

1660

English Parliament proclaims Charles II, King of England and invites him to return



1895

China cedes Taiwan to Japan under Treaty of Shimonoseki

1902

Mount Pelée on the French overseas island of Martinique erupts, wiping out the city of Saint-Pierre, killing 30,000 and leaving only two survivors

1945

V-E Day: World War II ends in Europe after Germany signs an unconditional surrender

1980

World Health Organization announces smallpox has been eradicated

Cardinals begin voting for pope

Vatican conclave begins amid global hopes, divisions, and protests over Church reform

● 133 cardinals enter Sistine Chapel to elect next pope

● Ritual begins with “Extra omnes” and oath of secrecy

AFP | Vatican City

Cardinals choosing the next leader of the global Catholic Church were locked into the Vatican’s Sistine Chapel on Wednesday, marking the formal start of the conclave to elect a successor to Pope Francis.

Shortly after 17:45 (15:45 GMT), the conclave’s master of ceremonies declared “Extra omnes” -- “Everybody out” in Latin -- and then shut the heavy doors of the 15th century chapel, leaving the 133 “Princes of the Church” to make their choice in secrecy.

The centuries-old ritual, which is expected to last several days, comes just over a fortnight after the death of Pope Francis, the Argentine Jesuit who led the world’s 1.4 billion Catholics for 12 years.

The cardinal electors had earlier gathered in the nearby Pauline Chapel in silent prayer before proceeding to the 15th-century Sistine Chapel, where tables and chairs have been laid out beneath Michelangelo’s frescoes.

They took a group oath of secrecy before each cardinal approached the altar to utter his personal vow in front of the Italian master’s depiction of the Last Judgement, when Christians believe God will return to decide who goes to heaven or hell.

According to a live video feed produced by the Vatican, they took a vow not to reveal what



A view of the Sistine Chapel on the eve of the conclave in The Vatican

happened in the conclave, on pain of excommunication.

The conclave is the largest and the most international ever, with cardinals from around 70 countries -- many of whom did not know each other before being summoned to Rome following Francis’s death.

There is no clear frontrunner to succeed the charismatic Francis, with the cardinals representing a range of progressive and conservative traditions within the Church.

But the challenges facing the 2,000-year-old institution are clear.

The new pope faces diplomatic balancing acts at a time of geopolitical uncertainty, as well as deep splits within the Church itself.

There is also the continued fall-out from the clerical child

abuse scandal and -- in the West -- increasingly empty pews.

Waiting for the smoke

Thousands of people gathered outside in St Peter’s Square to watch the proceedings, which were streamed live on several large screens in front of St Peter’s Basilica.

There was applause for the declaration of “Extra omnes”.

Many hope to see the smoke that will come out of the Sistine Chapel’s chimney when the cardinals have voted -- black smoke for no winner, white for a new pope.

“It would be perfect, lovely to be here for a new pope,” said Irish tourist Catriona Hawe, 60.

“Francis was brilliant, progressive, a man of the people, though he didn’t move things forward as

quickly as I would have liked,” she said.

“The Church won’t be doing itself any favours if it elects someone conservative.”

Besides outward displays of faith, the conclave has also generated a festive atmosphere, with one young woman in the square showing off her black miniature poodle dressed as the pope.

The cardinals will cast just one ballot on the first evening, with a result expected around 7:00pm (1700 GMT), before retiring to the nearby Santa Marta guesthouse.

If no one secures the two-thirds majority needed to be elected, they will resume voting on Thursday, with four ballots a day scheduled until there is a winner.

Pray for unity



The 15th-century Sistine Chapel doors were sealed with the Latin command “Extra omnes” (“Everybody out”) - the same ritual used when Michelangelo painted its famous frescoes

The cardinals joined a mass in St Peter’s Basilica ahead of the conclave on Wednesday morning, where Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals, offered his peers some final advice.

“We are here to invoke the help of the Holy Spirit, to implore his light and strength so that the pope elected may be he whom the Church and humanity need at this difficult and complex turning point in history,” he said.

“This is also a strong call to maintain the unity of the Church... a unity that does not mean uniformity, but a firm and profound communion in diversity.”

He called it a choice of “exceptional importance”, requiring the red-robed prelates to set aside “every personal consideration”.

Battista Re himself is too old to vote, with cardinal electors required to be under the age of 80.

The mass was the last rite to be celebrated publicly before the Church’s 267th pope is presented to the world from a balcony of St Peter’s Basilica.



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TWEETS

01



No nation should have to accept terrorist attacks being launched against it from land controlled by another country. India is justified in striking terrorist infrastructure. There can be no impunity for terrorists. @RishiSunak

02



As we mark 80 years since the end of World War II, we remember that peace must never be taken for granted. Let this ceremony be a call to action. To renew our commitment to strengthen our Union and to protect what was so hard-won, and can so easily be lost @eucopresident

03



The next long-term EU budget must respond to geopolitical realities. It must be strategic, flexible and responsible. An ambitious and modern plan that invests in what matters to people. @EuroparL_EN is ready to meet Europe’s moment. @EP_President

04



Very concerned by on-going drone strikes on Port Sudan, a hub for our humanitarian operations and key entry point for aid. International humanitarian law must be respected. Constant care must be taken to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure. @UNReliefChief

Region joins push for safe tech

● Over 1,000 global participants

● GCC focus on AI, education

● Quantum, Web3, cybercrime addressed

Mahir Haneef
TDT | Dubai



of His Highness Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the summit saw ministers, regulators, academics, and industry leaders converge to outline a strategic global framework for governing AI, quantum computing, Web3, and synthetic realities.

Shared Gulf Priorities

For the GCC, the summit served as a critical platform to align national strategies on education, public health, industrial innovation, and cyber defence with global standards. Ministers

and technologists stressed the importance of embedding AI into national curricula, establishing ethical guidelines, and building inclusive institutions that can keep pace with rapid technological change.

From classroom reforms in the UAE to Bahrain’s growing investments in digital public services and AI start-ups, the region is working to build resilient frameworks that balance progress with protection.

Sector Focus

Sessions ranged from AI in healthcare and smart manufacturing to digital content rights and quantum regulation. Speakers from the UAE Space Agency, ADIB, Honeywell, M-PESA, and global firms like PwC and Binance joined discussions on securing data, addressing cross-border cyber threats, and preparing for decentralised finance systems.

The summit also spotlighted the role of youth councils from multiple emirates, signalling a GCC-wide effort to bring younger generations into policymaking on tech.

Global Consensus Building GETS featured strong calls from INTERPOL, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, and major consulting firms for international collaboration. A joint roadmap from TRENDS Research & Advisory and ASPIRE proposed accelerating global policy coordination and institutional readiness.

For Bahrain and its Gulf neighbours, the summit underscored the need to collaborate on har-



The GCC is among the fastest-growing regions in AI adoption, with Saudi Arabia and the UAE alone projected to contribute over \$200 billion from AI to their economies by 2030

monised regulation, ethical standards, and public-private partnerships to govern emerging technologies.

As the global tech landscape evolves, the GCC’s active role in shaping cross-border governance frameworks could determine how innovation unfolds across the region in the decade ahead.

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