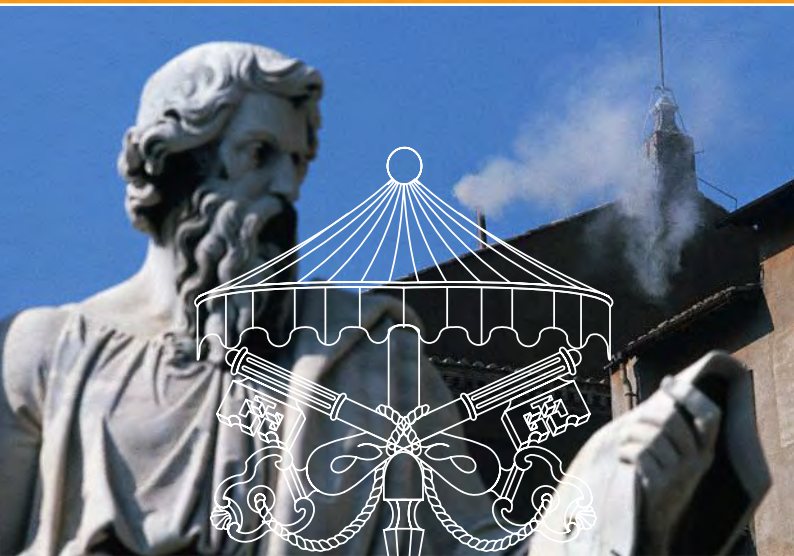


# CONCLAVE

STEP BY STEP THROUGH  
THE PAPAL INTERREGNUM



BY MONSIGNOR CHARLES BURNS

# Conclave

## Step by Step through the Papal Interregnum

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## Introduction

The Papacy is a dynasty: it claims to be an unbroken succession of Popes, onwards from the Apostle Peter in the first century of the Christian era, so is possibly the oldest institution surviving continuously to the present day.

Unlike royal dynasties, however, the next in line to the papacy is unknown until he is elected to the office. The election of a new Pope arouses interest worldwide, not only within the Roman Catholic Church, but indeed with many of other faiths and of none.

The public gaze will soon be focused on the Vatican, where the Cardinals assemble in seclusion to decide the succession. For centuries this has been termed the **Conclave**, derived from the Latin words *cum* and *clave*, meaning 'under-lock-and-key'. Literally they are locked in and others are locked out.

## Why such interest?

Who is the Pope that his death, or abdication of the role, and the choice of a successor should attract such attention? As Bishop of Rome he is the spiritual leader of millions of Catholics and acknowledged as a moral beacon by the secular world. The word '*Papa*', meaning 'Pope', is derived from the Greek word '*papas*' meaning 'father', the equivalent in English to 'papà'.

**The death of a Pope**, whether sudden and unpredicted, or preceded by infirmity and advanced age, does not cause a crisis, **nor would his free and clearly expressed resignation, which does not require to be accepted and confirmed by anyone.** In both these circumstances, procedures are in place to replace him. There are, however, no procedures for deposing an impaired, mentally deranged, senile, comatose, or a manifestly immoral one. **The papacy is vacated only by demise or renunciation.**

Over the course of the centuries it has been the duty of the Popes to enact laws providing for any normal eventuality that can arise during a vacancy or interregnum of this unique office.

The norms for a valid election to the papacy are set out in the Apostolic Constitution *Universi Dominici Gregis*,

dated 22 February 1996, published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*. The numbers given here within brackets refer to the relevant paragraphs to facilitate cross-checking with the official authentic text.<sup>1</sup>

The rules are the following and must be implemented and adhered to closely by the Grand Electors, it being their right and duty to ensure this due process of Canon Law by their personal oath of commitment.

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<sup>1</sup> It may be most easily consulted online at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apc\\_22021996\\_universi-dominici-gregis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_22021996_universi-dominici-gregis_en.html)

## Death of the Pope

The **Cardinal *Camerlengo*** (Chamberlain) **of the Holy Roman Church**, having verified the death of the Pope, and the requisite certificate having been signed, declares officially that the **Holy See is vacant** [17].

