

February consistory to create new cardinals will feature changes

VATICAN CITY - In part to avoid giving the impression that becoming a cardinal is a sacrament or quasi-sacrament, Pope Benedict XVI will use a revised, streamlined prayer service to create 22 new cardinals in February.

“The rite used up to now has been revised and simplified with the approval of the Holy Father Benedict XVI,” the Vatican newspaper, *L’Osservatore Romano*, reported Jan. 7.

The paper said there would not be a “ring Mass” the day after the consistory; the new cardinals will receive their red hats, their cardinal rings and the assignment of their titular churches in Rome during the same ceremony Feb. 18.

They still will celebrate Mass with the pope the day after the consistory; at the beginning of the Mass, the first of the new cardinals - Cardinal-designate Fernando Filoni, prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples - will express thanks to the pope on behalf of the group.

The ritual was revised in order to maintain an atmosphere of prayer, while not giving the impression that becoming a cardinal is a liturgical event, the newspaper said.

“The creation of new cardinals should be located within a context of prayer while avoiding any element that could give the idea of a ‘sacrament of the cardinalate,’” it said. “In fact, historically the consistory was never considered a liturgical rite, but rather a meeting of the pope with the cardinals in relation to the governance of the church.”

Within the consistory itself, giving the cardinals their rings is not the only change being made, L'Osservatore Romano said.

The opening and closing prayers will be the ancient prayers, which were drawn upon in 1969 when Pope Paul VI held his first consistory using a prayer service designed after the Second Vatican Council, the paper said. The prayer service also will be shorter, eliminating the first reading and including only the Gospel reading: Mark 10:32-45, in which Jesus explains to the disciples that he came to serve, not be served.

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