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By Serre Verweij

The dust of the conclave is starting to settle. Establishment progressives are still hoping our new Pope Leo XIV will be similar to Francis, because he has made a number of references to synodality. However, the German bishops and Cardinal Hollerich seem to be scaling down their expectations. Hollerich admitted that Pope Leo XIV might reinterpret *Fiducia Supplicans*. Some sources are talking about a repeal of *Traditionis Custodes*. So far, nothing seems to have been said on *Amoris Laetitia* either way, but a clear return to *Familiaris Consortio* might also eventually happen.

But documents aren't everything in terms of what is important to look for in the new Pope. As the saying goes, 'personnel is policy'. Pope Francis' appointments often turned out to be erratic, inconsistent, and unpredictable. His curial reforms are still incomplete.

With an ongoing conflict with heretical German bishops, an unfinished and unclear project of Synod on Synodality, and clear divisions within the Church, a return to stability within the Curia could prove to be crucial to help Pope Leo XIV in restoring order. Who might our new Pope appoint to help him govern from Rome, and furthermore, what kind of new generation of cardinals will he gradually create? Any non-cardinal who is made a curial prefect ordinarily also gets made cardinal. This adds an extra dimension to elevating bishops to curial leadership positions.

Possibilities and powers left by Francis

While Pope Francis left unfinished curial reforms with important unanswered questions regarding canon law and holy orders, he did make a few strong, or at least adequate, appointments in the last years of his pontificate.

Under the new curial constitution, *Praedicate evangelium*, it's supposed to be the norm that prefects, secretaries, and undersecretaries serve a five-year term, which can -but doesn't have to- be renewed by the Pope. As such, Pope Leo XIV can remove almost any leading curial figure within a few years, without prelates being able to accuse him of an unprecedented power grab.

Does it look wise to use this power excessively, or should it only be used for a limited number of cases when specifically necessary? Francis himself ended up rarely enforcing this

provision. Similarly, the retirement age of 75 was rarely, if ever, enforced: Ouellet was kept in office till he was 78 and had served over 12 years, Ladaria served for 6 years till the age of 79, and De Aviz served for over 14 years till he was well over 77. Pope Leo XIV might prefer to keep skilled prefects and secretaries around longer to build stability and trust, and as such limit the application of the five-year term.

New blood and old wine

Cardinal **Parolin** may very well be kept around for a couple of more years, in part to preserve unity between different factions of cardinals and also to ensure consistency. Pope Francis had already limited his authority somewhat. So, the primary focus could be on the appointment of new curial prefects.

The obvious place to start with in making appointments is the Dicastery for Bishops, where the position of prefect is now vacant. The current secretary of the dicastery is Brazilian archbishop Ilson de Jesus Montanari, appointed by Francis more than 11 years ago. While it was reported that Francis wanted to make him prefect, Montanari reportedly declined multiple times. Therefore, Pope Leo XIV has ample justification to appoint another bishop as prefect, instead.

If Pope Leo XIV decides not to promote him, but rather to send him home, as he had previously desired, the new Pope could soon appoint both a new prefect and a new secretary to the dicastery, completely revamping it at the start of his pontificate. Especially worthwhile could be his appointing two prelates from different continents with broad (missionary) experience and a strong record in dealing with abuse and handling administrative problems. Ideally, the new prefect should be around 60 and the new secretary in his 50s.

A couple of orthodox candidates could be: Archbishop Tadeusz Wojda (from Poland), Archbishop Nkea Fuanya (from Bamenda, Cameroon) and Archbishop Ayau Kaigama (from Abuja, Nigeria). Several experienced nuncios who have served across different continents, such as American-born Banach, Canadian-born Antun Rajič, or Italian-born Guido Filipazzi, are other possibilities.

Wodja (age 68) serves as the current president of the Polish bishops' conference. He is more conservative, regarding both doctrine and liturgy, and was able to earn the trust of his fellow bishops. Crucially, starting in 1991, he served in numerous capacities for the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and was appointed to be the Congregation's under-secretary on 24 July 2012, serving nearly five years before returning to Poland. His missionary and curial experience could make him a very appealing choice.

Fuanya (age 59) has taken a clear stance on polygamy and on the blessing of homosexual unions. He has been noticed for his leadership in Bamenda, a conflict-ridden region, and for his outspoken role in the Cameroonian Bishops' Conference, particularly on moral and social issues. His public statements against Western ideological pressures have gained attention in Catholic media.

His relatively young age and lack of curial experience might make it more logical to appoint him (at first) as secretary to the dicastery.

Kaigama (age 66) would be of ideal age, served as president of the Nigerian Bishops Conference, as president of the Reunion of Episcopal Conferences of West Africa, as chair of the Interreligious Committee for Peace from 2005 to 2007, and as head of the Christian Association of Nigeria in Plateau. His broad experience, trust of fellow African bishops, and past dealings with anti-Catholic persecution could give both a unique perspective and much-needed expertise to the dicastery. He also had a prominent role during the Synod on the Family, ensuring he's not unfamiliar with the situation in Rome.

Another dicastery that will need attention soon is the **Dicastery for Divine Worship**.

Roche, its prefect, turned 75 this year and his five-year term as prefect will end in May of 2026. The five-year term of the dicastery's secretary, Viola, will end, as well. However, Viola is still young. He's been rumored to be very ambitious and to have been part of a key group in 2024 that wished to go beyond *Traditionis Custodes* and completely ban the Tridentine Mass. He was also said to have been allied to Parolin, specifically on this issue. If the Pope wishes to ensure that Parolin's influence doesn't become too excessive, he can pass over Viola and appoint an outsider as prefect. He could even send Viola back to serve as a bishop somewhere in Italy; and reboot the Dicastery for Divine Worship alongside the Dicastery for Bishops.

Archbishop **Cordileone**, from San Francisco, as prefect would function as a conciliatory gesture towards Americans and traditionalists. He is an experienced and proven archbishop who has always upheld orthodoxy while avoiding extremes.

Other possible candidates to be prefect, or to replace Viola as secretary, are Bishop José Negri (Blumenau, Brazil; age 65) and Joseph Pamplany (age 55, from the Syro-Malabar church in India).

Negri has strongly defended the Catholic faith in heavily divided Brazil, while being known to ensure reverence and discipline in the liturgy.

Pamplany is from the Syro-Malabar rite and has played a crucial role in creating a compromise that prevented a full-blown schism. He has received recognition for his unifying

role which along with his knowledge of the liturgy of a different rite, could make him a real asset to the Dicastery for Divine Worship. He also has an impressive resume serving as Secretary of the Commission for Doctrine and Secretary of the Commission for Inter Ritual Text Books for Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, as member of the Commission of Theology of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences and the Commission for Doctrine for Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council and Chair of the Catechesis Textbook Committee of [Syro-Malabar](#) Catholic Church.

Radical reform

Two dicasteries that might need a more rapid turnover are the **Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith** and the **Dicastery for Culture and Education**. They're both led by two of the most radically liberal and fringe prelates Francis ever appointed, Fernandez and Tolentino de Mendonça, respectively. Pope Leo XIV might want to appoint less controversial prefects, as soon as possible, and even before that make known orthodox bishops and cardinals such as Eijk, Chomalí and Cezar Costa members of these dicasteries to create a more orthodox environment.

Fernandez became notorious for releasing *Fiducia Supplicans* without consulting with other parts of the Curia, while Mendonça has taken a weak stance on homosexuality and supported a pro-abortion nun.

Pope Leo XIV will likely want to replace Fernandez no later than when his term ends in 2028 and quite possibly sooner. Furthermore, Italian priest Armando Matteo, is more than three years into his five-year term as secretary for the doctrinal section of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith. He played a dubious role in the release of *Fiducia Supplicans*. The Pope might not want to reappoint him, but instead look for an adequate replacement. Cardinal Mendonça's term will also end in September 2027.

Fisher (age 65, from Australia) is a logical candidate as prefect for the **Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith**. He is a protégé of late Cardinal Pell, known for his heroic struggle against corruption and unjust persecution, has already served as a member of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith and the Dicastery for Eastern Churches and took a doctoral studies in bioethics at the University of Oxford until 1995, matriculating from University College.

