

Pope announces surprise consistory, handing red hats to key allies

Elise Harris, *Crux Now*, 1 September 2019



Pope Francis delivers his speech during the Angelus noon prayer from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square, at the Vatican, Sunday, Sept. 1, 2019. Pope Francis says he was stuck for 25 minutes in a Vatican elevator and had to be rescued by firefighters. Francis apologized to faithful in St. Peter's Square Sunday for showing up seven minutes late for his traditional noon appointment with the public. (Credit: AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino.)

ROME - Pope Francis on Sunday announced a consistory for the creation of new cardinals Oct. 5, featuring 13 new red hats total, several of whom are widely considered to be key allies of this papacy. Notably, no American made the cut. New cardinals feature 10 men eligible to vote for the next pope, and three members of the pope's own Jesuit order.

Among the so-called "honorary" cardinals, meaning those over 80 and therefore ineligible to take part in a conclave, the **inclusion of British Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald is especially striking**. Once the Vatican's leading expert on Islam and the former president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Fitzgerald was sent by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in 2006 as his ambassador to Egypt. At the time, many observers saw the move as punishment for Fitzgerald's dovish line on Islam. The papal honor, therefore, is likely to strike many people as a rehabilitation of Fitzgerald and his advocacy of dialogue and outreach to the Islamic community.

At the same time, **Archbishop Miguel Angel Ayuso Guixot, Fitzgerald's successor as head of the Vatican Council for Interreligious Dialogue, was also named cardinal**. Even before his appointment as head of the office, Ayuso Guixot was charged with overseeing dialogue between the Vatican and Egypt's prestigious Al-Azhar mosque and university, widely considered the Vatican of the Sunni Islamic world.

Also on the pope's list is Archbishop Matteo Zuppi of Bologna, a member of the Community of Sant'Egidio, which is widely seen as Francis's favorite of the so-called "New movements" in the Church. Zuppi is considered an ally of Francis in the powerful Italian bishops' conference.

Meanwhile, also getting a red hat is Canadian Jesuit Father Michael Czerny who has acted as Francis's right-hand man on matters regarding migrants and refugees.

Czerny is an official of the Vatican's dicastery for promoting Integral Human Development, and his elevation puts another key Francis supporter in the college of cardinals.

The other seven new voting-age cardinals, beyond Guixot, Zuppi and Czerny, are:

- José Tolentino Medonca, Vatican Archivist and Librarian
- Ignatius Suharyo Hardjoatmodjo, Archbishop of Jakarta in Indonesia
- Juan de la Caridad García Rodríguez, Archbishop of Havana, Cuba
- Fridolin Ambongo Besungu, Archbishop of Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo
- Jean-Claude Hollerich, Archbishop of Luxembourg
- Álvaro Ramazzini Imeri, Bishop of Huehuetenango, Guatemala
- Cristóbal López Romero, Archbishop of Rabat, Morocco

Apart from Fitzgerald, the other two "honorary" cardinals over the age of 80 and thus ineligible to elect a pope are Sigitas Tamkevičius of Kaunas, Lithuania, and Eugenio dal Corso of Benguela, Angola.