

Inside the 2025 Papal Conclave: meet the Cardinal Electors

Pedro Esteva

The papal conclave of 2025 will begin following the passing of Pope Francis, whose 12-year papacy profoundly shaped the Catholic Church. The conclave, expected to take place in early May, faces the difficult task of selecting a successor—one who must navigate a diverse Church and lead it through a complex global landscape marked by various crises and social debates.

The election process, though shrouded in secrecy, is well-documented and carefully structured by centuries-old rules, with a few modern updates. Of the 252 active

cardinals, only 135 are eligible to vote for the next pope.

While any Catholic male who has “reached the age of reason” could theoretically be chosen, no one outside of the College of Cardinals has been elected to the papacy since the late 1300s. It makes sense—who better to lead the Church than someone familiar with the complexities of the papacy?

Secrecy and privacy are the chief cornerstones of the conclave. Cardinals are enclosed in the Sistine Chapel and adjacent areas, all sealed off to prevent external influence. Communication with the outside world is strictly forbidden. The Vatican employs signal jammers to block transmissions, and thorough secu-

rity sweeps are conducted to ensure no surveillance devices are present.

Ballots are counted and burned each day to maintain secrecy. If no pope is elected, black smoke rises from the Sistine Chapel chimney. White smoke signals the successful election of a new pope. A two-thirds majority is required for election, as reinstated by Pope Benedict XVI in *Normas Nonnullas*. Once a candidate achieves the required majority, he is asked if he accepts the election. Upon acceptance, he becomes pope and selects a papal name before being publicly announced.

The 2025 conclave is not just about electing a new leader; it will shape the future direction

of the Church. Will the next pope continue Pope Francis's legacy or go another direction?

Prof. Kurt Martens, expert in canon law, noted, “History shows a trend of cardinals electing a candidate ‘to correct’ some aspect of the last pope’s pontificate. After a short pope, we have a tall pope. After a thin pope, we have a fat pope. After an intellectual, we have more of a pastoral person.” But he added, “There are no hard and fast rules.”

However, concerns have been raised that the Church risks a schism if an ‘orthodox’ leader is not chosen. As Cardinal Gerhard Müller warned, “The new pope must be orthodox—not a liberal nor a conservative.” He emphasised,

“The question is not between conservatives and liberals but between orthodoxy and heresy,” stressing the responsibility the cardinals bear. “I hope cardinals are not so influenced by what they are reading in the headlines.”

Cardinal Pablo Virgilio David offers a different perspective, cautioning against viewing the conclave as a political election. “There are no candidates in a conclave... No one will give dole-outs. No one will mount a campaign,” he said. “The conclave is a retreat where we must pray and discern not whom we want to elect, but whom the Lord wants to succeed Pope Francis.”

The media frenzy, fuelled by both faithful Catholics and

secular onlookers, has turned the election into a spectacle of speculation. But Cardinal Müller cautioned, the conclave is not a “power game” played by “stupid people looking to manipulate,” as depicted in films like *Conclave* (2024). Prof. Martens echoed this, emphasising, “The cardinals have done their homework. They know their duty starts the moment they receive their red hats.”

Regardless of the speculations, we can only pray that the Holy Spirit guides the cardinals in their momentous task.

With this in mind, we now turn our attention to the cardinal electors, whose choices will shape the future of the Church.



