

ELECTION OF A POPE



RCL Benziger

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The Leadership of the Pope

The pope is the leader of the Church all over the world. The word *pope* comes from the Latin word that means “papa.” The pope is sometimes called the Holy Father. The pope has the same job in the Church that Jesus gave to Saint Peter.



Our most recent pope was Pope Francis. After his passing, cardinals from around the world will go through a process called the conclave.

The Conclave

A conclave is the process for electing the pope. Cardinals from around the world gather in Vatican City to elect, with the help of the Holy Spirit, who the new pope will be. To begin the conclave, the cardinals 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.

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 stand outside the door so no one may enter. The cardinals may not use their phones or 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.

The Voting Process

When the cardinals vote, they vote on a paper ballot. Only cardinals under the age of 80 vote. Each cardinal writes the name of one of the cardinals on a ballot who he thinks will be the best pope to lead the Catholic Church. Then the cardinals take their ballots up to the altar in the chapel. Each cardinal prays and then places his ballot in a basket. The ballots 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, they burn the papers with chemicals that make black smoke. The black smoke that goes up the chimney means the cardinals have not made a decision. They continue this process of talking to each other, praying, and voting until a new pope is elected.

When a cardinal has enough votes to be elected pope, the cardinal is asked if he accepts the election as pope. If he accepts, he chooses the name he will take.

When a pope is finally elected, the papers are burned with a different chemical. White smoke goes up the chimney. The crowd cheers. The Vatican announces in Latin *Habemus Papam*: We have a pope! Then, after praying in the chapel, 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 to give a special blessing.



Our Role and Participation

The conclave is a process that can last a day or several days. During this process, we are called to pray for the cardinals as they choose the new leader of the Church. Let us join them in praying to the Holy Spirit to assist them as they pray and vote to choose the next pope. Let us 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.

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