Maximum discretion will guarantee the privacy and respect for the corpse of the pontiff [30]. The late Pope's study and bedroom will be sealed off to prevent entry [17]; after the burial the entire papal apartment will be vacated and remain securely locked [31].

The Chamberlain informs the **Dean of the College of Cardinals**, the **Cardinal Vicar of Rome** and the **Cardinal Archbishop of St Peter's Basilica** in the Vatican of the Pope's death. He also assumes responsibility for the administration of the Vatican Palace, the Lateran Palace and the papal summer villa at Castel Gandolfo, overseeing their current expenditure, since it is his express duty to safeguard the possessions and temporal rights of the Holy See throughout the duration of the vacancy [17].

Until the valid election of a new Pope, the central government of the Catholic Church remains temporarily suspended [2]. A clear sign of this can be seen in the immediate destruction of the principal seals of office,

namely, the defacement of the inscription bearing the reigning Pope's name around the rim of the **matrix** of the **Fisherman's Ring**, his special signet ring, with an engraving of the miraculous catch of fish as its central motif, which is impressed to validate certain official enactments. Likewise the embossed heads of the Apostles Peter and Paul, on the obverse, and the Pope's name and ordinal number, on the reverse, forming the two sides of the **matrix** of the **lead seal** termed the **bull**, are also destroyed. The **bull** is attached to authenticate documents of major significance, such as the promulgation of the decrees of a General Council, of the Canonisation of Saints, as well as those of lesser but still significant importance, such as the letters of appointment or transfer of bishops. From this, the name 'papal bulls' is derived [13g].

During the interregnum, narrowly restricted powers are invested in the College of Cardinals to arrange the funeral of the deceased Pope, to make all appropriate preparations for the unhindered election of a successor, and to resolve matters arising not affecting the rights of the Holy See, but which in the majority opinion cannot be postponed [2, 6]. Jurisdiction over everything else remains reserved exclusively to the future Pope [1].

The **Cardinal Secretary of State**; the **Cardinal Prefects of the Congregations**, (the equivalent of cabinet ministers in a national government: there are nine in



all, with allocated responsibility for the Doctrine of the Faith, for the Oriental Churches, for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, for the Causes of Saints (preparing the evidence that may lead eventually to canonisation), for the Evangelisation of Peoples (to coordinate and finance the missionary work of the Catholic Church throughout the world), for the Clergy (including the formation in approved colleges and seminaries of suitable candidates for ordination to the priesthood), for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (which are male and female religious communities living under vows), and for Catholic Education (extending from schools to universities)); the eleven **Archbishop Presidents of the Pontifical Councils**, which care for the Laity, for the Promotion of Christian Unity, for the Family, for Justice and Peace, '*Cor Unum*' for the organisation of works of charity in all forms, for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerants, for the Pastoral Support of Health Workers, for the Authentic Interpretation of Legislative Texts, for Inter-Religious Dialogue, for Culture, for Social Communications, and lastly the most recently created (in 2010) Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation; together with the consultative **Members** of the aforelisted Departments of the Roman Curia: **all cease to function** [14].

Only the following remain in office for the duration of the vacancy and may exercise their ordinary prescribed faculties: the **Dean** [*Angelo Sodano*] of the College of Cardinals and the **Camerlengo** [*Tarcisio Bertone*] to organise the Conclave. The **Major Penitentiary** [*Manuel Monteiro de Castro*], the **Vicar of Rome** [*Agostino Vallini*], the **Archpriest of St Peter's and Vicar General of Vatican City** [*Angelo Comastri*], for matters concerning the pastoral care of souls [14]. The **Substitute** [*Archbishop Giovanni Angelo Becciu*] of the Secretariat of State, the **Secretary** [*Archbishop Dominique Mamberti*] for **Relations with States**, the **Secretaries** of the Curial Departments and the papal **Almoner** [*Archbishop Guido Pozzo*] also remain in office, all answerable to the College of Cardinals [20, 22]. The **Papal Representatives** abroad continue at their diplomatic missions and their accreditations do not lapse [21].

