# Cardinal Vincent Nichols joins historic conclave as Church prepares to choose new pope



In a pivotal moment for the global Catholic Church, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the Archbishop of Westminster, is among over 130 cardinal electors preparing to enter the conclave in Vatican City to elect a new pope. This secretive voting process, set to begin on May 7, follows the death of Pope Francis and is drawing significant international attention.

Prior to their entrance into the Sistine Chapel, the cardinals will attend a special mass in St Peter’s Basilica. Subsequently, they will be sequestered from the outside world as they cast their votes, with the highly symbolic white smoke signalling the selection of a new pontiff. Cardinal Nichols remarked to the Independent that he feels "quite intimidated" by the global scrutiny surrounding the conclave and the weight of the responsibilities associated with the election.

Having arrived in Rome shortly after the passing of Pope Francis, Cardinal Nichols has engaged in extensive discussions with fellow cardinals, stating, “These meetings... lead us to the conclave at which only those under 80 who will vote... attend.” This conclave stands out for having a higher representation from Africa and Asia compared to previous gatherings, largely reflecting the appointments made under Pope Francis.

The cardinal expressed the gravity of the election, acknowledging that those in the conclave bear a responsibility that resonates beyond the Church, influencing the spiritual and ethical landscape of society. He articulated hope that the new pope will embody an inviting vision that calls all people to feel loved by God.

As expectation mounts ahead of the conclave, the potential candidates for the papacy remain under speculation. The legitimacy of any decision will require a two-thirds majority from the cardinal electors. The conclave will allow for up to four votes daily, although the initial voting will commence only in the afternoon of the first day.

Both religious experts and commentators have noted that the situation is markedly unpredictable, due in part to the demography of the current College of Cardinals. Professor Anna Rowlands of Durham University indicated that the cardinal electors are poised to not merely replace Pope Francis but to select a leader who can navigate the Church into a new epoch. She highlighted that their recent discussions would help them unify around a consensus candidate.

Notably, several prominent names have emerged in the field of potential successors, including Cardinal Luis Tagle of the Philippines, who is often mentioned as a frontrunner. Other names include Cardinal Peter Erdo from Hungary and Cardinal Parolin, currently serving as Pope Francis’s secretary of state.

Despite the speculation, Cardinal Nichols and other British and Irish cardinals appear to be distancing themselves from potential candidacy. Nichols has previously stated he feels "too old, not capable," while Cardinal Timothy Radcliffe affirmed that he does not see himself in the running either.

As the conclave approaches, the world awaits the outcome, with all eyes on the chimney of the Sistine Chapel, where the colour of the smoke will indicate the election of the new pope. Upon acceptance of his election, the new pontiff will traditionally address the world shortly thereafter from the balcony of St Peter’s Basilica, announcing, “Habemus Papam,” meaning “we have a pope.”

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2025-04/pope-francis-dies-21-april-2025.html> - This article reports on the death of Pope Francis on April 21, 2025, at the age of 88, leading to the upcoming papal conclave.
2. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2025-04/pope-francis-funeral-26-april-2025.html> - This article details the funeral and burial of Pope Francis on April 26, 2025, following his death.
3. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2025-05/pope-francis-funeral-26-april-2025.html> - This article discusses the upcoming papal conclave scheduled to begin on May 7, 2025, in the Sistine Chapel to elect a new pope.
4. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2025-05/pope-francis-funeral-26-april-2025.html> - This article mentions Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican's Secretary of State, as a leading candidate to oversee the 2025 papal conclave.
5. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2025-05/pope-francis-funeral-26-april-2025.html> - This article highlights Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of the Philippines as a potential candidate for the papacy in the upcoming conclave.
6. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2025-05/pope-francis-funeral-26-april-2025.html> - This article discusses Cardinal Péter Erdő of Hungary as a leading candidate in the 2025 papal conclave.
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