

## Pope names 16 new cardinals, from 12 countries and all continents



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Francis will create 16 new cardinal electors on February 22, and give red hats to 3 who are over the age of 80 that cannot vote in a conclave. Five are from “the peripheries”. His first consistory shows he is beginning a process to limit significantly the number of electors from Europe and the Roman Curia.

Pope Francis sprung some big surprises today when he announced the names of the 19 new cardinals that he will create on 22 February. They come from fifteen countries, including some of the poorest countries in the world, and all five continents.

Sixteen are cardinal electors with a right to vote in a conclave, among them are 6 Europeans (including 4 Italians), 5 Latin Americans, 2 Africans, 2 Asians and 1 North American (from Canada).

Significantly, twelve of are residential bishops that currently govern a diocese. The other 3 cardinals are over the age of 80 and so cannot vote in a conclave.

Five notable hallmarks distinguish this first batch of cardinals named by the Argentinean Pope: universality, attention to the peripheries of the world, and a break with the tradition of giving the red hat to the heads of 8 major Italian dioceses.

Universality is the first hallmark. The 16 new cardinal electors come from all five continents: 6 from Europe, 5 from Latin and Central America, 2 from Asia, 2 from Africa, and 1 from North America (Canada).

The second hallmark is a distinguishing aspect of this pontificate: attention to countries and peoples on the peripheries of the world that suffer from poverty, diseases, violence, natural disasters, and for whom life is a daily struggle. 5 of the new cardinals (including 4 electors) come from Haiti, the Antilles, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, the Philippines. Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the Americas, often hit by violence and natural disaster. Nicaragua is also among the poorest countries in the Americas, and struggling with political tensions. The Antilles are islands in the Caribbean, where so many live on the bare minimum. Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in Africa. The Ivory Coast has been plagued by civil war, internal strife and much poverty. The Philippines suffers from widespread poverty, natural disasters and the conflict in Mindanao. Both Haiti and the Antilles have never had a cardinal before.

Another particularly striking aspect is the Pope's decision to break with the tradition that the heads of the nine major Italian dioceses should be cardinals. Since the Lateran Pacts in 1929, it was customary to assign red hats to the archbishops of nine major Italian sees beginning with Rome and, in descending order by reason of the number of faithful, Milan, Turin, Naples, Palermo, Bologna, Florence, Genoa, and Venice. That is no longer the case.

Pope Francis by-passed Turin and Venice, and gave a red hat instead to the archbishop of Perugia, Gualtiero Bassetti, vice president of the Italian bishop's conference, a pastoral, meek and prayerful man, the qualities the Pope likes in a bishop. It's interesting to note that the last archbishop of Perugia to be given a red hat was Gioacchino Pecci, the future Pope Leo XIII, in 1853.

A fourth significant feature is that Pope Francis has kept the new European electors to a minimum. Four hold senior positions in the Roman Curia and will receive the red hat: Parolin (Italy) – the Secretary of State; Baldisseri (Italy) - Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, a body the Pope wants to strengthen with a view to developing synodality in the Church; Muller (Germany) – the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, a man that is very close to Benedict XVI who

appointed him to this post in July 2012; Stella (Italy) –the Prefect of the Congregation for Clergy.

In this context, the choice of the two other European electors stands out: Nichols of Westminster (England) and Bassetti of Perugia (Italy), both of whom he appointed to the Congregation for Bishops earlier in the month.

The fifth significant aspect of the list is that the Pope did not give a red hat to any of the Presidents of the Pontifical Councils as had been the practice in recent decades, nor did he give one to the Prefect of the Vatican Library and Archives. In this way he is diminishing future expectations in the Roman Curia, and putting a curb on careerism.

It came as no surprise that the Argentinean Pope gave five red hats to Latin and Central America, where more than 40% of the Catholics of the world live. As expected he gave one to his successor in Buenos Aires, Mario Poli, and to the archbishop of Rio de Janeiro, Orani Joao Tempesta who hosted the World Youth Day last year. He also recognized the archbishop of Santiago del Chile, Ricardo Ezzati Andrello, and the archbishop of Managua, Leopold Brenes Solorzano. But he surprised again by naming as cardinal, Chibly Langois, the bishop of Les Cayes and President of the Haitian Bishops' Conference.

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