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Papal conclave: fault lines emerge as cardinals gather to vote

A colourful cast of 115 cardinals are gathering to select a new pope from one of their number to lead 1.2bn Catholics

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Cardinals arrive for an afternoon meeting of pre-conclave at the Vatican. Photograph: Filippo Monteforte/AFP/Getty Images

There are diplomats, academics, intellectuals and theologians. There are hardliners, conservatives, ultra-conservatives, moderates, mavericks and many who simply defy categorisation. When it comes to the conclave of 115 cardinals who will choose the next pope in the next few days, the phrase broad church is entirely appropriate.

Take Cardinal Manuel Monteiro de Castro of Portugal and Cardinal Juan Sandoval Iñiguez of Mexico. In 2004, while papal envoy to Spain, Monteiro de Castro appeared to hint that the church should acknowledge homosexual partnerships as well as heterosexual ones. Although most countries defined marriage as the union of one man and one woman, he said: "There are other forms of cohabitation and it is good that they be recognised."

Sandoval has taken the other side. Three years ago he described same-sex unions as an "aberration" and was equally blunt on the subject of gay people adopting children, asking: "Would you want to be adopted by a pair of faggots or lesbians?" His other betes noires include at least one other Christian denomination, "you've got to be shameless to be a Protestant", and on women who he believes fail to dress and behave correctly: "Women shouldn't go around being so provocative – that's why so many get raped."

These are not the only faultlines. While cardinals such as Ennio Antonelli of Italy and Jean-Louis Tauran of France bitterly opposed the US-led invasion of Iraq, others are more hawkish on matters of security. After the capture of the head of the Shining Path terrorist group in 1992 – which signalled the end of the bloody insurgency that claimed 70,000 lives in his native Peru – Cardinal Juan Luis Cipriani called for the earthly ultimate punishment. "We cannot allow the fears, worries and cowardice of a few people in the country to stop us approving the death penalty," said Cipriani, a member of Opus Dei and champion basketball player in his youth.

Some cardinals, however, share remarkably similar views. Many African cardinals, for example, are sceptical about using condoms to halt the spread of HIV/Aids. Wilfrid Napier of South Africa expressed doubts about the efficacy of condoms; John Njue of Kenya has blamed them for the spread of disease, while Cardinal Anthony Okogie of Nigeria has gone so far as to say: "The condom is widely known not to be a safe protector against HIV/Aids."

Cardinal Peter Turkson, the archbishop emeritus of Cape Coast in Ghana and the man judged Africa's best hope for pope, has stressed the importance of common values, recently telling a TV interviewer that that Africa had largely escaped the sexual abuse scandals that wreaked so much damage on the western church thanks to its strong taboos against homosexuality.

"African traditional systems kind of protect or have protected its population against this tendency," he told CNN. "Because in several communities, in several cultures in Africa, homosexuality, or for that matter, any affair between two sexes of the same kind are not countenanced in our society ... It's helped to keep this out."

Taboo or no taboo, other cardinals have found themselves bound together rather more ineluctably. Although Cardinal Keith O'Brien opted to absent himself from the conclave after he resigned as archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh over allegations that he had behaved "inappropriately" towards four priests, some scandal-hit cardinals have refused to recuse themselves.

Cardinal Sean Brady, archbishop of Armagh, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York, Cardinal Roger Mahony, archbishop emeritus of Los Angeles, and Cardinal Justin Rigali, former archbishop of Philadelphia, have all faced – or are facing – questions about what they knew about the abuse of children by priests. But all have decided to go to Rome for the conclave.

Then there are those who find fame for other reasons: Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the Jesuit intellectual and archbishop of Buenos Aires who travels around town by bus and told his compatriots not to waste their money on plane tickets to Rome to see him become a cardinal but to give it instead to the poor; Cardinal Dominik Duka of the Czech Republic, who practised and deepened his faith despite enduring years of state repression; Cardinal Fernando Filoni, who refused to leave his diplomatic post in Iraq in the violence that followed the US invasion, saying "If the pastor flees in moments of difficulty, the sheep are also lost"; Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, the charismatic, 55-year-old archbishop of Manila, whose scholarship on the second Vatican council and passionate defence of the sanctity of life have won him popularity on both sides of the political divide; and Cardinal Óscar Rodríguez Maradiaga of Honduras, who has proved an ardent defender of human rights and a fierce critic of capitalism and the drug trade.

The archbishop of Tegucigalpa would be a perfect Latin American candidate to succeed Benedict were it not for his leftist leanings and his intemperate comparison, in 2002, of the US media's coverage of the church sexual abuse scandals with the persecution of Christians by Nero, Hitler and Stalin.

The geographical divide is instructive: 60 of the cardinals are European, 19 Latin American, 14 North American, 11 African, 10 Asian and one Australian.

The 28 Italian cardinal electors, who comprise nearly a quarter of the total number of pope-makers, do not want for colourful characters among their ranks either, be they Angelo Amato, who takes a markedly revisionist approach to the church's treatment of Galileo, Angelo Bagnasco, who has publicly denounced the "intrinsically wretched and empty" behaviour of some Italian politicians – although he did not mention Silvio Berlusconi by name – or Gianfranco Ravasi, a Dante enthusiast who believes that Darwin's theory of evolution is compatible with the church's teachings on creation.

Then there is the Vatican's finance minister, Domenico Calcagno, who is known as Rambo in certain sections of the Italian press because of his extensive collection of firearms, which includes a Smith & Wesson magnum, a Turkish pump-action Hatsan shotgun and a Remington. It is unclear whether he possesses a Beretta to go with his biretta.

