

# **Reflections on joy at the Vatican: Celebrating the Holy Father's feast day, new cardinals, and the surprise appearance of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI**

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..." (1 Peter 1:3a)*

There is nothing that brings more joy to my Church-loving heart than a special occasion with the Holy Father. And Saturday was his papal feast day, the Chair of Saint Peter the Apostle, which is the commemoration of the spiritual authority of the popes through the ages as passed down from Jesus to the Apostle Peter. Pope Francis marked this special day by creating 19 new cardinals at a General Consistory.

## **The new Cardinals:**

The first new cardinals named by our current Holy Father, they come from countries all over the world including: Italy, Germany, Britain, Nicaragua, Canada, Ivory Coast, Brazil, Argentina, South Korea, Chile, Burkina Faso, the Philippines, and Haiti.

Some of these men clearly represent Pope Francis' priority of the preferential option for the poor and his emphasis on the clergy being close to those living on the

margins of society.

Sixteen of the new prelates are under age 80 and thus eligible, when needed, to elect a pope. The youngest of the group is 55-year old Cardinal Chibly Langlois of Haiti, a place stricken by devastating earthquakes and hurricanes in recent years, said to be the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

Among the three new cardinals who are over 80 years and being honored for their lifelong service to the Church is the former priest-secretary to Pope John XXIII, 98-year old Cardinal Loris Francesco Capovilla. Not able to attend the general consistory due to health reasons, this new cardinal is the oldest to ever be named to the College and was once the priest-secretary to Pope John XXIII. This is another wonderful reminder of the upcoming canonization of “Good Pope John” on April 27.

### **A surprise visit from the Holy Father Emeritus:**

At yesterday morning’s General Consistory at St. Peter’s Basilica, the new cardinals received the symbols of their office: the cardinal’s ring and the traditional red zucchetto and biretta whose color symbolizes their willingness to die for Christ and the Church.

The wonderful surprise of the morning was that Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI slipped in from the side door and attended the entire ceremony. This marks the first ceremony ever attended by two pontiffs in St. Peter’s Basilica. Another entry for the Church history books as represented symbolically was Church shepherds past, present, and future!!



*Photo: Vatican Radio*

In a letter sent last month to the newly-named cardinals, Pope Francis exhorted

them that becoming a cardinal “does not signify a promotion, an honor nor a decoration: it is simply a service that demands a broader vision and a bigger heart... And, although it seems a paradox, this ability to look further and love more universally with greater intensity can be acquired only by following the way of the Lord: The way of lowliness and of humility, taking the form of a servant.”

### **Remembering the consistory of 2012:**

Two years ago on February 18, our Archbishop Emeritus of Baltimore, Cardinal Edwin O’Brien, was elevated to the College of Cardinals, along with Archbishop of New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan. That day too was filled with great joy. Little did these two new American cardinals know that they would witness and participate in important new chapters of Church history in less than twelve months.



*Cardinal Edwin O’Brien, the Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, Archbishop-Emeritus of Baltimore, must have been remembering the joyful emotions of 2012 during yesterday’s consistory. (Photo: Catholic News Agency)*



*My friend Father Doug Kenney of St. Margaret Church, Bel Air, was part of the 2012 Archdiocese of Baltimore pilgrimage. He is seen here with Cardinal O’Brien at the celebration that followed for both Eminences Cardinal O’Brien and Cardinal Dolan at the North American College. (Photo: Fr. C. Doug Kenney)*

### **Tuning in:**

I watched the rebroadcast of today's General Consistory at lunchtime on EWTN. It warmed my heart to see the Holy Father Emeritus seated in the front row on the side among the College of Cardinals. Imagine having him praying each and every day for Pope Francis and the Church? What a great blessing!!

As I watched 17 of the new cardinals approach the Holy Father at the Altar of the Confession, it was a touching moment to see him place the red biretta on their head and proclaim in Latin:

*“To the praise of God, and the honor of the Apostolic See receive the red biretta, the sign of the cardinal's dignity; and know that you must be willing to conduct yourselves with fortitude even to the shedding of your blood: for the growth of the Christian faith, the peace and tranquility of the People of God, and the freedom and spread of the Holy Roman Church.”*

Each Cardinal was then given the name of their titular church in Rome. Afterwards, Pope Francis walked down the steps to the front of the nave where he installed wheelchair-bound Cardinal Jean-Pierre Kutwa of the Ivory Coast and embraced him with the sign of peace.

I was particularly moved at the end of the consistory to see the Holy Father go over to the statue of St. Peter the Apostle, fully adorned for the feast day, and pay reverence by rubbing his foot. I look forward to this April when my husband and I will be in St. Peter's Basilica and we will rub the foot of this statue representing the continuity of Church shepherds through the ages.



*The adorned statue of St. Peter the Apostle can be seen (back right) as the new Cardinals greet their brothers in the College of Cardinals after receiving their birettas. (Photo: Catholic News Agency)*

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**Prayer for the Holy Father:**

*Lord, source of eternal life and truth, give to Your shepherd, the Pope, a spirit of courage and right judgment, a spirit of knowledge and love.*

*By governing with fidelity those entrusted to his care may he, as successor to the apostle Peter and Vicar of Christ, build Your church into a sacrament of unity, love, and peace for all the world.*

*We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.*

**May the new members of the College of Cardinals be blessed abundantly for the work that they undertake for the Church for the years to come: Ad multos annos!!**

**Videos to enjoy:**

1. Enjoy this 80-second video with highlights of Pope Francis and Pope Emeritus at the General Consistory:
2. Watch the entire General Consistory for the Creation of New Cardinals here: