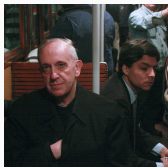


Pope Francis I 1936 - 2025

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

WHO WAS POPE FRANCIS?



Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1936. Fr Jorge grew up in a working-class family, the son of Italian immigrant and trained as a chemist before deciding to become a priest. He joined the Jesuits, a religious order known for their work in education and social justice. He was made a bishop in 1992 and later became Archbishop of Buenos Aires. Bishop Bergoglio was known for living simply and preferred commuting by bus so he could be alongside the people he served. In 2001, he was made a cardinal by Pope John Paul II who recognised his humility and wisdom.

In 2013, after the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Bergoglio was elected pope—the first ever from the Americas, and the first Jesuit to hold the role. He chose the name Francis after St Francis of Assisi, a saint known for peace, poverty, and care for creation. As pope, he focused on mercy, care for the environment, interfaith dialogue, and defending the dignity of the poor. He challenged the Church to listen more and love deeply telling journalists and Catholics “who am I to judge?” and that “the Church is a field hospital” about reaching people in need.



TIMELINE

The death of the pope

- Sede Vacante begins (“The seat is vacant”)
- The fisherman’s ring is broken
- An official period of mourning begins

Novendiales (official mourning period)

- Daily masses and prayers are said for the pope
- The pope’s body will lie in state for people to pay their respects

DAY 1

DAYS 1-9

DAY 5

Papal Funeral

- Usually occurring 4-6 days after the death of the pope
- Led by the Dean of the College of Cardinals
- Attended by Catholics and Leaders from around the globe

Preparations for conclave

- The cardinals meet together formally
- Preparations are made and a date is set
- The cardinals swear an oath of secrecy

DAY 10

DAY 15

Conclave

- Eligible cardinals gather in an official ceremony in the Sistine Chapel
- Only Cardinals younger than 80 years old can participate (138 of 252)
- They vote up to 4 times a day in a secret ballot
- A successful candidate must get 2/3rds of the votes
- The votes are burnt and the smoke tells the people outside of the result
- The shortest conclave was about 24 hours (St John Paul I) the longest was nearly 3 years (Pope Gregory XI)

Habemus Papam!

- White smoke tells the world a new pope has been elected
- A senior cardinal will declare “Habemus Papam” - “We have a Pope”
- The new pope will choose his papal name to reflect his values
- The new pope will give his first blessing “Ubi et Orbi” - “To the City and the World”

PAPAL FUNERAL

CATHOLIC FUNERALS ARE FULL OF SYMBOLS THAT REFLECT BELIEFS IN ETERNAL LIFE AND RESURRECTION. PAPAL FUNERALS ARE NO DIFFERENT, BUT ARE CONSIDERABLY RARER, SINCE THE INVENTION OF THE TELEVISION THERE HAVE ONLY BEEN 6: POPE FRANCIS WAS KNOWN FOR HIS HUMILITY AND A PREFERENCE TO LEAD A SIMPLE LIFE AND THIS MAY BE REFLECTED IN HIS FUNERAL.

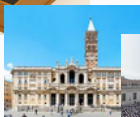
Triple coffin

Traditionally the pope is buried in three coffins, cypress, lead and oak with the papal name and symbols on a brass plaque. Pope Francis has requested to be buried in a Cypress and Zinc coffin, a simpler structure to represent his desire for a simpler life



Burial

Many popes are buried inside the crypt at St Peter’s basilica, where the first pope St Peter is also buried. However Pope Francis has chosen to be buried at Santa Maria Maggiore, one of the major papal basilicas and a place he regularly prayed. This is another break from tradition however it is a place close to his heart and other popes have chosen to be buried there.



Lying in state

The pope’s body will be placed in St Peter’s basilica for people to pay their final respects. It is usually raised on a catafalque however Pope Francis has asked that he remain in his coffin with the lid off.



Papal Rogito

Before the coffin is sealed, a scroll listing the pope’s life, achievements, and key moments is placed inside. It is a final tribute recording how he served the Church. This links to the symbolism of the scroll that St Peter holds.

World Leaders

Leaders from around the world will join with Catholics to celebrate the life of Pope Francis. This is a recognition of the fact that Catholicism is spread across the world as well as Pope Francis’ work to unite people.



CONCLAVE: ELECTING A NEW POPE

“What does conclave mean?”

The word conclave means “with a key” – because when the cardinals gather to elect a new pope, they are literally locked into the Sistine Chapel until they make a decision.

How does the voting work?

Before voting begins, there is a special Mass and a solemn oath of secrecy. The cardinals swear to vote in good conscience, not to campaign, and not to reveal anything said during the conclave. Each cardinal writes the name of their chosen candidate on a paper ballot and places it on a plate, tipping it into a chalice. There can be up to four votes per day. To be elected pope, a cardinal must receive a two-thirds majority. When voting is finished the papers are burnt and the smoke tells those who are watching of the outcome.