Even they, however, struggle to compete with Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, who has a knack for attracting publicity – and not all of it positive. Despite winning fans by donning a sheepskin coat to provide live commentary for a match between Sampdoria and Juventus while archbishop of Genoa in 2004, and memorably dismissing *The Da Vinci Code* as "a potpourri of lies; a phantasmagorical cocktail of inventions", his more recent headlines have been less favourable. In 2010, he provoked an international outcry after suggesting that the blame for the sexual abuse crisis lay with the nature of homosexuality rather than the pressures of priestly celibacy.

"Many psychologists and psychiatrists have shown that there is no link between celibacy and paedophilia but many others have shown, I have recently been told, that there is a relationship between homosexuality and paedophilia," he said.

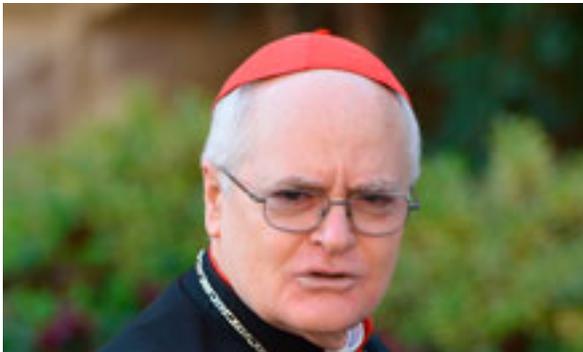
But neither such pronouncements nor the pressures of the Vatileaks affair – which was seen by many as a direct attempt to discredit him – appear to have done serious damage to Bertone's reputation. Benedict XVI's secretary of state, who is now 78, remains a popular candidate to succeed his former boss.

With the clamour for the new leader of the world's 1.2 billion Roman Catholics to be a strong, untainted reformer growing ever louder and more urgent – and so many candidates to choose from – the cardinals face an unenviable task as they enter the conclave to decide who he will be .

The only thing you can be sure of is that all 115 of the men meeting in the Sistine Chapel will have wondered what they would say if they were elected and suddenly found themselves asked for the papal name they had chosen. "I think," said one conclave veteran, "that all the cardinals have a name up their sleeve."

Five cardinals to watch

Cardinal Odilo Pedro Scherer, 63 (Brazil)



Cardinal Scherer. Photograph: Vincenzo Pinto/AFP/Getty Images

Appointed archbishop of São Paulo in March 2007, he was created a cardinal by [Pope Benedict XVI](#) eight months later. Although tipped as a possible candidate, his low profile among other cardinals may be problematic.

Leading the archdiocese of São Paulo (one of the largest with 6 million members) means that he has had to demonstrate his strengths and skills. He said in February 2013 that it was "time to have someone from a different culture, someone with new ideas".

The cardinal is outspoken on abortion: when Brazil's supreme court voted in 2012 to legalise the termination of fetuses with malformed brains, Scherer asked which group "incompatible with life" would be eliminated next.

Cardinal Angelo Scola, 71 (Italy)

The son of a truck driver, he holds doctorates in philosophy and theology and was professor of theological anthropology at the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family. He was appointed bishop of Grosseto in 1991, patriarch of Venice in 2002, created a cardinal in 2003, and appointed archbishop of Milan in 2011.

In spite of his place at the top of the Vatican hierarchy and his academic pedigree, he has urged the church to do more to appeal to the modern world, arguing it needs to build on the second Vatican council of the 1960s, which proved a landmark moment in Roman Catholic history. An ardent believer in the church's role at the centre of society, he has publicly bemoaned its inability to clearly communicate its message on matters such as marriage. A strong favourite.

Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, 68 (Austria)

The archbishop of Vienna is considered one of the favourites for the papacy., In addition to being a polyglot (he speaks German, French, Italian, English, Spanish and Latin fluently), his education in theology, philosophy and psychology may stand him in good stead.

His public stance has been more moderate on issues such as HIV/Aids than some of the other candidates. The cardinal has also gained respect for his handling of the sex abuse scandal stating: "The days of cover-up are over. For a long while the church's principle of forgiveness was falsely interpreted and was in favour of those responsible and not the victims." He was created a cardinal by John Paul II on 21 February 1998.

Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, 69 (Argentina)

Like many Argentinians, the grand chancellor of the Pontifical Oriental Institute is of Italian descent (his parents emigrated to South America from Trentino) – a fact that is unlikely to harm his chances of succeeding Benedict. Sandri, who speaks five languages and has represented the Vatican in the US, Venezuela and Mexico, served as the voice of John Paul II when he was ill with Parkinson's disease. He also announced John Paul's death in 2005.

But despite being head of the congregation of Oriental churches – which makes him responsible for Catholics in Bethlehem and elsewhere in the Holy Land – some have noted that his star has been waning in recent years and his current role is less influential than the positions he occupied under John Paul. He was created a cardinal by Benedict on 24 November 2007.

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, 55 (Philippines)



Cardinal Tagle. Photograph: Franco

Origlia/Getty Images

Appointed as archbishop of Manila in 2011, he has been hailed by some as a worthy successor to Pope Benedict XVI. The cardinal's youth – he is the second youngest of the cardinals after Cardinal Baselios Cleemis Thottunkal – coupled with his detailed knowledge of Vatican history, his charisma and his progressive outlook make him a strong candidate. If successful, he would be the first Asian pope.

Tagle, however, has been outspoken at times. In Rome in October 2012, he told a gathering of bishops that the church should be more ready to admit its mistakes and has been connected to the "Bologna School" of progressive academics who have taken a liberal view of the second Vatican council. He was created a cardinal by Benedict on 24 November 2012.