

Vatican secretary of state to serve as chamberlain

VATICAN CITY – Pope Benedict XVI has named Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Vatican secretary of state, to serve as the camerlengo, the chamberlain of the Holy Roman Church.

While the pope is alive, the job is basically just a title. But when a pope dies, the chamberlain is charged with sealing the papal apartments, chairing consultations about the papal funeral, making the practical preparations for the conclave to elect the next pope, and chairing a committee of cardinals taking care of the temporal affairs of the church until a new pope is elected.

Cardinal Bertone, whose appointment was announced April 4, succeeds Spanish Cardinal Eduardo Martinez Somalo, who turned 80 March 31 and consequently is no longer eligible to enter a conclave to elect a new pope.

The Spaniard was named chamberlain in 1993, fulfilling the responsibilities of his office with the April 2, 2005, death of Pope John Paul II and the April 19, 2005, election of Pope Benedict.

Pope Benedict named Cardinal Bertone, 72, as the Vatican secretary of state, in June 2006. The former archbishop of Genoa had served as secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith when the future Pope Benedict was prefect of that congregation.