Time to choose

The College of Cardinals is to meet today to begin selecting a new pope. After a security check of the Sistine Chapel to ensure that the deliberations remain secret, and the cardinals take an oath not to reveal anything of the proceedings, they will begin their work. The conclave could last several days, or extend almost two weeks.

Deciding factors

The cardinals will weigh various traits of papal candidates and issues, including:

- Leadership style
- Linguistic ability
- Radical or moderate leanings
- Whether to return the papacy to an Italian
- Ecumenism and how to increase dialogue with other religions, especially Islam
- The shift from Catholicism to evangelical Protestant faiths, especially in Latin America
- Effect of globalization, especially in developing countries
- Autonomy for local dioceses

The electorate

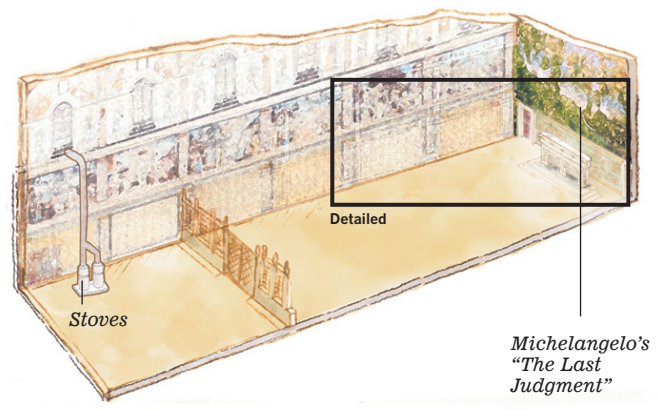
Almost all of the 115 cardinals expected to vote in this conclave were appointed by Pope John Paul II. About half are from Europe.

Cardinals, by region of origin

Europe **58**
Latin America **20**
North America **14** (U.S. 11)
Africa **11**
Asia **10**
Oceania **2**

