

VATICAN ANNOUNCES NEW CONSTITUTION

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Defined by an emphasis on evangelization, charity,

and the inclusion of the laity, the new constitution to govern the Roman Curia will go into effect on Pentecost.

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Vatican experts [presented](#) Pope Francis' long-awaited Apostolic Constitution on the Roman Curia on March 21st at a press conference, two days after the text was [released](#). The new constitution entitled *Praedicate Evangelium* (Preach the Gospel) is scheduled to go into effect on June 5th, the Solemnity of Pentecost.

The [new 54-page constitution](#) will replace the version valid since 1988, *Pastor bonus* (The Good Shepherd). *Praedicate Evangelium* is intended to help Rome position itself for future service in local churches around the world. The document, the result of years of work between the pope and the Council of Cardinals, is defined by a strong focus on evangelization.

Praedicate Evangelium's innovation that lay people—including women—will one day be allowed to head departments at the Vatican has garnered [particular attention](#). This practice, which has already begun unofficially with the appointment of Paolo Ruffini as head of the Dicastery for Communications in 2018, will now formally become part of the Vatican's constitution.

Striking organizational consolidation and leveling reforms, signaled by the [renaming of all the Curia's central institutions](#) as “dicasteries,” include the merger of the Congregation for the Evangelization of People and the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization (established by Benedict XVI in 2010) into the new Dicastery for Evangelization, which will be directly subordinate to the pope. The Office of Papal Charities is receiving an upgrade and will now be known as the Dicastery for the Service

of Charity.

While the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is certain to lose prominence under this new constitution, becoming one of many dicasteries in line with the desired decentralization, the Secretariat of State will remain clearly separate and is bound to appear more distinctly as a papal secretariat, rather than as a ‘world church command center.’

The appointment of bishops will now involve the inclusion of “in an appropriate form, members of the people of God in the respective dioceses,” though this “appropriate form” is not further defined.

The constitution emphasizes the Pope’s desire to put the “catholicity of the Church” on display through a mixed composition of curia personnel. Future staff should bring experience in pastoral care, love for the poor, and the ability to see “the signs of the times.”

In the preamble to *Praedicate Evangelium*, the Pontiff emphasizes the central importance of preaching for the Church and thus for the Roman Curia. For the Pope the Church is called to “missionary conversion.” Francis’ preamble likewise emphasizes the [principle of synodality](#), as in the “Church of listening” everyone can learn from everyone else. In all of this, the Pope tasks the Roman Curia with bringing itself “into harmony with the path of evangelization that the Church is following.” The “interior reform” he wants derives from the “spirit of the Council,” a common reference to Vatican II.

Francis’ shift of focus from the individual “good shepherd” to group leadership leads the Church in some senses into uncharted waters. Time will tell if this mixed Curia will have better success in preaching the Gospel around the world.