

**VATICAN CITY:  
HABEMUS PAPAM! THE  
PAPAL CONCLAVE**



# VATICAN CITY: HABEMUS PAPAM! THE PAPAL CONCLAVE

## Description

Through the investigation of primary and secondary sources, including written, digital and media sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the details of the Roman Catholic Papal Conclave, its history and what role it still plays in the election of a new pope.

## Subjects

World History  
European History

## Grade Level

11-12

## Duration

90 minutes

## Tour Links

- Vatican City
- Sistine Chapel
- St. Peter's Square

## Essential Questions

- Who is the Pope? What control does he have over the Roman Catholic Church? How does one become pope?
- What is the Papal Conclave? How long has it been in existence? How were popes chosen before the conclave came into existence?
- What changes to the Papal Conclave have popes made since 1870, when they lost control of Rome to the newly created Kingdom of Italy?
- Is the Papal Conclave still necessary today?

## Academic Summary

On 13 Mar 2013, at approximately 7:06 pm local time in Rome, smoke began to billow from a small chimney attached to the roof of the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican. After a few seconds, wild cheers of “fumo bianco” could be heard throughout crowd as white smoke rose into the damp evening. Bells in the Vatican and all over Rome started to ring in celebration. The crowd of almost 80,000 people assembled in St. Peter’s Square, many of whom had been camped out for over two days, quickly rose as one voice in a jubilant cheer. Millions of Roman Catholics watching television around the world joined in the celebration. About ten minutes later, French Cardinal Jean-Luis Tauran, Proto-Deacon of the College of Cardinals, appeared at the papal balcony in the center of St. Peter’s Basilica and spoke in Latin the words the world had been waiting to hear.

*Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum. Habemus Papam!*  
(I declare to you a great joy. We have a Pope!)

About 10 minutes after the announcement of his election, 76-year-old Argentinian Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio stepped out onto that same balcony clothed in a simple all white cassock and addressed the world for the first time as Pope Francis I, thanking them for their support and leading them in prayer. The throne of St. Peter, home to the Bishop Rome, the head of the Roman Catholic Church, and the oldest absolute monarchy in the world, was again filled.

Even in the modern age of televisions, “chimney cams”, the internet, twitter and smartphones, the election of a new pope is shrouded in secrecy. When the current pope dies (or resigns as in the case of Pope Benedict XVI in 2013), and there is a vacancy in the post, Cardinals (“princes” of the church) from all over the world come to the Vatican and sequester themselves inside what is known as the “Conclave” (literally from the Latin phrase “with a key”). The cardinals lock themselves inside the Sistine Chapel after taking an oath of secrecy and they take as many votes as necessary to elect one of their own. A 2/3 supermajority vote is required to elect a new pope. After each vote, if no one is chosen, the ballots are burned in a specially designed furnace. Special chemicals (the composition of which is unknown to the world) are burned with the ballots to produce black smoke, a sign to those outside that the conclave continues. Eventually, sometimes after many days or even weeks, the cardinals are able to come to a decision on a new Supreme Pontiff. The ballots from that vote are burned with different secret chemicals which turn the smoke white, signaling the election of the new Pope. Even in the modern age, the Roman Curia, a two-thousand-year-old institution steeped in rituals, maintains its traditions in the face of ever-changing technology.

Through the investigation of primary and secondary sources, including written, digital and media sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the details of the Roman Catholic Papal Conclave, its history and what role it still plays in the election of a new pope.

## Objectives

1. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the Papal Conclave and how it chooses a new pope.
2. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how the Papal Conclave came into use and how popes were chosen before the Roman Catholic Church used the conclave.
3. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the changes modern popes since 1870 have made to the conclave and why those changes were made.
4. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how the Catholic Church maintains its traditions and secrecy in an ever-increasing technology-driven global society.

## Procedures

### I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: What role does the Pope play in governing the Roman Catholic Church? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of documents and readings from the websites listed. (5 min)

### II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – Papal Conclave (15 min)
- Videos – Habemus Papam and the Conclave in the History (35 minutes for both videos)
- Independent Activity – Students read the articles and sources on the Papal Conclave and its history, taking notes as appropriate. (15 min)
- Suggestion: Have the students read some of these articles and sources for homework before class.
- Group Activity – Socratic Seminar: Discussion on the Papal Conclave, its history and its role in the Roman Catholic Church today. (15 min)

### III. Closure

- Assessment / DBQ – Essay: Explain in detail the Papal Conclave, its history, how it has changed over the centuries and its role in the Roman Catholic Church today.

## Extension

### On tour: Vatican City

While on tour, you will visit Vatican City, St. Peter's Basilica and the Sistine Chapel, home not only to world famous works of art, but also to the center of the Roman Catholic Church. Students will have the opportunity to see for themselves the sites where the Papal Conclave takes place. Make sure to look for the Papal Balcony above the main doors at St. Peter's Basilica. Facing the main square, it is where the announcement of "Habemus Papam!" is made and then where the newly elected pope traditionally addresses the crowd for the first time.

