

GMUNC XII

Papal

Conclave

Rayla Chen • Head Chair
Reese Giresi • Co-Chair



Ad Hoc Background Guide Text Fields

I. About Chairs

Head Chair:



Greetings delegates!

My name is Rayla and I'm incredibly excited and honored to be your head chair of the Ad-Hoc of the Secretary-General this year. I am a senior at Gunn High School and have been doing MUN for over three years. With this club, I have received many amazing opportunities to participate in local and travel conferences, and with it, boost my writing and public speaking skills. Outside of school and MUN, I enjoy figure skating and hiking & backpacking. I look forward to working with all of you as a chair for the last time at GMUNC!

Email: rc40998@pausd.us

Co-Chair:

Hello!

My name is Reece Giresi, I am a senior here at Gunn, and I am excited to be working for GMUNC for the first time! I discovered my passion for MUN during my junior year and have loved it ever since. Crisis committees are always my favorite due to their fast paced nature and all the twists and turns they take. I'm so excited to see what you all come up with, especially not knowing the topic beforehand and having it be on a subject you might not have been familiar with before! I chose this topic because it is one I find immensely interesting and I'm very excited to run it. In my free time apart from MUN I enjoy studying linguistics, reading, and working at the Los Altos History Museum so feel free to ask me about any of these subjects and more. Here's to a great committee and good luck!

Email: rvgiresi@gmail.com

II. About Committee

The Papal Conclave committee serves as the secretive and traditional process by which the College of Cardinals elect a new pope; emphasizing diplomacy, faith, and political maneuvering within the Vatican. Delegates must navigate religious doctrine, internal alliances, and global influence as they guide the Catholic Church through a time of transition.

This unique ad-hoc panel challenges delegates to balance theological integrity with the practical application of politics, all while operating under strict procedural secrecy and centuries-old traditions. Delegates will be expected to react to dynamic developments and shape the future of the Church through decisions, negotiations, and moral convictions.

We encourage all delegates to fully immerse themselves in the historical weight of this conclave. Remember, **your decisions will be written in bold in history books.** This committee promises an intense and thought-provoking experience that will test your leadership, adaptability, and understanding of global dynamics and theocracy.

III. Foreword

Welcome to the Gunn Model United Nations Conference XII and the Papal Conclave. Having previously attended GMUNC, I am honored to be a part of this conference again and excited for another memorable year.

This committee explores the intricate intersection of faith, tradition, and politics within the upper echelons of the Catholic Church. Delegates will delve into the ideological divides among the cardinals, the global implications of papal leadership, and what happens behind closed doors in shaping the Church's direction. We hope that all participants will consider not only religious doctrine but also geopolitical realities, media scrutiny, and internal power dynamics. Since this is an ad hoc committee, a position paper will not be necessary and no research awards will be awarded in this committee. Crisis updates will occur, and all writing will be done in the form of crisis notes and directives.

Please send committee-specific inquiries to the committee email address:

gmunc.adhoc@gmail.com. Additionally, all delegates are required to complete contact and medical forms to participate in the conference. Please confirm with your delegation that the required documents have been submitted.

I wish you the best with preparation for the conference and look forward to seeing everyone on October 11, 2025 for GMUNC XII.

Best,
Rayla Chen
Head Chair of Ad-Hoc

IV. Introduction



Cardinal electors vote for the new pope in the Sistine Chapel.

Welcome to the GMUNC Ad Hoc committee! In this committee delegates take on the role of cardinals and will be given the important task of electing the new pope.

Sede Vacante! It is early May of 2025 and Pope Francis has passed away. After nine days of mourning, the cardinals have gathered in Rome to prepare to be sequestered as long as it takes for the pope's seat to be full again. In the interim, the College of Cardinals is in charge of the rudimentary governance of the Vatican alongside the Camerlengo.

The cardinals know how serious the task ahead of them is. In a time when the world is facing conflicts, environmental crises, and threats to human rights, among others, the nearly 1.4 billion catholics in the world often look towards the pope as a guiding figure and a voice of wisdom.