## The Grand Electors

Upon being informed officially of the Pope's death by the Camerlengo, the **Dean** notifies the **entire College of Cardinals**, the **Diplomatic Corps** accredited to the Holy See, and the **Heads of State** of the respective nations. He convokes **all** the Cardinals to the Vatican City State for the preparation of the election of a new Pope [19].

Unless legitimately impeded, they are expected to attend the general preparatory meetings, termed **General Congregations**, exception being made for the very elderly Cardinals should they prefer to absent themselves from even these initial stages of the process [7].

The **College of Cardinals** is composed in order of **precedence** as follows:

**Cardinal Bishops and Patriarchs, Cardinal Priests, and Cardinal Deacons.**

Although the right to elect a new Pope belongs **exclusively** to the **College of Cardinals**, not all Cardinals may take an active part in the election. Those who have attained their **eightieth birthday** before the day on which the Apostolic See becomes vacant no longer exercise a

personal role [33]; they may also decide not to attend the preparatory general meetings, if they so prefer [7].

The Apostolic Constitution confirms that the maximum number of electors should be restricted to **one hundred and twenty** [33]; but this norm appeared to be abrogated by the mere fact that after recent consistories for the creation of new Cardinals the aggregate number has sometimes exceeded the legal limit.

## Before the Conclave

The principal protagonists with special roles in the process of the election are the following: Cardinal **Dean** of the College; Cardinal **Camerlengo** of the Holy Roman Church; Cardinal **Major Penitentiary**; Cardinal **Vicar** of the **Diocese of Rome**; Cardinal **Archpriest of St Peter's**; the **Vicar General for Vatican City State**; former Cardinal **Secretary of State**; former Cardinal **President of the Commission for Vatican City State** [*Giuseppe Bertello*]; **Senior Cardinal Deacon** [*Jean-Louis Tauran*]; **Junior Cardinal Deacon** [*James Harvey*]; **Master of Papal Liturgical Ceremonies** [*Monsignor Guido Marini*]; **Secretary of the College of Cardinals** [*Archbishop Lorenzo Baldisseri*].

**Nine** consecutive days of liturgical mourning, termed the *novendiali*, will be observed after the death of the Pope in accordance with the *Ordo Exsequiarum Romani Pontificis* (Order of Funeral Rites of the Roman Pontiff) [27], together with some other official formalities and injunctions [28-32]. In one of the earliest preparatory meetings, the Cardinals will decide on the day, hour and manner of the dignified transfer of the remains to St Peter's Basilica for the lying-in-homage [13a, 29].

The burial takes place between the **fourth** and the **sixth** day after death, unless some special reason to the contrary prevails [13b]. Any eventual dispositions contained in the Pope's last testament will be carried out by his executor, who is answerable only to the future Pontiff [32]. These might include a preference for a place of burial other than the crypt of the Vatican Basilica.

Parallel with the arrangements for the funeral of the deceased Pope, the Cardinals must oversee the preparations for the election of a successor [2]. Much has to be decided.

The space of **fifteen** days is considered sufficient to guarantee that distant Cardinals arrive in the Vatican in time to join their colleagues. A **maximum** of **twenty** days may elapse from the moment the Holy See became vacant, by then however all the Cardinal Electors present are obliged to proceed with the election without further postponement [37]. A decision will be taken fixing the day and the hour for the beginning of the process.

To assist the Camerlengo in despatching ordinary matters inherent in the preparation for the election, three **Assistants**, one from each rank of the College (Bishops, Priests, Deacons), are chosen by lot from among the Electors already present in the Vatican. After a period of three days a new trio will be selected to replace the previous one, and so it continues, also after the process of election has begun. The meetings of the Camerlengo with

his Assistants are termed **Particular Congregations**, and serve to resolve the questions of lesser importance which arise from time to time [7, 8].

