

# ELECTION OF A POPE

## Who is the pope?

The pope is the leader of the Church all over the world. The word *pope* means “father.” Our most recent pope was Pope Francis. When a pope goes to Heaven, another pope needs to be chosen.



## What is the conclave?

It is the process for electing the pope. Cardinals, helpers of the pope around the world, gather in Vatican City in the country of Italy to choose the new pope. When the cardinals are together, they walk in line into the Sistine Chapel singing “Come, Holy Spirit.” The cardinals pray to the Holy Spirit for assistance in electing the next pope.

## What happens in the conclave?

For the conclave, all the windows are covered so no one can look inside. All the doors are shut so no one except the cardinals may come into the chapel. The Swiss Guards, the security guards of the pope, stand outside the door so no one may enter. During the conclave, cardinals may not use their phones, computers, or the internet. They talk to each other and pray. Many people gather outside in Saint Peter’s Square to pray for the cardinals. Catholics around the world pray and wait for news.



## How do cardinals vote?

When the cardinals vote, they vote on a paper. The votes are counted slowly and prayerfully.

A stove with a chimney is placed in the Sistine Chapel. After each cardinal writes his vote on a piece of paper, the stove is used to burn the papers from the votes. If no one has enough votes, the papers are burned with something that makes black smoke. The black smoke that goes up the chimney means the cardinals have not made a decision. It is what people gathered outside see to know if a pope has been chosen or not. The cardinals continue this process of talking to each other, praying, and voting until a new pope is elected.

When a pope is finally chosen, the papers are burned with something that makes white smoke. When the white smoke goes up the chimney, the crowd gathered outside cheers. The Vatican announces: We have a pope! Then, the new pope goes to the balcony of Saint’s Peter Basilica to be introduced as the new pope of the Church, greet the people, and give a special blessing.

## What can we do?

The conclave is a process that can take a day or several days. During this process, we are called to pray to the Holy Spirit to help the cardinals choose the pope. We can also thank God for the service of Pope Francis to the Church and pray for the next pope, so that he may guide the Church with wisdom, humility, and love.