Moreover, the cardinals all know how important the pope's role is, especially in an increasingly secular world where the traditions of the church must be reconciled with modern realities.

With these issues at the forefronts of their minds, the Cardinals must decide who will be the best successor to St. Peter.

Best of luck and godspeed.

V. Historical Context



A painting of the 1271 conclave, the first and longest in history

The death of Pope Clement IV in 1268 led to a massive crisis of succession for the catholic church. The Cardinals in charge of electing the pope were split into two camps, with those supporting the French king in one, and those supporting the Holy Roman empire in the other. Neither side was willing to compromise and as a result the elections dragged on. Out of frustration, the people of Viterbo where the voting was taking place, became frustrated, and locked the cardinals inside the Papal Palace. This was referred to as being locked up “cum clave,” meaning “with a key”, which later morphed into the word “conclave.”

Over the course of three years the cardinals still could not come to a decision, so the people took more drastic steps including reducing their food rations and removing the roof to the palace. After three years and three of the nineteen cardinals present dying, the remaining cardinals managed to elect pope Gregory X. Pope Gregory X, seeking to avoid such a fiasco in the future, formalized the rules of conclave and how the cardinals ought to be sequestered in a constitutional document known as the “Ubi Periculum,” which is still largely used today.

In the years since the formal papal conclave has become a staple of papal succession and is the legal means by which popes are chosen. Though the rules have undergone a few changes in the years since Gregory X, such as not allowing cardinals over 80 to vote, the fundamental process of sequestering and voting remains the same.

VI. Past Church Action



The ecumenical council known as Vatican II

Of course, as absolute monarch of the Holy See, the Pope has wide reaching authority to influence many facets of catholic practice globally as well as the official doctrines and practices of the church. One example of a major reform put forward by the church in the 21st century came from the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, an event commonly referred to as Vatican II. During this council, the church instituted various liberal reforms including transitioning the language of mass from Latin to the local language. Additionally, Vatican II increased the participation of the laity in church functions, turned alters around so that priests

could see their congregations, and made statements acknowledging religious freedom as a basic right for all religious traditions as well as recognizing other christian denominations as fellow christians (though they were still considered misguided). Vatican II was one of the largest recent attempts to adapt the church to modern realities and address modern problems, though it certainly hasn't been the last, with the notoriously liberal Pope Francis doing things such as denouncing climate change as a moral evil, opening dialogues with those of other faiths, and advocating for more inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in the church. Many of these reforms have been attempts to address issues such as declining church attendance and controversial beliefs and doctrines espoused by the church.

While these reforms have been a trend for the catholic church throughout the 21st century, they have faced criticism from all sides. Traditionalists are often upset by the liberal reforms of the church, claiming that such reforms represent the church sacrificing traditional values and traditions to appeal to a secular world. Still others criticize them for not going far enough, such as those that feel the church is still too regressive on issues like birth control, divorce, and the ordination of women.

For all of these reasons, Catholics around the world are watching the conclave with bated breath, as the results of the conclave will set the stage for church policy and doctrine for the next few years. As political polarization has increased around the world, the catholic church too has been affected, with both liberal and conservative cardinals advocating for what they believe and trying to express their beliefs through their choice of pope.

VII. Current Situation



The Funeral of Pope Francis

In the wake of Pope Francis's death, the college of cardinals has been assembled. Francis was known as a great reformer in the church, however, some catholics found many of his stances controversial and for this reason the future policy of the church is uncertain. Will the cardinals elect a more conservative pope who might anger the more liberal catholics, a more liberal pope who might anger the conservatives, or vote for a moderate who might anger or appease both. These are the questions many are asking themselves. As the cardinals are preparing to be sequestered, each has his own agenda and are considering the needs of their own dioceses. Some may even have silently picked out their papal names.