Instead, Cardinal **Erdő** could possibly be appointed to the **Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith**, both as a gesture towards conservative cardinals and as a sign of continuity with the three previous popes.

Zvolenský (the archbishop of Bratislava in Slovakia) is also a known defender of Catholic

doctrine, who served four times as head of the Slovakian Episcopal Conference, has detailed knowledge of the struggles the Church experiences in Eastern Europe and would also make a fine prefect, or otherwise secretary, at the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith.

Another important prelate to consider is Italian Archbishop **Morandi**, of Reggio Emilia-Guastalla. He currently serves as president of the regional bishops' conference and previously as undersecretary of the then Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith, from 2015 till 2017, under Cardinal Muller; and then secretary of the same congregation under Cardinal Ladaria, from 2017 till 2022. He was widely rumored to be behind the 2021 Responsum, which affirmed that the Church cannot bless homosexual unions. Certain heretical activist groups and the German and Belgian bishops viciously attacked this affirmation of the Catholic faith, and it was said he was thrown under the bus by Francis and sent out of Rome in early 2022, as a response. This was never confirmed, however, and after *Fiducia Supplicans*, many bishops and cardinals, from Poland to Uruguay, rallied behind this unambiguous proclamation of the faith.

Morandi could either be called back to serve once again in the dicastery that he served faithfully for so long, now that he has additional experience as a diocesan bishop, or he could be made the new prefect for the Dicastery for Culture and Education, as he previously served as a professor at the Institute of Religious Sciences in Modena and as a lecturer on patristic exegesis at an institute in Rome.

Archbishop Stankevičs (age 70) of Riga, the capital of Latvia, is also highly educated and has experience in Rome, making him suited to bring an Eastern European perspective to Dicastery for Culture and Education as well.

Alternatively, other orthodox cardinals named by Francis could be elevated, including **Goh** (from Singapore), if Pope Leo XIV wants older and more well-known prefects. Goh could lead the **Dicastery for Divine Worship**, as he's very orthodox on liturgy and friendly towards both the old and the new Latin rite.

Balance and integration

Pope Francis left the **Dicastery for the Clergy** and the **Dicastery for the Eastern Churches** in good shape. For the Dicastery for Clergy he promoted South Korean You Heung-sik as prefect and Chilean Ferrada Moreira as secretary, in 2021, while for the [Eastern Churches](#) he appointed Italian diplomat Gugerotti as prefect and Maronite Jalakh as secretary.

You Heung-sik (age 73) while dubious as a possible Pope, has been a firm defender of

priestly celibacy and opposed radical anti-clericalism and supported moderate seminary reform with greater involvement of women, without enabling the push to clericalize women. As an experienced seminary leader himself, he has proven quite suited for this job.

Ferrada Moreira (age 56) is an experienced Chilean clergyman who distinguished himself by calling out the abuse of Father Fernando Karadima, a former mentor figure.

Gugerotti (age 69) is an experienced Italian-born diplomat, who has served for years in Eastern Europe and already served as undersecretary of the Dicastery for Eastern churches, between 1997 and 2011

Jalakh (age 58) is a Maronite Archbishop, who has taken a clear stance in favor of the Uniate tradition and its worth for the Church.

Pope Leo XIV could allow both You Heung-Sil and Ferrada to serve another five year term. You Heung-sik will be close to 80 by the time a second term ends. At that point, if Ferrada **Moreira** proves himself both orthodox and competent, he could take You Heung-sik's place as he is currently under 60. Pope Leo XIV could pursue a similar policy for the Dicastery for Eastern churches.

Cardinal Farrell, however, the prefect for the **Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life**, president of the Supreme Court of Vatican City and the Camerlengo of the Holy Roman Church since 2019 who presided over the funeral of Pope Francis, will turn 78 in a few months. Pope Leo XIV could appoint African Cardinal Ambongo Besungu as his successor as prefect.

Ambongo has strongly defended the Christian family, and natural law, against ideological colonization. His appointment would also give the African continent real influence in the Curia again and greater prominence to an important collaborator of Francis and blend one of the better elements of the previous pontificate with the new one.

