Leftist Cupich is notoriously pro-homosexual. He is now positioned by Francis to recommend men of his ilk to become bishops in the United States. The Francis disaster continues full throttle and will further poison the Church in America and worldwide. Oremus – John Vennari

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(Crux) – **By naming Archbishop Blase Cupich of Chicago to the Vatican's all-important Congregation for Bishops, Pope Francis effectively has positioned him, in tandem with Cardinal Donald Wuerl of Washington, D.C., to be the American "kingmakers" on this pope's watch.**

Pope Francis on Thursday named Archbishop Blase Cupich of Chicago to the Vatican's all-important Congregation for Bishops, **in effect positioning the Chicago prelate to help shape the next generation of bishops in the United States and around the world.**

The Congregation for Bishops is composed of roughly 30 senior prelates from around the world, and is the body that submits recommendations for new bishops' appointments to the pope. Although the final decision is always up to the pontiff, with relatively few exceptions, popes generally accept the panel's recommendations.

As a result, the Congregation for Bishops is widely considered among the two or three most influential departments in the Vatican, and generally appointing someone as a member is a sign that they have the favor of the present pope.

The congregation is presently led by Cardinal Marc Ouellet of Canada, who was appointed to the role by emeritus Pope Benedict XVI.

The appointment does not mean Cupich will leave his position in Chicago, although it will likely mean more frequent travel to Rome for meetings of the congregation. Those meetings are generally held on a monthly basis, though not every member attends them all.

By tapping Cupich, Francis has extended his effort to put a more moderate-to-progressive stamp on the Congregation for Bishops, and, by extension, the global episcopacy.

In December 2013, Francis removed several members of the congregation seen as more conservative, including Cardinals Raymond Burke of the United States and Mauro Piacenza of Italy, replacing them with twelve new figures perceived as more centrist and pastoral.

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Among that crop was Cardinal Donald Wuerl of Washington, D.C., who had also been tapped by Francis as a member of the drafting committee for the final documents of his two Synods of Bishops on the family.

At 67, Cupich is poised to be a member of the Congregation for Bishops for a long run, potentially until he turns 80.

Although each member of the congregation gets a vote on every bishops' nomination to come before it, the informal practice over the years has been to defer to the members from a particular country when a position opens up in that country.

During the Benedict XVI years, that practice often meant that Cardinal Justin Rigali, a former secretary to the Congregation for Bishops, was effectively the American "kingmaker," meaning the prelate with the most behind-the-scenes influence on bishops' picks.

Today, Wuerl and Cupich seem positioned to play that "kingmaker" role under Pope Francis.

Since becoming Pope Francis's surprise pick for Chicago in September 2014, Cupich has carved out a profile as a leader of the moderate-to-progressive camp in the Church.

During the 2015 Synod of Bishops, for instance, Cupich distanced himself from some of his fellow American prelates who had expressed concerns about the synod process, and also called for greater inclusion of "marginalized" groups in the synod's deliberations, such as gays and lesbians.

Cupich also suggested support for calls to allow divorced and civilly remarried Catholics to return to Communion in individual cases, following a process of discernment.

In the wake of the recent Orlando massacre, Cupich was among the American bishops who explicitly mentioned "our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters" in his statement on the attack, calling for stepped-up efforts to promote tolerance.

Cupich, who's of Croatian ancestry, is a native of Omaha, Nebraska, and previously served as the bishop of both Rapid City, South Dakota, and Spokane, Washington.

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