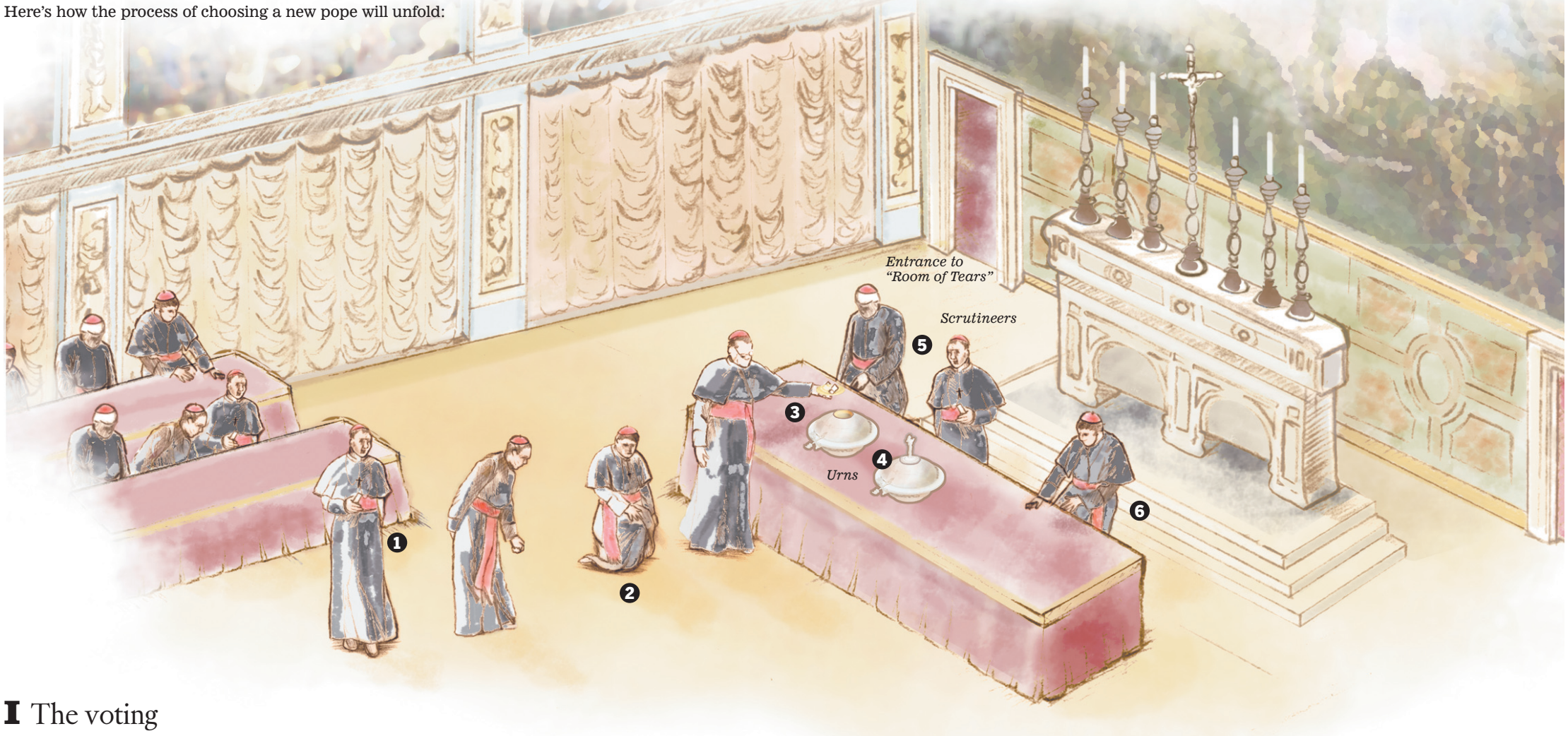
Inside the Sistine Chapel

The chapel was built between 1475 and 1481, during the time of Pope Sixtus IV.



The conclave

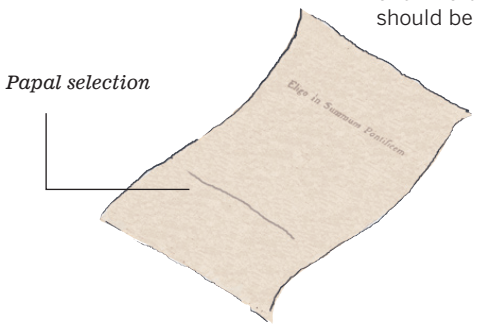
Here's how the process of choosing a new pope will unfold:



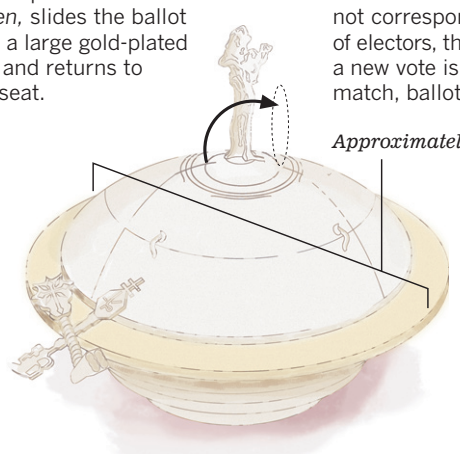
I The voting

The rectangular ballot bears the words "Eligo in Summum Pontificem" (I elect as supreme pontiff) with space at the bottom for the elector's choice. Disguising his handwriting, each cardinal notes his choice and folds the ballot twice. Three "scrutineers" chosen earlier by lot take places at a table in front of the altar to count the ballots after all are cast to ensure they correspond to the number of electors.

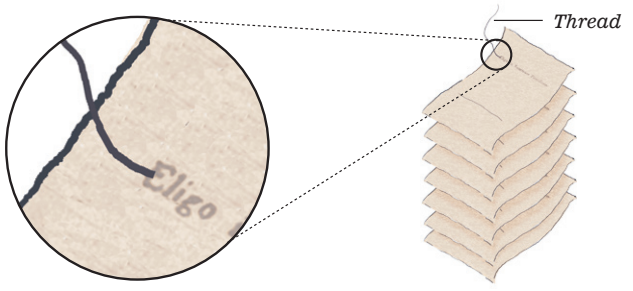
1. One at a time, in order of seniority, each cardinal approaches the altar holding out his ballot.
2. He kneels, offers a short prayer, rises and says aloud in Latin, "I call as my witness Christ the Lord, who will be my judge, that my vote is given to the one who before God I think should be elected."
3. He places his ballot on a gold plate called a *paten,* slides the ballot into a large gold-plated urn and returns to his seat.
4. Collected ballots are removed and counted. If the total does not correspond to the number of electors, they are burned and a new vote is taken. If numbers match, ballots are opened.
5. The first scrutineer opens a ballot and notes the name; the second repeats the process. The third reads the name aloud for all to hear and writes the name.
6. The scrutineers total the votes. If one man has received two-thirds of the vote, a valid election has taken place. If the number of electors is not divisible by three, two-thirds plus one constitutes an election.