Why are they locked in?

The cardinals are not allowed contact with the outside world – no phones, news, or email. This helps them focus on their task, prayer, reflection, and discussion without pressure. It also protects the decision from outside influence.

Why is the conclave held in the Sistine Chapel?

There is no specific reason why it HAS to be held in the Sistine Chapel. However it is one of the most sacred spaces in the Church. Underneath Michelangelo’s famous ceiling depicting important stories from the bible it reminds the cardinals that the decision they are making is spiritual, not political.

Who can vote?

Only cardinals under the age of 80 may vote. This means that of the 252 cardinals only 138 are eligible for election. Pope Francis’ appointments means there are more African (18) and South American (18) cardinals than ever before.

How do we find out?

Since the 1400s smoke has been used to tell the people of the world a vote has taken place. In the 1900s chemical were added to make the outcome obvious. Black smoke means a vote has not found a majority. White smoke tells the world we have a new pope.

A NEW POPE

IN THEORY ANY BAPTISED CATHOLIC MALE CAN BE ELECTED POPE (IF ALL THE CARDINALS AGREE). HOWEVER, THEY HAVE TRADITIONALLY ALWAYS CHOSEN FROM AMONGST THE COLLEGE OF CARDINALS, THE MOST SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE MAGISTERIUM. CARDINALS ARE INVITED TO PRAY AND REFLECT ON THE NEEDS OF THE CHURCH AND BE INSPIRED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO CHOOSE THE NEW “SERVANT TO THE SERVANTS OF GOD”. POPE FRANCIS WAS THE FIRST POPE FROM OUTSIDE EUROPE IN 1300 YEARS, COULD HIS SUCCESSOR BE SIMILARLY GROUND BREAKING?



Cardinal Pietro Parolin
(Italy, Age 70)

Cardinal Parolin works as the Pope’s top diplomat, helping manage the Church’s international relationships. He has years of experience working for the Vatican overseas and plays an important role in guiding how the Church responds to global events.



Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle
(Philippines, Age 67)

Based in Rome, Cardinal Tagle helps lead the Church’s work in spreading the Gospel around the world. He is also known for leading Caritas, the Church’s international aid and charity organisation. He was previously the Archbishop of Manila.



Cardinal Peter Turkson
(Ghana, Age 76)

Cardinal Turkson has worked in Rome on issues like climate change, poverty, and peace. He was Archbishop of Cape Coast in Ghana and is one of Africa’s most well-known Church leaders, speaking often on global justice and development.



Cardinal Péter Erdő
(Hungary, Age 72)

The leader of the Church in Hungary Cardinal Erdő is known for his background in Church law and theology. He has helped coordinate the Catholic Church across Europe and brings experience from a region where religion faced years of communist suppression.



Cardinal Vincent Nichols
(United Kingdom, Age 79)

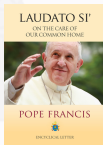
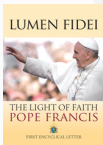
Cardinal Nichols is the leader of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. He has been a bishop since 1992 and often speaks about education and the role of religion in the modern world. His election would mean the first English pope since the 12th Century.

THE LEGACY OF POPE FRANCIS

Lumen Fidei (2013)

The Light of Faith

His first encyclical completed from a draft by his predecessor, Lumen Fidei explores how faith brings meaning to our lives. He reminds us that “faith is not a light which scatters all our darkness, but a lamp which guides our steps in the night.” In a world full of noise and confusion, Francis encourages us to let faith shape our choices, to trust God’s presence in hard times, and to seek truth in community with others.



Laudato Si' (2015)

On Care for Our Common Home

Pope Francis urged the world to face the truth about climate change and environmental destruction. He

reminded us that the Earth “is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth,” especially in the eyes of the poor and vulnerable. He challenged all people—not just Catholics—to see caring for creation as a spiritual and moral duty. This letter should inspire us to live more simply, reduce waste, and act with urgency to protect our earth.

Laudate Deum (2023)

A Cry for Urgent Action

A follow-up to Laudato Si’, this shorter encyclical was written in response to the worsening climate crisis. Pope Francis speaks with urgency and disappointment, warning that “our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing.” He calls on leaders to act, but also on ordinary people to change their habits, use their voices, and stay hopeful. This letter is a reminder that hope must always lead to action.



Fratelli Tutti (2020)

On Fraternity and Social Friendship

Written during the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, Fratelli Tutti called for a new vision of humanity based on solidarity, dialogue, and kindness. Pope Francis invites us to “dream... as a single human family,” setting aside what divides us to focus on what unites us. The encyclical challenges us to be peacemakers in our homes, schools, and communities—reaching out to the lonely, confronting racism, and choosing friendship over fear.