More serious matters are referred to the General Congregations of Cardinals, superannuated non-Electors included, over which the Dean presides [9]. Prior to the election, they are termed “preparatory” and held daily to provide an open forum for individual opinions to be aired and suggestions offered. If any case needs to be put to a vote, this will not be open, but done in a way that safeguards confidentiality [11, 10].

In the first General Congregation the Cardinals receive a copy of the Norms and Regulations and they swear in Latin an oath to observe the prescriptions and maintain secrecy, according to the following formula: *We, the Cardinals of Holy Roman Church, of the Order of Bishops, of Priests and of Deacons, promise, pledge and swear, as a body and individually, to observe exactly and faithfully all the norms contained in the Apostolic Constitution Universi Dominici Gregis of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, and to maintain rigorous secrecy with regard to all matters in any way related to the election of the Roman Pontiff or those which, by their very nature, during the vacancy of the Apostolic See, call for the same secrecy.*

Next each Cardinal adds: *And I, N. Cardinal N., so promise, pledge and swear.* And placing his hand on

the Gospels continues: *So help me God and these Holy Gospels which I now touch with my hand.*

In one of the Congregations immediately following, the Cardinals will decide on the more urgent items on their agenda, beginning with the arrangements to be made for the **funeral** of the late Pope, in conformity with the appropriate liturgical norms [13b].

A Commission composed of the Camerlengo, the former Secretary of State, and the former President of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State, undertakes the preparations for **accommodating** the Electors in the *Domus Sanctae Marthae* residence adjacent to St Peter's basilica. The apartments are allocated by drawing lots [13h].

Suitable lodgings have to be found within the restricted area of the election for the other persons who must be included to ensure a smooth conduct of the process, namely, the Secretary of the College of Cardinals, who acts as secretary for the electoral assembly; the Master of Papal Liturgical Celebrations, with two Masters of Ceremonies and two Religious employed in the Sacristy; and an ecclesiastical Assistant to the Dean. Furthermore, some priests must be available for hearing confessions, two medical doctors for possible emergencies, and an adequate team of domestic staff to prepare and serve meals, and for general housekeeping. All those listed above must have



prior approval of the Camerlengo and his current three Cardinal Assistants [46].

They too are bound to observe total confidentiality about anything they come to know directly or indirectly about the election process, in particular about the voting itself, and will be made aware of the seriousness of the oath (in Italian) they are required to take [47]: *I, N.N., promise and swear that, unless I should receive a special faculty given expressly by the newly-elected Pontiff or by his successors, I will observe absolute and perpetual secrecy with all who are not part of the College of Cardinal electors concerning all matters directly or indirectly related to the ballots cast and their scrutiny for the election of the Supreme Pontiff. I likewise promise and swear to refrain from using any audio or video equipment capable of recording anything which takes place during the period of the election within Vatican City, and in particular anything which in any way, directly or indirectly, is related to the process of the election itself. I declare that I take this oath fully aware that an infraction thereof will make me subject to the spiritual and canonical penalties which the future Supreme Pontiff will see fit to adopt, in accordance with Canon 1399 of the Code of Canon Law. So help me God and these Holy Gospels which I touch with my hand [48].*

Two renowned **Preachers** will admonish the Electors on the need for wise discernment in choosing a future

Pope, given the challenges facing the Church in the present moment [13d]. The first meditation will be delivered during the obsequies of the deceased Pope; the second at the precise moment when the Electors withdraw from the outside world and enter the reserved precinct [54].

## The Conclave begins

On the morning of the **fifteenth** day after the vacancy of the Holy See, and **not later than the twentieth**, the Cardinal Electors concelebrate a Votive Mass in **St Peter's Basilica** *Pro eligendo Papa* (for the election of a Pope) [49]. Later that afternoon, they assemble in the **Pauline Chapel**, the smaller of the internal chapels of the Vatican Palace, constructed during the pontificate of Pope Paul III (1534-1549), and process chanting the Latin hymn *Veni Creator* to the **Sistine Chapel**, where the election will be held and total seclusion guaranteed through careful preparations and stringent technical checks of the entire area [51].