Pietro Parolin - Italy - 70



Fernando Filoni - Italy - 79



Robert Francis Prevost
OSA. - US - 69



Luis Antonio Tagle -
Philippines - 67



Louis Raphaël I Sako - Iraq
- 76



Peter Turkson - Ghana - 76



Josip Bozanić - Croatia - 76



Philippe Barbarin - France
- 74



Péter Erdő - Hungary - 72



Stanisław Ryłko - Poland
- 79



Francisco Robles Ortega -
Mexico - 76



Daniel DiNardo - US - 75



Odilo Scherer - Brazil - 75



John Njue - Kenya - 79



Robert Sarah - Guinea - 79



Raymond Leo Burke - US
- 76



Kurt Koch - Switzerland -
75



Kazimierz Nycz - Poland
- 75



Malcolm Ranjith - Sri
Lanka - 77



Reinhard Marx - Germany
- 71



João Braz de Aviz - Brazil
- 77



Thomas Collins - Canada
- 78



Wim Eijk - Netherlands - 71



Giuseppe Betori - Italy - 78



Timothy M Dolan - US - 75



Ranier Woelki - Germany
- 68



James Michael Harvey - US
- 75



Baselios Cleemis - India -
65



Gerhard Ludwig Muller -
Germany - 77



Vincent Nichols - UK - 79



Leopoldo Brenes -
Nicaragua - 76



Gérald Lacroix ISPX -
Canada - 67



Jean-Pierre Kutwa - Côte
d'Ivoire - 79



Orani João Tempesta Ocist.
- Brazil - 74



Mario Aurelio Poli -
Argentina - 77



Philippe Ouédraogo -
Burkina Faso - 79



Chibly Langlois - Haiti - 66



Manuel Clemente - Portugal
- 76



Berhaneyesus Demerew
Souraphiel CM. - Ethiopia
- 76



John Dew - New Zealand
- 76



Charles Maung Bo SDB. -
Myanmar - 76



Kriengsak Kovitvanit -
Thailand - 75



Francesco Montenegro -
Italy - 78



Daniel Sturla SDB. -
Uruguay - 65



Arlindo Gomes Furtado -
Cape Verde - 75



Soane Patita Paini Mafi -
Tonga - 63



Dieudonné
Nzapalainga CSSp. - Central
African Republic - 58



Carlos Osoro Sierra - Spain
- 79



Sérgio da Rocha - Brazil -
65



Blase J. Cupich - US - 76



Jozef De Kesel - Belgium
- 77



Carlos Aguiar Retes -
Mexico - 75



John Ribat MSC. - Papua
New Guinea - 68



Joseph W. Tobin CSSr. -
US - 72



Juan José Omella - Spain
- 79



Anders Arborelius OCD. -
Sweden - 75



Angelo De Donatis - Italy
- 71



Joseph Coutts - Pakistan
- 79



António Marto - Portugal
- 77



Désiré Tsarahazana -
Madagascar - 70



Giuseppe Petrocchi - Italy
- 76



Thomas Aquino Manyo
Maeda - Japan - 76



Ignatius Suharyo
Hardjoatmodjo - Indonesia
- 74



Juan García Rodríguez -
Cuba - 76



Fridolin Ambongo
Besungu OFMCap. -
Democratic Republic of
Congo - 65



Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ. -
Luxembourg - 66



Álvaro Leonel Ramazzini
Imeri - Guatemala - 77



Matteo Zuppi - Italy - 69



Cristóbal López
Romero SDB. - Morocco - 72



Antoine Kambanda -
Rwanda - 66



Wilton Daniel Gregory - US
- 77



Jose Advincula OP. -
Philippines - 73



Augusto Paolo Lojudice - Italy - 60



Jean-Marc Aveline - France - 66



Peter Okpaleke - Nigeria - 62



Leonardo Ulrich Steiner OFM. - Brazil - 74



Filipe Neri Ferrão - India - 72



Robert W. McElroy - US - 71



Virgílio do Carmo da Silva SDB. - Timor-Leste - 57



Oscar Cantoni - Italy - 74



Anthony Poola - India - 63



Paulo Cezar Costa - Brazil - 57



William Goh - Singapore - 67



Adalberto Martínez Flores - Paraguay - 73



Giorgio Marengo IMC. - Mongolia - 50



Pierbattista Pizzaballa OFM. - Jerusalem - 60



Stephen Brislin - South Africa - 68



Ángel Sixto Rossi SJ. - Argentina - 66



Luis José Rueda Aparicio - Colombia - 63



Grzegorz Ryś - Poland - 61



Stephen Ameyu Martin Mulla - South Sudan - 61



José Cobo Cano - Spain - 59



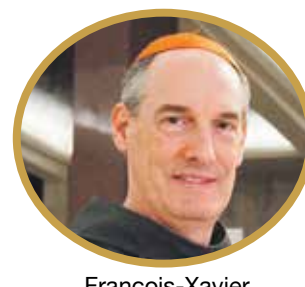
Protase Rugambwa - Tanzania - 64



Sebastian Francis - Malaysia - 73



Stephen Chow Sau-yan SJ. - Hong Kong - 65



François-Xavier Bustillo OFMConv. - France - 56



Américo Aguiar - Portugal - 51



Carlos Castillo Mattasoglio - Peru - 75



Vicente Bokalic Iglic CM. - Argentina - 72



Luis Cabrera Herrera OFM. - Ecuador - 69



Fernando Chomalí Garib - Chile - 68



Tarcisio Isao Kikuchi SVD. - Japan - 66



Pablo Virgilio David - Philippines - 66



Ladislav Nemet SVD. - Serbia - 68



Jaime Spengler OFM. - Brazil - 64



Ignace Bessi Dogbo - Côte d'Ivoire - 63



Jean-Paul Vesco OP. - Algeria - 63



Dominique Mathieu OFMConv. - Iran - 61



Roberto Repole - Italy - 58



Baldassare Reina - Italy - 54



Frank Leo - Canada - 53



Mykola Bychok CSSR. - Australia - 45



Domenico Battaglia - Italy - 62



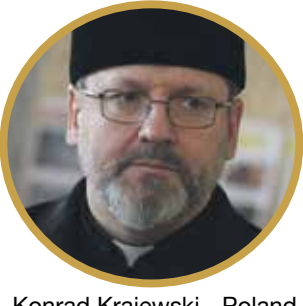
Dominique Mamberti - France - 73



Mario Zenari - Italy - 79



Kevin Farrell - US - 77



Konrad Krajewski - Poland - 61



José Tolentino de Mendonça - Portugal - 59



Michael Czerny S.J. - Canada - 78



Mario Grech - Malta - 68



Marcello Semeraro - Italy - 77



Mauro Gambetti OFMConv. - Italy - 59



Arthur Roche - UK - 75



Lazarus You Heung-sik - South Korea - 73



Claudio Gugerotti - Italy - 69



Víctor Manuel Fernández - Argentina - 62



Emil Paul Tscherrig - Switzerland - 78



Christophe Pierre - France - 79



Ángel Fernández Artime SDB. - Spain - 64



Rolandas Makrickas - Lithuania - 53



Timothy Radcliffe O.P. - UK - 79



Fabio Baggio C.S. - Italy - 60



George Koovakad - India - 51

