



Vox Populi
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The Papal conclave to elect the next pope will begin on May 7th in the Vatican's Sistine Chapel.

The cardinals will celebrate the Mass for the Election of the Roman Pontiff in St Peter's Basilica in the morning of Wednesday May 7th (Rome time) before processing into the Sistine Chapel late that afternoon-early evening.

There are 135 cardinals under the age of 80 who are eligible to vote in a papal election.

The youngest member of the conclave is 45-year old Ukrainian-born Cardinal Mykola Bychok of the Ukrainian Eparchy of Sts Peter and Paul of Melbourne.

Cardinals cast their votes for the election of the Pope through a secret ballot. By tradition and law this is held in the Sistine Chapel within the Vatican Apostolic Palace, which was closed to the public on Monday and remains completely sealed off until the election is completed.

Votes are taken once or twice in a morning session and once or twice in an afternoon session.

A two-thirds majority of the electors present is required to elect a Pope.

After the votes are counted, all ballots are burned. If the ballot was inconclusive, a chimney positioned over the Sistine Chapel and visible from St Peter's Square, emits black smoke. If a Pope is elected, white smoke is emitted.

Once the Cardinals have elected a new Pope, the Dean of the College, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, asks for the elected candidate's consent - "Do you accept your canonical election as Supreme Pontiff?".

Upon receiving consent, he then asks: "What name do you wish to be called?"

It is from this moment the newly-elected Pope, leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics, acquires full and supreme authority over the universal church.