Invariably, since 1878, Conclaves have taken place there: it is the Major Chapel of the Papal Palace, built for Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484), from whom it takes its name. Because some of the most sublime works of the masters of the Italian high renaissance adorn its ceiling and walls, including the awesome 'Last Judgement' by Michelangelo, the Sistine Chapel is rated among the principal sites of world heritage.

Architecturally, however, it is only a plain, lofty, oblong structure, measuring internally 40.23 metres in length and 13.41 metres in width, allegedly the same dimensions as

Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. Lit by six large windows high up on the side walls, the height of the Chapel from the floor to the vault being 20.70 metres.

This extreme simplicity renders it particularly suitable as the electoral chamber, but not until a team of carpenters, electricians, engineers, furnishers and technicians have completed a complicated transformation.

Desks and chairs are arranged along the side walls to accommodate the exact number of Grand Electors seated in double rows facing one another across the chamber. Immediately in front of the altar, there are additional central tables, where the votes can be cast, counted, and the result of the ballot checked and then announced.

In a corner at the opposite end of the Chapel near the principal entrance from the *Sala Regia*, a stove is installed temporarily in which the ballot papers and other discarded material can be burned by an assistant at the designated time. The smoke produced is emitted from a chimney constructed against the external gable wall, and so is clearly visible in St Peter's Square. When the smoke is dark and dense in colour, this indicates an inconclusive ballot; when it is white, this means a decisive ballot has elected a new Pope.

Having taken their places in the Sistine Chapel, the **Dean** administers the oath to them, by reading aloud the Latin text: *We, the Cardinal electors present in this*

*election of the Supreme Pontiff promise, pledge and swear, as individuals and as a group, to observe faithfully and scrupulously the prescriptions contained in the Apostolic Constitution of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, Universi Dominici Gregis, published on 22 February 1996. We likewise promise, pledge and swear that whichever of us by divine disposition is elected Roman Pontiff will commit himself faithfully to carrying out the munus Petrinum of Pastor of the Universal Church and will not fail to affirm and defend strenuously the spiritual and temporal rights and liberty of the Holy See. In a particular way, we promise and swear to observe with the greatest fidelity and with all persons, clerical or lay, secrecy regarding everything that in any way relates to the election of the Roman Pontiff and regarding what occurs in the place of the election, directly or indirectly related to the results of the voting; we promise and swear not to break this secret in any way, either during or after the election of the new Pontiff, unless explicit authorisation is granted by the same Pontiff; and never to lend support or favour to any interference, opposition or any other form of intervention, whereby secular authorities of whatever order and degree or any group of people or individuals might wish to intervene in the election of the Roman Pontiff.*

Individually the Electors in order of precedence take the oath pronouncing personally the following words,

while placing a hand on the page of Sacred Scripture: *And I, N. Cardinal N., do so promise, pledge and swear. So help me God and these Holy Gospels which I touch with my hand* [53].

When the last of the Electors has sworn this oath, the Master of Papal Liturgical Celebrations gives the order *extra omnes*, ordering all those not taking a direct part in the election to leave the Sistine Chapel instantly.

At this juncture, the second previously commissioned **Preacher** will be invited to direct the minds of the Grand Electors to the grave task before them, on the need to act with right intention for the good of the Universal Church, *solum Deum prae oculis habentes* (having only God before their eyes). This challenging task accomplished, he leaves the Chapel, together with the Master of Papal Liturgical Celebrations [54].

## Voting for the next Pope

The Electors are now completely alone. The Dean will ask them whether the election may begin, or are there still points requiring clarification, though any substantial modification or substitution of the promulgated norms and procedures is not permitted and would nullify the process. If, in the judgement of the majority, there is nothing to prevent the process from beginning, then it starts immediately [54].