VOTING: *Only one name is permitted per ballot. Ballots are folded twice before being submitted.*



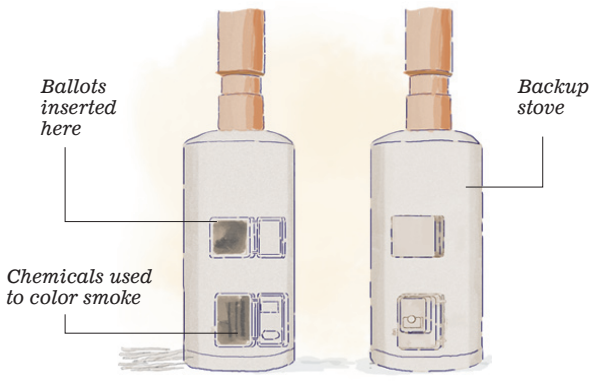
URN: *One of three urns replacing the traditional chalice.*



BALLOTS: *Joined with needle and thread through the word "Eligo."*

II Election results

If no cardinal receives enough votes after three days, a day of prayer and discussion takes place. After approximately 30 ballots or 12 days, the cardinals may decide to choose by a simple majority or limit the field to the two top cardinals from the previous vote. Ballots are burned in a stove to signal results. Black smoke indicates voting is inconclusive; white shows there is a new pope. For the first time, the bells of St. Peter's Basilica will ring as a complement to the traditional white smoke.



STOVES: *Used to burn ballots and produce smoke.*

III Accepting the vote

After his election, the new pope enters the "Room of Tears" to don the papal vestments. The room is so named because some of the newly elected, realizing the immense responsibility of the office, have broken down.

VESTMENTS: *Prepared in advance in three sizes.*

IV First words

From the central window of St. Peter's Basilica, the senior cardinal deacon announces to Rome and the world, "Habemus papam" — we have a pope — and announces his name. The new pontiff then appears to deliver his first greeting, a simple blessing, and perhaps a few additional comments. If so, they are closely followed for clues as to the direction of the church.

FIRST GREETING: *The new pope will speak from St. Peter's.*

Papal elections through the ages

In its present form, the papal conclave dates to the 13th century. Before that time, cardinals, clerics and laymen voted in papal elections and were often influenced by kings, emperors and even sitting popes. The word conclave is derived from the Latin "cum" (with) and "clavis" (key), implying that the cardinals are locked in a room until a pope is chosen. Not all scholars agree on the exact history of papal elections.

1073: St. Gregory VII is the last pope to ask for imperial confirmation from the Holy Roman emperor. He recommends his successor, Pope Victor III.

1179: Pope Alexander III rules that the papal elections must be decided by a two-thirds majority of electors.

1271: After a three-year deadlock, a group of six cardinals is commissioned to choose a candidate. They select Pope Gregory X.

1274: Pope Gregory X decrees that papal elections must take place in a conclave, requiring cardinals to assemble in a locked room until they arrive at a decision.

1276: Conclave law suspended.

1294: Pope Celestine V restores the conclave.

1298: Pope Boniface VIII incorporates conclave into canon law, with all subsequent papal elections taking place in conclaves.

1314: Pope Clement V decrees that the conclave must take place where the pope dies.

1378: Pope Urban VI is last non-cardinal elected pope.

1562: Pope Pius IV codifies the loosely observed conclave laws. He allows elections outside of the conclave, but none occur. That stipulation is revoked by Gregory XIII.

1621: Pope Gregory XV further codifies all details of the conclave and institutes secret ballot.

1996: Pope John Paul II allows election by a simple majority after 12 days of failed votes.

Sources: Apostolic Constitution, Universi Dominici Gregis; "The Papal Conclave: How Do Cardinals Divine the Will of God?"; "Conclave" by John Allen; Catholic Encyclopedia; Associated Press; Reuters; Gallery of the Roman Pontiffs; Catholic News Service; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia, OSV Catholic Almanac; Vatican; Wikipedia; Times reporting. Graphic reporting by TOM REINKEN, JULIE SHEER, BRADY MACDONALD

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