

Faith in Five – Adults
The Roman Catholic Church/The Pope
July 1, 2022

1. **Why are we called Roman Catholics?** The term catholic means universal; church is an assembly of the faithful. The Catholic Church refers to the body of people who profess the same belief – creed, sacraments and hierarchy defined by the Magisterium, the teaching authority of the Church. Those baptized by the Latin Rite, who follow the traditions and customs of the Roman catholic church are referred to as Roman Catholic.
2. The churches in Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem were formed in the Greek East by Andrew, Mark, Peter, and James, respectively. Peter also founded the Church of Rome in the Latin West. During the beginning of the Middle Ages, conflicts arose between Rome and Constantinople, due to differences in liturgy and language. These religious disagreements along with political conflicts led to a break in relations between the church of Constantinople and the church of Rome in 1054. The Great Schism, also called the East-West Schism, divided Christendom into Western (Latin) and Eastern (Greek) branches, which then became the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. Over time and into the twentieth century, some Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches reconciled with the Roman Catholic Church. This established the Eastern Catholic Churches to be in full communion with the Holy See, while still liturgically and hierarchically distinct from it. [Image source](#)



3. Hierarchy of the Church



What is the Holy See?

'Holy See' means the seat or office of the bishop of Rome, the Pope. The Holy See is the universal government of the Catholic Church and operates from Vatican City State, a sovereign, independent territory.

The word pope comes from the Italian 'papa'. Some titles of the pope include "his Holiness", "Bishop of Rome", "Vicar of Christ", "Successor of the Prince of the Apostles".

4. **What is the responsibility of the pope?** The pope is the head of state of Vatican City and of the Church. He is the spiritual leader and representative of the Catholic Church. The pope defines all issues related to faith and morality. It is a position held for life or concluded upon a resignation. Being both the head of the state and the Church, the Pope's duties involve religious, political and moral obligations.
5. **What are the qualifications to be pope?** Any baptized Catholic male is canonically eligible to be elected. They must at a minimum, be an ordained bishop. One who is not yet a bishop (and the Church has elected several non-bishops to the papacy) can accept election but must be immediately become a consecrated bishop. The pope should be multi-lingual: he should be able to speak Italian as it is the language of Rome and the Vatican Curia. English and Spanish are ideal since it is the language of so many.
6. **How is a pope elected?** The apostolic constitution, [Universi Dominici Gregis](#) contains all of the details related to the election of the Roman Pontiff.

After the death of a pope, there is a 15-day period to celebrate the funeral Mass and burial of the pope, as well as a period of mourning. Unless there are special reasons, the deceased Pope is to be buried between the fourth and sixth day after death. The Cardinal Camerlengo (a cardinal appointed treasurer of the Holy See), verifies and declares the death of the pope formally, notifying a series of officials in Rome and the College of Cardinals. The camerlengo takes possession of the Ring of the Fisherman, the symbol of papal authority. The ring and the papal seal are destroyed before the College of Cardinals.

7. At least fifteen days after the death of the Pope and not more than twenty, the Cardinals assemble at the Vatican to participate in the papal conclave, organized by the Camerlengo. In 1970, Pope Paul VI established that only those Cardinals eighty years of age and younger would be granted voting privileges (called cardinal electors); in 1975, he established the maximum number of cardinal electors to 120.
8. **The Holy Mass is celebrated on the first day of the conclave** at St. Peter's Basilica. Deliberations are conducted in the Pauline Chapel where the Holy Spirit is invoked for guidance. The cardinal electors proceed to the Sistine Chapel where balloting takes place behind locked doors. Pope St. John Paul II decreed in his *Universi Dominici Gregis* that the "election take place in the Sistine Chapel, where everything is conducive to an awareness of the presence of God, in whose sight each person will one day be judged. (UDG, Intro)". The time in the chapel is for silent voting and prayer. The conclave operates with utmost secrecy and no outside interaction or interference. All forms of communication with the outside are removed. Up to four rounds of balloting are taken every day until a candidate receives a two-thirds majority of the vote.

Each cardinal elector approaches the altar one-by-one prayerfully and with ballot in hand. These ballots are placed in a special urn. The ballots are handled very formally by scrutineers (vote counters), infirmarii (cardinals who collect ballots of any cardinals too sick to participate in the conclave) and revisers (who review the work done by the scrutineers). Each morning and afternoon, new scrutineers, infirmarii and revisers are chosen by lot.

The ballots and notes are burned unless another vote is needed. Special chemicals are used to create a black or white smoke. If a new pope has not been elected, the ballots are burned with a chemical to cause black smoke. When the majority 2/3 votes have been met, the count is certified, ballots and notes are burned, and white smoke is emitted to alert the awaiting crowd outside.

When a new pope is elected, the Dean of the College of Cardinals asks the consent of the elected. If the person accepts, he is asked what name he wishes to be called. The cardinals make an act of homage and obedience to the new pope. The new pope enters the Room of Tears, a room next to the Sistine Chapel; a room aptly nicknamed due to the emotional acceptance and enormity of what is to come. The new pope dons his pontifical robes at this time. The senior Cardinal Deacon announces to the people in the piazza, 'Habemus Papam' (We have a Pope)! The Pope appears at the balcony and imparts the apostolic blessing for the first time as successor of St. Peter.

9. **Papal renunciation** –this is the papal resignation, the reigning pope voluntarily steps down as bishop of Rome. This happens rarely, though the last pope to resign was Pope Benedict XVI in 2013. The pope is known as pope emeritus.
10. **What is papal infallibility?** It is the Church's teaching that the pope, acting as supreme teacher and under certain conditions, cannot err when he teaches in matters of faith or morals. Without a guide or teacher, without a true witness, we are in danger of error. The

Magisterium is comprised of the pope and the bishops in union with him. The mission of the Magisterium is to “preach the Gospel and to ‘guarantee’... the profession and transmission of the true faith without error” (CCC 890). The grace of infallibility only applies to matters of faith and morals. When the pope teaches infallibly, it is after much prayer and the careful study of divine Revelation (Scripture and Tradition), as well as collaboration with his brother bishops.

11. **What is the purpose of praying for the pope’s intentions?** As a catholic community of believers, we unite with the Pope in prayerful support of his concerns for the Church, for the world, social injustices, and human dignity. According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Holy Father asks for our prayers for a specific intention each month. [The Pope’s Monthly Intentions for 2022 can be found on their site.](#)

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