Paramount is the observance of **total confidentiality** by the Electors regarding what transpires during the election, and their protection from any violation of the self-imposed isolation. The Camerlengo and his three Assistants act as *vigilanti*, with the cooperation of trustworthy technicians, adept in uncovering surreptitiously installed devices, concealed with the intent of recording or transmitting what takes place within the off-limits area [55]. The intentional use of such instruments is absolutely forbidden [61]. Likewise, any communication or conversation with persons outside the area is forbidden for the duration of the election [56], and the Electors may not receive messages, newspapers, publications of any kind, nor follow news bulletins via audio or video transmissions [57]. This embargo on revealing the outcome of the

voting, or other matters discussed or decided concerning the election of the Pope in the meetings of the Cardinals, both before and during the time of the balloting, applies to all members of the College, including non-Electors [58]. This secrecy must be seen as a most grave obligation of conscience [60].

The only valid form of electing the Pope is by **scrutiny**, a **two-thirds majority** of the votes cast being required to elect a candidate, or two-thirds plus one when the total number of Electors does not divide into three equal parts [62]. For instance with a full electoral college of one hundred and twenty voters, a two-thirds majority of eighty would be required, whereas with their number reduced to say one hundred and fifteen, the necessary majority would be seventy-six plus one.

Should the election begin on the afternoon of the entry to the Sistine Chapel, only one ballot will be held that day. On the following days, if no one was elected on the first ballot, two ballots will be held in the morning and two in the afternoon.

The voting process will be performed in three phases. The initial preparatory phase is simply the distribution of the ballot papers by the Masters of Ceremonies, who give at least two or three to each Elector. They are rectangular in shape and have the words *Eligo in Summum Pontificem* (I elect as Supreme Pontiff) printed on the upper half, with



the lower half left blank to allow space for writing the name of the person chosen.

Secondly, the drawing out by lot one after another of nine Electors' names by the junior Cardinal Deacon, the first three to serve as **Scrutineers**, the second three to carry out the task of the so-called **Infirmarians**, and the last three as **Revisers** [64].

Finally, during the voting the Electors remain totally alone in the Chapel, so having distributed the ballot papers, but before the Cardinals begin to write, the Secretary of the College of Cardinals, the Master of Papal Liturgical Celebrations and the Masters of Ceremonies must leave the chamber. The **junior Cardinal Deacon** then locks the door, opening and closing it again each time this is necessary.

The compilation of the ballot papers can now start. It is done in secret, each Elector writing legibly the name of the person of his choice, if possible in handwriting not easily identifiable as his, and so that the completed paper can be folded lengthwise. This concludes the pre-scrutiny phase of the election process [65].

## Casting their votes

The scrutiny proper will consist of three crucial acts, namely, depositing the completed ballots in the urn; mixing and counting them accurately; opening and announcing the votes.

In order of precedence, each Elector holding aloft between thumb and forefinger his completed and folded ballot, and in view of all the others processes with it to the large chalice-like urn placed in front of the Scrutineers. There he halts and declares aloud: *I call as my witness Christ the Lord who will be my judge that my vote is given to the one who before God I think should be elected.* Placing the vote on the paten (a shallow circular metal plate on which normally the eucharistic wafer rests during the celebration of Mass) laid on top, and letting it slide into the urn below, he then bows in reverence and returns to his place.

An arrangement is foreseen for an infirm Elector, having taken the oath, to cast his vote without leaving his seat by consigning the ballot to a **Scrutineer**, who performs the identical ritual of sliding it from the paten into the urn [66].

If any Electors are so ill that they cannot come personally to the Sistine Chapel, but need to remain

confined to their rooms, in these cases the **Infirmarians** will go to the *Domus Sanctae Marthae* to administer the oath individually, collect their votes in an empty locked receptacle and deliver it to be opened and the ballots checked by the Scrutineers.

In order not to prolong the laborious electoral process unduly, the Infirmarians may vote immediately after the senior Elector and perform this special duty while the others in the Chapel continue with the balloting, thereby avoiding unnecessary delay [67].