# Web Links

## Lesson Plan Websites

- [www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2013/03/11/173991833/a-rough-guide-to-the-papal-conclave](http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2013/03/11/173991833/a-rough-guide-to-the-papal-conclave)  
A Rough Guide to the Papal Conclave – from NPR (National Public Radio)
- [www.csun.edu/~hcfll004/conclave-list.html](http://www.csun.edu/~hcfll004/conclave-list.html)  
List of Conclaves (website). Outstanding website on every conclave or papal election since 1073 CE by Professor John Paul Adams, head of the Classics Section of the Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures department, College of Humanities at California State University Northridge – highly recommended for students and/or teachers.
- [www.fisheaters.com/papalelections.html](http://www.fisheaters.com/papalelections.html)  
How Popes are Elected (website)
- [www.panoramicearth.com/4007/Rome/Tombs\\_of\\_the\\_Popes\\_in\\_Vatican\\_Grotto](http://www.panoramicearth.com/4007/Rome/Tombs_of_the_Popes_in_Vatican_Grotto)  
Tombs of the Popes in Vatican Grotto (website) from Panoramic Earth – contains information and a video on the Vatican Grotto, where most of the popes are buried.
- [www.daramccarthy.com/tourguide/vatican/vatican-papal-tombs.php](http://www.daramccarthy.com/tourguide/vatican/vatican-papal-tombs.php)  
The Papal Tombs (website) by Dara McCarthy, summer tour guide in Rome
- [newsinfo.inquirer.net/373297/pope-live-white-smoke-and-awaiting-the-appearance-of-new-pontiff](http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/373297/pope-live-white-smoke-and-awaiting-the-appearance-of-new-pontiff)  
“Pope Live: White Smoke and Awaiting the Appearance of a new Pontiff” article on Inquirer News
- [www.businessinsider.com/how-the-vatican-makes-whiteblack-smoke-2013-3](http://www.businessinsider.com/how-the-vatican-makes-whiteblack-smoke-2013-3)  
“How They Make the White or Black Smoke that Announces the New Pope” (article) on Business Insider – Science
- [stmichaelsociety.com/2013/03/12/the-traditions-and-history-behind-the-white-smoke-over-the-vatican/](http://stmichaelsociety.com/2013/03/12/the-traditions-and-history-behind-the-white-smoke-over-the-vatican/)  
The Traditions and History Behind the “White Smoke Over the Vatican” (article)
- [www.powershow.com/view/1358f5-MGJhN/THE\\_CONCLAVE\\_powerpoint\\_ppt\\_presentation](http://www.powershow.com/view/1358f5-MGJhN/THE_CONCLAVE_powerpoint_ppt_presentation)  
The Conclave – PowerPoint Presentation
- [www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1](http://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1)  
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video) – great 2-minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes. From Shilpa Duvor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA – highly recommended for teachers.
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3Cz4LhKh5E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3Cz4LhKh5E)  
The Conclave in the History (video) – this film, in Italian but with English subtitles, was produced by Rai Tre (Channel 3 on Italian state TV) and is a comprehensive look at the Papal Conclave. Highly recommended for both students and teachers.
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=v58H5Rs8cH0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v58H5Rs8cH0)  
Habemus Papam (2013 video)

## Background Information

- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papal\\_conclave](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papal_conclave)

- “Papal Conclave” – Wikipedia article
- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vatican\\_City](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vatican_City)
- “Vatican City” – Wikipedia article
- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sede\\_vacante](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sede_vacante)
- “Sede Vacante (Vacant Seat)” – Wikipedia article
- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/College\\_of\\_Cardinals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/College_of_Cardinals)
- “College of Cardinals” – Wikipedia article
- [www.passports.com/group\\_leaders/on\\_the\\_road/italy/the\\_vatican](http://www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/italy/the_vatican)
- On the Road: Vatican City – from Passports Educational Travel

### **Other Relevant Passports Websites**

- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/italy/prisoner-of-the-vatican-pius-xi-and-the-roman-question](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/prisoner-of-the-vatican-pius-xi-and-the-roman-question)  
Prisoner of the Vatican: Pius IX and the Roman Question 1870
- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/italy/solving-the-roman-question-lateran-accords-of-1929](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/solving-the-roman-question-lateran-accords-of-1929)  
Solving the Roman Question – Mussolini, Pius XI and the Lateran Accords 1929

### **Key Terms**

- Bishop of Rome
- Cardinal
- Catholic
- Conclave
- Habemus Papam
- Pope
- Sistine Chapel
- Vatican City