Secondary posts

Cardinal Marcello Semeraro of the **Dicastery for Causes of Saints** is also 77. Pope Leo XIV could replace him with a non-Italian, specifically from missionary areas, or countries with a history of martyrdom, such as Archbishop Joseph **Nguyễn Năng** (age 71, from Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam) or Bishop Felix (Saeed) **Dawood Al Shabi** (age 49, Bishop of Zākhō, Iraq), recently elected as general secretary of the Synod of the Chaldean Catholic Church. Both prelates present different peripheries, are familiar with persecution and provide a more concrete look at the Church as a missionary force in a world of darkness.

The **Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue** recently already received a new prefect with Cardinal Koovakad, while Cardinal Koch has been in charge of the **Dicastery for Christian Unity** for 15 years and recently turned 75, making a replacement logical. Yet, considering Koch's moderate diplomatic conservative profile, his strong opposition to the German Synodal Path and his massive experience, it would seem wise for Pope Leo XIV to keep him around for a few more years, during a very important time of ecumenical dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox and attempts to deal with the fallout over *Fiducia Supplicans*.

The **Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life** recently got two new prefects, Cardinal Arttime as pro-prefect and a woman as prefect. Pope Leo XIV will have to answer the question of how this is canonically supposed to work.

Conclusion

A mix of keeping competent younger curial figures, adding Francis' cardinals from the peripheries and the promotion of a younger generation of orthodox and hardworking bishops seems to be the balance that the Curia, and by extension the Catholic Church, badly needs.

Pope Leo XIV has the possibility to give authority to more orthodox and capable prelates who can help guide the Church for many decades, while strengthening unity and providing needed reform to the Vatican.



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"He said to him the third time: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?" (John 21:17)

Habemus Papam Pope Leo XIV

By Murray Rundus

On May 8, 2025, around 6 p.m. in Rome, crowds began gradually leaving St. Peter's Square. We had been expecting white smoke from the Sistine Chapel, if there was to be any, around 30 minutes earlier, as that is when the Vatican Press Office had told us was the latest approximate time for smoke to appear. It would seem that the Conclave was to move into a fifth round of voting, the same number of votes that it took for Pope Francis to be elected. After filming a short video explaining the number of votes it took, and how this could mean we would see a long conclave that everyone was anticipating, there was a roar from the crowd. As I looked behind me, there was white smoke; a new Pope had been elected. Later in the day than anticipated, but after only four rounds of voting, the number it took to swiftly elect Pope Benedict XVI, the Cardinals managed to elect Pope Leo XIV. There was an initial optimism in the air as it was announced that Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost would be Pope. Some saw him as a complete unknown, but we had reported just that week that he was a likely top-three contender. The Pope came out onto the loggia in the red mozzetta, a tradition neglected by Pope Francis, and immediately he proclaimed the words of the Risen Christ, emphasizing the true and historical nature of the Resurrection but also imploring the crowd to take up a more fervent dedication

to Our Lady, all accompanied by his blessing and a plenary indulgence.

What worried me then, and what still worries me, is that the traditional media would fall into what I called at the time a "vibes-based analysis," one based more on emotion than reality itself. This reality showed that the result of this conclave proved that this kind of emotional or instinctual analysis was extremely faulty. Already moving into the Conclave, there were many who were saying they predicted Cardinal Parolin would become Pope because of a feeling of impending doom. Many respectable journalists in Rome only had that much to offer! Those who had been studying the Conclave, in this period of history where we know practically everything about each of the Cardinal electors, knew that Parolin had fallen into disfavor due to the scandals of the China deal, property agreements, and general discontent with his job as Secretary of State. We also knew that the College was relatively more conservative than was being reported, with many of the Cardinals selected by Pope Francis being selected for their identity as being located on the peripheries rather than for their ideological position.¹ This, combined with a number of reports from those who knew the Cardinals well, allowed Vatican analysts, including those of us at *Catholic Family News*, to accurately assess that Cardinal Prevost was indeed a likely contender.