## Counting the votes

After the ballots of all the Electors have been deposited according to the norms, the second stage of the **scrutiny** follows immediately. The first Scrutineer shakes the urn several times to mix the papers thoroughly. The last Scrutineer counts them meticulously, transferring them one by one in full view of all those present to another empty receptacle.

If the number of ballots does not tally with the number of participating Electors, the ballots must be burned and a second vote taken at once. If the ballots do correspond to the number of Electors, then the process of reading and announcing the names of those for whom the votes have been cast will be done in the following manner [68].

The three **Scrutineers** will be seated at a table in front of the altar, on which the ballot papers have been placed. The **first** Scrutineer takes a ballot, unfolds it, notes the name of the person for whom the vote was cast, and passes it in silence to the **second** Scrutineer, who likewise notes the name written on the ballot, before passing it to the **third** Scrutineer, who reads it out in a clear voice, audible to all the Electors present so that they can hear and record

the vote on the pages prepared for that purpose. He himself writes down the name he has just read aloud.

He then inserts a needle through the word *Eligo* (*I elect...*), on each ballot, drawing a thread through to be knotted securely at both ends, so that there is no risk of their dispersal. The sum of votes obtained by different *papabili* is calculated and recorded on a separate sheet of paper [69]. This concludes the second phase of the election by scrutiny.

## Double checking

The third post-scrutiny phase follows, also comprised of three stages. The Scrutineers count the ballots all the individual Electors have received in their favour. If anyone has obtained **two-thirds** of the votes cast, (two-thirds plus one only when the quorum is not divisible in three), then he has been canonically and validly chosen as Pope and the election is over. Otherwise, the process must continue.

In either case, the **Revisers** check both ballots and notes taken by the Scrutineers to make sure that the scrutiny has been conducted faithfully. If a second ballot needs to take place, it will be held immediately. Meantime, the earlier ballot papers are put aside. They will be burned only at the end, together with those of the second vote.

At that juncture, the junior Cardinal Deacon will readmit the Secretary of the College and the Masters of Ceremonies to assist the Scrutineers in disposing of all the papers in the stove specially installed for this purpose in a corner of the Sistine Chapel [70]. For reasons of confidentiality, this measure extends even to personal notes the Electors may have made in the course of the voting, all of which must be surrendered to the Camerlengo, or his Assistants, for destruction. They have the task of drawing up an accurate

and detailed account of the voting at each session, that will be enclosed in a sealed envelope to be kept in a specially designated archive [71].

Balloting will take place each day, twice in the morning and again twice in the afternoon [72, 73]. After balloting has been carried out as prescribed for three days without arriving at a conclusive result, the process will be suspended for one day, before being resumed in the usual manner. Another pause may be taken after seven more ballots, and again after another seven ballots [74].

## Impasse

Faced with an impasse, calculated at around thirty-three or thirty-four ballotings, the Camerlengo will ask the Electors for their opinion on how to proceed and the election proceeds in accordance with what the absolute majority decides. For the validity of the election, however, a **two-thirds majority of the votes will always be required**, even in the extreme case of voting only on the two *papabili* who obtained the greatest suffrage in the immediately preceding ballot, and are **excluded themselves from voting in the resumed round of balloting** [*Motu Proprio* of Benedict XVI, dated 11 June 2007, abrogating the provision contained in n.75 of the Apostolic Constitution *Universi Dominici Gregis* that made a **simple** majority of votes sufficient for a valid election in these unusual circumstances].

The modern composition of the College of Cardinals aims at being representative of the Universal Church. Nevertheless there is nothing to prohibit the votes being cast for someone outside the College of Cardinals, who is deemed suited to shoulder the *munus Petrinum* - the office of Peter the Apostle [83].

Beware! The last time a non-Cardinal was elected, in 1378, it caused the Great Western Schism, which divided Christendom into rival factions for almost forty years.



## Some statistics

The longest **interregnum** recorded was prolonged for two years, nine months and two days, from the death of Pope Clement IV on 29 November 1268, until the election of his successor Pope Gregory X on 9 September 1271. A previous one had lasted for two years, three months and one day, the interval between the pontificates of Pope Honorius IV (1285-1287) and Pope Nicholas IV (1288-1292). They were exceptions.

