi's family has long and close ties to the Vatican. From his youth he quickly took to the clerical life, becoming ordained in 1981. Through his career he stayed close to Rome, serving at various churches in Central Italy and even playing a role in negotiating peace agreements in Mozambique. In 2012, he was made Auxiliary Bishop of Rome, then in 2015

Archbishop of Bologna. Four years later in 2019 he was made Cardinal by Francis, and is seen as a close ally of the late Pontiff. As a prominent **progressive** among the senior leadership of the Church, his theology is rooted in concern for the poor and ostracized, and he is described as a true adherent of the spirit of Vatican II's consultative aims. He engages amicably with divorcees, homosexuals, Muslims, Jews, and migrants, drawing the ire of some of the more exclusionary conservatives. Congenial and with many friends in the Curia, Cardinal Zuppi will be a power-player in the coming Conclave.⁴⁵



His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

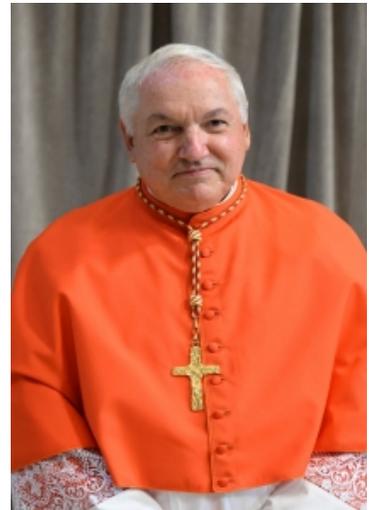
Jean-Marc Aveline

Metropolitan Archbishop of Marseille

Nationality: French

Type: Diocesan

Cardinal Aveline was born in French Algeria and exiled at just four years old. Ordained in 1984, Aveline continued his theological education until 2000, when he defended his thesis on Christology. His career focused on interreligious relations, and he was appointed to the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 2008 by Benedict XVI. In 2014 he was made Auxiliary Bishop of Marseille, and succeeded to the see in 2019. Francis promoted him to Cardinal in 2022, and he grew close to the late Pope. With a focus on Mediterranean relations and religious dialogue across the region, Aveline is considered the favored successor of Francis and yet a solid **moderate**. On doctrinal and theological disputes, Aveline has kept a low-profile, but he is a vocal supporter of dialogue and Francis' social positions.⁴⁶



⁴⁵ [Cardinal Matteo Zuppi - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

⁴⁶ [Cardinal Jean-Marc Aveline - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

Reinhard Marx

Archbishop of Munich and Freising

Nationality: German

Type: Diocesan

Ordained in 1979, Marx is a leading German prelate who aligned closely with Francis. His career began in 1996 as Auxiliary Bishop of Paderborn, then in 2001 he was made Bishop of Trier. In 2007, Benedict XVI appointed Marx as the Metropolitan Archbishop of Munich and Freising. At the time more aligned with the conservatives, observers speculate that Benedict saw him as a potential successor, and he was elevated in 2010 to the Cardinalate. After the election of Pope Francis Cardinal Marx moved toward a **progressive** position, embracing Francis' reform aspirations and theology. The two issues most closely associated with him are homosexuality and synodality. On the former, he supports the blessing of same-sex unions and even the ordination of homosexual men into the priesthood. On the latter, he pioneered the controversial German Synodal Way, which is a process by which the German Bishops' Conference held open meetings with their parishes to discuss issues that affected the church. While the meetings were initially to address sexual abuse the forums expanded to discuss same-sex couples, ordination of women, and revision to dogma.⁴⁷



His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

João Braz de Aviz

Prefect Emeritus of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life

Nationality: Brazilian

Type: Emeritus

Brazilian-born Cardinal de Aviz was a key player in the Curia during his tenure from 2011 to 2024. First ordained in 1972 and later the Auxiliary Bishop of Vitória in 1994, de Aviz was made Archbishop of Brasília in 2004. Then-Archbishop de Aviz was appointed to the Cardinalate by Benedict XVI in 2012 and as Prefect of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life. Within the Curia, de Aviz is known for his vocal advocacy of the role of women within the Church. While a diocesan bishop in Ponta Grossa his female flock grew substantially, and he spoke against the “dominance” that men hold in the church over women. He additionally supports restricting the *Vetus Ordo* (Old Latin Mass) and reforms to the institutions of power in the Church to increase inclusivity, accessibility, and accountability. It is for these reasons he is considered a **progressive** in the Curia and a relative moderate among those due to his focus being on one particular issue rather than being vocally progressive on all issues.⁴⁸



⁴⁷ [Cardinal Reinhard Marx - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

⁴⁸ [Cardinal João Braz de Aviz - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

His Eminence Cardinal-Priest

Rainer Woelki

Metropolitan Archbishop of Cologne

Nationality: German

Type: Diocesan

Cardinal Woelki walks two worlds in more ways than one. His family was expelled from Prussia after World War II and settled in Mülheim, in the Ruhr Valley. He joined the priesthood and was ordained in 1985. In 2003 he was made Auxiliary Bishop of Cologne, then Archbishop of Berlin in 2011. A year later, his fellow German Pope Benedict XVI made him a cardinal. The new Pope, Francis, transferred Woelki from Berlin to Cologne in 2014.