The preparations are made, the papal chambers have been sealed off, and you are preparing for what may very well be the biggest decision of your career. Now is the time to ask yourself, how do you feel called to vote?

VIII. Goals for Committee

- Elect a new pope who will be a suitable leader for the catholic church going forward including by addressing hot button topics
- Govern the church during the interim while there is no pope
- Respond to emerging crisis updates so that the conclave can run smoothly
- Ensure that the unique needs of your own diocese are represented
- Determine what exactly you think the identity of the church should be going forward and act accordingly

IX. Questions to Consider

- What are some of the most central issues facing the church today?
- Given each candidate's actions and background, who would be most suitable to address these issues?
- What are some ways you can represent your diocese?
- What is important to you given your unique background?
- How can you leverage the powers afforded to you by your position within the church to achieve your goals?

X. References

- Andrews, Frank, and Anna Matranga. “What Happens next after Pope Francis’ Death?” *Cbsnews.com*, CBS News, 21 Apr. 2025, www.cbsnews.com/news/pope-francis-death-what-happens-next-funeral-conclave/.
- “Archives: Cardinals.” *The College of Cardinals Report*, 2024, collegeofcardinalsreport.com/cardinals/?_papabili=1&_cardinals_in_depth=1. Accessed 1 July 2025.
- Britannica. “Roman Catholicism - the Second Vatican Council.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/Roman-Catholicism/The-Second-Vatican-Council.
- Matranga, Anna. “Who Will Be the next Pope? Here’s a List of Some Possible Candidates to Succeed Pope Francis.” *Cbsnews.com*, CBS News, 21 Apr. 2025, www.cbsnews.com/news/who-will-be-the-next-pope-list-of-possible-candidates/.
- News, Vatican. “New Church Statistics Reveal Growing Catholic Population, Fewer Pastoral Workers.” *Vaticannews.va*, Vatican News, 20 Mar. 2025, www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2025-03/pontifical-yearbook-2025-priests-religious-statistics.html.
- . “What Happens after the Pope Dies?” *Vaticannews.va*, Vatican News, 22 Apr. 2025, www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2025-04/pope-death-what-happens-interregnum-sede-vacans.html.
- Pew Research Center. “The Global Catholic Population.” *Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project*, 13 Feb. 2013, www.pewresearch.org/religion/2013/02/13/the-global-catholic-population/.
- Rome, in. “The Catholic Church Faces Contemporary Challenges: A Roundtable with José Casanova.” *Georgetown.edu*, 2023, romeoffice.georgetown.edu/events/the-catholic-church-faces-contemporary-challenges-a-roundtable-with-jose-casanova.
- Tovar, Mariano. “The Longest Conclave in History: 1,006 Days, Cardinals Dying, and Only Bread and Water.” *AS USA*, 6 May 2025, en.as.com/latest_news/the-longest-conclave-in-history-1006-days-cardinals-dying-and-only-bread-and-water-n/. Accessed 1 July 2025.

XI. Committee Members

Kevin Farrell, Camerlengo
Luis Tagle, Pro-Prefect for Dicastry of Evangelization
Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of His Holiness (acting as dean of the college of cardinals)
Robert Prevost, Prefect of the Dicastery of Bishops
Peter Turkson, Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences
Kurt Koch, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity
Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem
Jean-Marc Aveline, Archbishop of Marseille
Peter Erdo, Archbishop of Budapest
Matteo Zuppi, Archbishop of Bologna

Fridolin Besungu, Archbishop of Kinshasa
Mykola Bychok, Eparch of Saints Peter and Paul of Melborne (Ukrainian Greek Church)
Willem Eijk, Archbishop of Utrecht
Dominique Mathieu, Archbishop of Tehran-Isfahan
Odilo Scherer, Archbishop of São Paulo
Louis Sako, Patriarch of Baghdad
Charels Bo, Archbishop of Yangon
Carlos Retes, Archbishop of Mexico City
Dominico Battaglia, Archbishop of Naples
Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York