



THE COLLEGE OF CARDINALS

College of Cardinals

- The cardinals were from a very early period, assistants of the pope in his liturgical functions, in the care of the poor, the administration of papal finances and possessions
- The decree of Nicholas II (1059), *In nomine Domini*, regulated papal elections. In accordance with this document the election of the pope and the government of the Church, during the vacancy of the Apostolic See, became the responsibility of the cardinals
- The Third Lateran Council (1179), convoked by Pope Alexander III, limited papal electors to members of the College of Cardinals.
- In the medieval centuries there were not more than 24 cardinals, the original number of the titular churches in Rome. With the passage of time, however, the number grew, first to 70, in 1586, then to 120 under Paul VI (1963-1978). Even this limit has been exceeded, however, because of the rule, introduced by Paul VI that cardinals can no longer participate in a papal conclave after they turn 80. This means there can be many cardinals older than age 80, but fewer than 120 under age 80.
- Total of 218 cardinals of which there are 128 Electors.

- A papal conclave is a meeting of the College of Cardinals whose responsibility it is to elect a new pope. During the conclave, the cardinals are not allowed to communicate with the world. They stay in a two-room suite in the Vatican. The cardinals take an oath that the proceedings of the conclave will remain secret. After each vote during the conclave, smoke from the Vatican signals whether someone has been elected—black smoke means no one was elected, white smoke means we have a new pope.