Woelki has held to a fairly traditional course, and is considered a **conservative**. He leads German opposition to the German Synodal Way, but sympathizes with many of Francis’s policies especially with respect to religious tolerance and migration. On doctrinal issues Woelki’s conservatism becomes evident with his opposition to homosexual blessings, female ordination, or revisions to contraception dogma. A careful theologian, Woelki could emerge as a moderate compromise candidate with respect for tradition.⁴⁹

His Eminence Cardinal-Deacon

José Tolentino de Mendonça

Prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education

Nationality: Portuguese

Type: Curial

Only 60 years old, Cardinal Tolentino de Mendonça was born and raised in Portuguese Angola during the colonial period and fled to the metropole with his family at only 10 years old. An academic for much of his career, Tolentino studied in Madeira, Lisbon, and Rome. Tolentino served in ecclesiastical roles at the same time as his professorships across the world, notably at the National Secretariat for Culture in Portugal from 2004 to 2010. In 2018, he was promoted to archbishop and made archivist of the Vatican Church. Just a year later, he was appointed to the cardinalate and the staff of several dicasteries. In 2022 he was made Prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education. With controversial, if not outright heretical, opinions, Tolentino is possibly the most **progressive** cardinal at this conclave. Homosexuality is the issue on which Tolentino is the most outspoken. Some of his allies even support abortion, same-sex marriage, ordination of women, and adoption by same-sex couples. He is known as a modernist and capable administrator, and though his positions are heterodox and controversial, his abilities could see him unify the support of the progressives.⁵⁰



⁴⁹ [Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

⁵⁰ [Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça - The College of Cardinals Report](#)

Appendix

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSI DOMINICI GREGIS

https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_2202_1996_universi-dominici-gregis.html

APPENDIX B

Papal Names in Latin and English, with symbolic meaning and connotation of previous holder.

| Latin | English | # | Connotation |
|--------------------|----------|----|--|
| <i>Ioannes</i> | John | 23 | Apostolic focus: belief in mercy and openness. Most recent: John XXIII (d.1963), remembered for modernization of the church and openness. |
| <i>Gregorius</i> | Gregory | 16 | Authority focus: liturgical concerns and morality. Most recent: Gregory XVI (d.1846), a conservative who opposed modernism but focused on doctrine. |
| <i>Benedictus</i> | Benedict | 16 | Traditional focus: focuses on spirituality and intellectualism. Most recent: Benedict XVI (r. 2013), theologian and syncretic thinker of faith and reason. |
| <i>Clemens</i> | Clement | 14 | Diplomatic focus: administrative concerns and stability. Most recent: Clement XIV (d.1774), attempted to reconcile with independently-minded Catholic monarchs. |
| <i>Leo</i> | Leo | 13 | Social focus: connected to social justice and poor advocacy. Most recent: Leo XIII (d.1903), remembered for <i>Rerum Novarum</i> and promulgation of social justice doctrines. |
| <i>Innocentius</i> | Innocent | 13 | Moral focus: priority on being moral and righteous. Most recent: Innocent XIII (d.1724), a reformist pope who sought to maintain moral authority amidst the Enlightenment. |
| <i>Pius</i> | Pius | 12 | Traditional focus: anti-secular and firm faith. Most recent: Pius XII (d.1958), reigned during WWII and focused on faith in opposition to communism and liberalism. |
| <i>Stephanus</i> | Stephen | 9 | Pastoral focus: signifies a church that focuses on preaching. Most recent: Stephen IX (d.1058), a major anti-corruption and reformer pope, sought to eradicate simony. |
| <i>Bonifatius</i> | Boniface | 9 | Benefactorial focus: priority on doing social and public good. Most recent: Boniface IX (d.1404), as a shrewd politician he re-conquered the Papal States and navigated reformism. |

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| <i>Urbanus</i> | Urban | 8 | Reformist focus: ecumenism, anti-corruption, public works. Most recent: Urbanus VIII (d.1644), major patron of the arts and expanded the Papal States. Also tried Galileo. |
| <i>Alexander</i> | Alexander | 8 | Modernizing focus: strong central leadership in organization. Most recent: Alexander VIII (d.1691), remembered for his generosity and attempts to preserve church finances. |
| <i>Hadrianus</i> | Adrian | 6 | Reformist focus: indicates willingness for institutional change. Most recent: Adrian VI (d.1523), refused to compromise on theology but compromised on institutions during Reformation. |
| <i>Paulus</i> | Paul | 6 | Evangelical focus: broad missionary work and modernization. Most recent: Paul VI (d.1978), finished Vatican II Conference and shifted focus of church to the poor in the Third World. |
| <i>Caelestinus</i> | Celestine | 5 | Spiritual focus: distance from earthly and tangible affairs. Most recent: Celestine V (d.1296), a monk who resigned after five months as Pope, desiring humble pastoralism. |
| <i>Nicolaus</i> | Nicholas | 5 | Ecumenical focus: reconciliation with other Christians. Most recent: Nicholas V (d.1455), major patron of the arts and helped shape the Renaissance. Built major public works. |
| <i>Xystus</i> | Sixtus | 5 | Constructive focus: supporting public works and social justice. Most recent: Sixtus V (d.1590), major anti-corruption campaigns and massive rebuilding projects in Rome. |
| <i>Anastasius</i> | Anastasius | 4 | Revitalization focus: renewal of church values and vitality. Most recent: Anastasius IV (d.1154), settled major disputes with the Holy Roman Empire and England. |
| <i>Eugenius</i> | Eugene | 4 | Intellectual focus: internal church debates and scholarship. Most recent: Eugene IV (d.1447), Opposed slavery and anti-semitism, mediated Spanish-Portuguese colonial disputes. |
| <i>Honorius</i> | Honorius | 4 | Evangelical focus: broad missionary work and modernization. Most recent: Honorius IV (d.1287), negotiated political and military tensions in southern Italy, elected unanimously. |
| <i>Sergius</i> | Sergius | 4 | Proselytizing focus: strict doctrine and aggressive missionary. Most recent: Sergius IV (d.1012), pursued charity during famines in Rome. |