In modern times the actual **conclaves** have been of very short duration: after an interregnum of nineteen days, only **two** days to elect Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli/Pope Pius XII (1939-1958), after an interregnum of nineteen days, Cardinal Albino Luciani/Pope John Paul I (1978), and Cardinal Josef Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI (2005-2013), after an interregnum of sixteen days; **three** days to elect Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini/Pope Paul VI (1963-1978), after an interregnum of seventeen days, and Cardinal Karol Wojtyła/Pope John Paul II (1978-2005), after an interregnum of seventeen days; **four** days to elect Cardinal Giacomo della Chiesa/Pope Benedict XV (1915-1922), after an interregnum of thirteen days, and Cardinal Angelo Roncalli/Pope John XXIII (1958-1963), after

an interregnum of eighteen days; and **five** days to elect Cardinal Giuseppe Sarto/Pope Pius X (1903-1914), after an interregnum of fifteen days, and Cardinal Achille Ratti/Pope Pius XI (1922-1939), after an interregnum that lasted fourteen days.

The **number of votes** cast in the balloting during these recent Conclaves in favour of these Cardinals resulting in their election to the papacy has never been revealed, though accurate records are made, but remain inaccessible to consultation and are kept in a special archive in strict security [71].

## Election achieved

When the election has taken place, the junior Cardinal Deacon summons the Secretary of the College and the Master of Papal Liturgical Ceremonies back to the Sistine Chapel. The Dean, in the name of the whole College of Electors, **will ask the consent of the newly elected** with the words: *Do you accept our canonical election as Supreme Pontiff?* Having received his assent, the Dean continues: *By what name do you wish to be called?* The Pope **declares the name he wishes to assume** during his pontificate. The Master of Liturgical Ceremonies acting as notary, and the two Masters of Ceremonies as witnesses, draw up a document certifying the new Pope's acceptance and the name he wishes to assume as Pontiff [87].

After his acceptance, the newly elected, provided he is already a bishop, becomes **immediately** Bishop of Rome, true Pope and Head of the College of Bishops, acquiring full and supreme authority over the Universal Church.

At this juncture, he will be accompanied by the Masters of Ceremonies to a small robing room, situated immediately behind the imposing fresco of the 'Last Judgement', where they assist him to divest from his scarlet robes as a Cardinal and don the traditional white

vesture of a Pope. Three sizes of soutane, large, medium and small, are in readiness to be rapidly adjusted to meet his personal requirements, together with the white moiré silk *fascia* and skull-cap, the lace *rochet*, or surplice, the crimson silk *mozzetta* - a sort of shoulder cape, - the red morocco leather slippers and the elaborate gold-embroidered red velvet stole.

If he is not already a bishop, he then receives Episcopal ordination at the hands of the Dean of the College without further delay. Otherwise one by one in order of rank within each class, the Electors must first pay homage and obedience to the new Pope followed by a solemn act of thanksgiving to God intoning the Latin hymn *Te Deum*.

This is the moment when the **senior Cardinal Deacon** announces from the central balcony of St Peter's that a canonical election has taken place and proclaims the identity of the newly elect and the pontifical name he intends to adopt. This proclamation is made using the Latin formula: '*Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum. Habemus Papam. Eminentissimum ac Reverendissimum Dominum, Dominum N. Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae Cardinalem N., qui sibi nomen imposuit N.*', meaning: *I announce a great joy to you; we have a Pope! The most Eminent and most Reverend Lord, the Lord N. (baptismal name) Cardinal N. (surname) of the Holy Roman Church, who has taken the name of N. (his choice of pontifical name).*

The new Pope will then make his appearance on the central balcony of St Peter's Basilica and impart from there the first **Apostolic Blessing** *Urbi et Orbi* - to the City and to the World [88, 89, 90]. The Conclave is over. The Holy See is no longer vacant. Another pontificate has already begun.