*Leo PP. XIV
8 maggio 2025*

Reading Pope Leo XIV

I believe it to be very important, especially for lay people involved in the traditional movement, to be precise in their reading of the Pontificate of Pope Leo XIV, to avoid emotional responses, and most importantly, to insist on judging our times by clear principles applied with prudence.

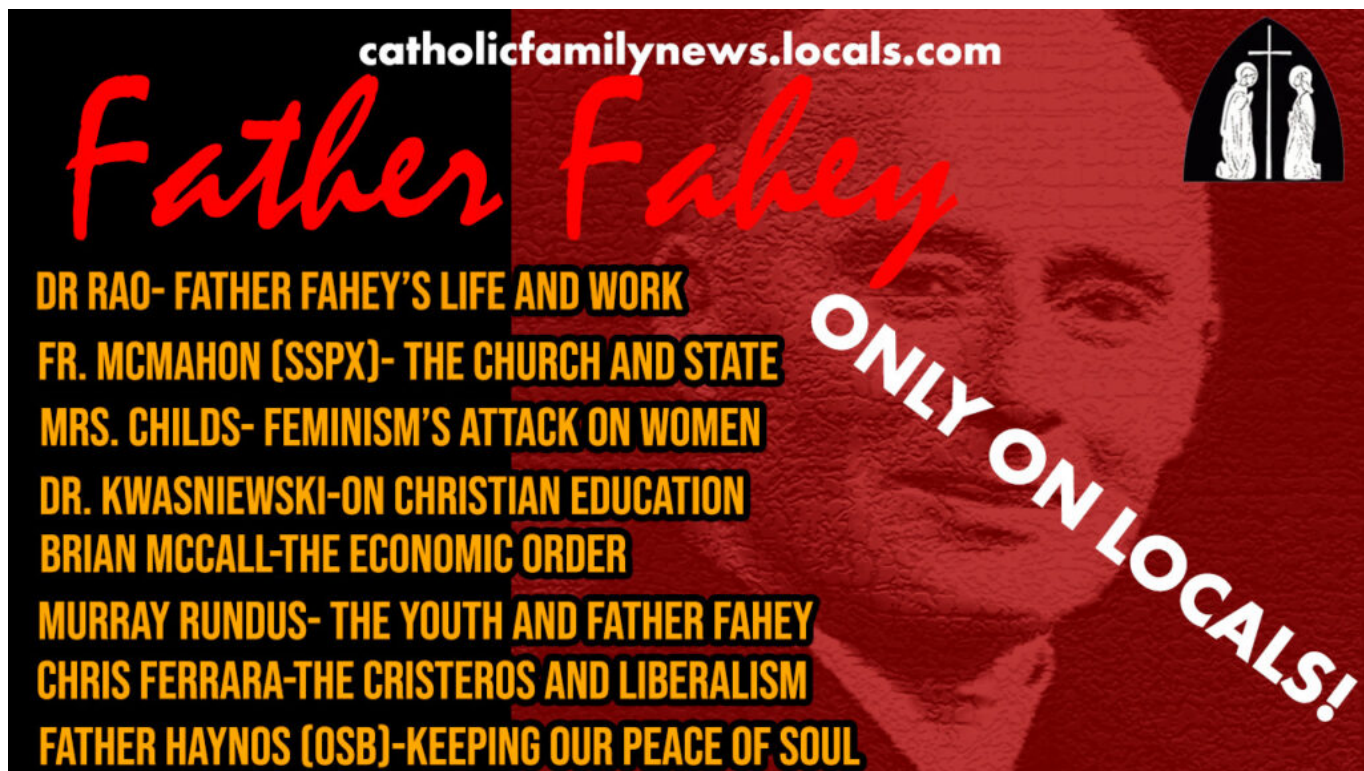
The election of Pope Leo XIV has drawn a mix of cautious optimism and vehement criticism from the traditionalist world. While to me it seems the consensus is developing towards optimism, the confusion is somewhat understandable. How is one to react when the predecessor of Pope Leo destroyed many communities and actively

concerned himself with disrupting the spiritual lives of so many? There is also a more practical and principled problem as there is now a mix of perspectives under the umbrella term "traditionalist" of those who recognized Pope Francis as a valid Pope and those who did not in various forms, whether saying Benedict

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