

Pope Francis and the Papacy

Lesson 4: Conclave: The Election of a New Pope
Grades 3-5, Middle and High Schools

Produced by the
Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America
Office of Educational Services



Pope Francis and the Papacy



All lessons are property of the ERCBNA Office of Educational Services
260 Wilmot Road, New Rochelle, New York, NY 11563
2025



Lesson Plan

Grade: Grades 3-5

Subject:

Date:

Topic: Conclave: The Election of
a New Pope

Lesson # Four


Learning Objectives:

SWBAT Role-play the process electing a new Pope.

SWBAT describe the significance of the Conclave.

SWBAT explore the role of the Holy Spirit as it guides the Church in choosing a new Pope.

Materials Needed:

 Handout: "How Is a New Pope Elected?" Page 5 with video link: [How Popes Choose Their Name.](#)

 Illustrative photos of the Conclave Process for use in a Presentation, pages 6-8

 Printable Voting Ballots with Prayer Page 9

 Conclave Skit Script Page 10

 Ballot Box (Any small box or container)

 Black & White Smoke Materials (Black & white paper or cotton balls)

Structure / Activity:

1. Introduction – How Is a Pope Chosen? (10 min)

 Distribute the handout or make a Power Point Slide. Handout on page ?
Read the process outloud.

2. Activity – Conclave Skit (20 min)

 Students will role-play electing a new Pope!

 Skit Roles:

- Camerlengo (Leader of the conclave)
- Cardinals (Majority of students)
- New Pope (Secretly chosen by the teacher)
- Vatican Crowd (Students outside waiting for the announcement)

 Skit Steps:

- 1. Cardinals enter the "Sistine Chapel" (classroom corner).
- 2. Each cardinal receives a ballot and writes a name.

"Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Good Shepherd. Guide me as I cast my vote. May the man chosen as Pope be a faithful servant of Your Church. Amen."

Structure / Activity:

4. The Camerlengo collects the ballots and counts them.

5. If no Pope is chosen, black smoke (paper or fabric) is displayed, and the voting continues.

6. Once a Pope is chosen, white smoke is displayed.

7. The New Pope is announced! 🎉

- The Camerlengo says: "*Habemus Papam!*"
- The new Pope steps onto the "balcony" (a chair) and gives a short greeting.

3. Conclusion – Discussion & Reflection (10 min)

🗣️ Discussion Questions:

- Why is prayer important in the election of a Pope?
- How does the Holy Spirit guide the Church?
- If you were elected Pope, what name would you choose and why?

🙏 Closing Prayer:

"Lord, guide the leaders of the Church as they serve Your people. Help us to listen to Your voice in our own lives. Amen."





How the New Pope is Elected



1. The Cardinals Gather

- After the Pope dies, Cardinals travel to Vatican City.
- They meet in a special room inside the Sistine Chapel to pray.



2. The Cardinals Vote

- The cardinals write down the name of the person they think should be the next Pope.
- The Ballots are collected and counted.



3. Black Smoke & White Smoke.

- Black Smoke = No Decision Yet. The Cardinals keep voting.
- White Smoke = A New Pope has been Chosen.



4. The Pope Chooses a Name

- The new Pope chooses a name of a mentor, previous Pope, or Saint. The name he chooses may tell us how he wishes to lead. For example Jorge Bergoglio chose Francis for Saint Francis of Assisi which reflects care for the poor, the earth, and humility. Here is a link to four minute video that explains the history of Pope's choosing their names: Click the link [How Pope's Choose Their Name](#)



5. The Annoucement

- The new Pope steps onto Saint Peter's Balcony and says "*Habemus Papam! (We have a new Pope!)*"



Images of Conclave



Top: Cardinals Gathering in the Sistine Chapel

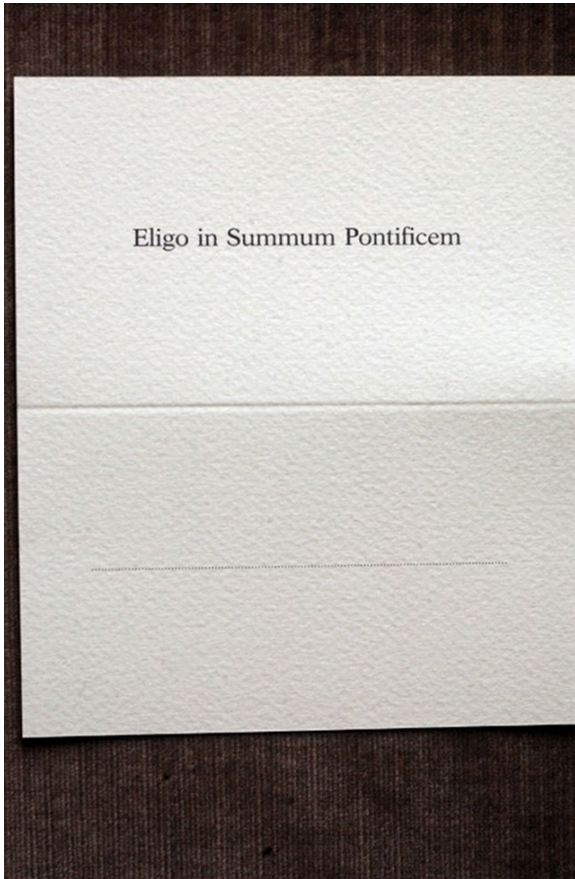
Below: Urns for Ballots: The paten on the top comes off and the ballot is placed on top of the paten and then the Cardinal slides it into the urn,



Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re is the current Dean of the College of Cardinals. One of his important roles is to preside over the next Conclave.



Images of Conclave



Above: A Sample Ballot with a line for the name selected



Above: Used Ballots are placed in the stove and a cartridge is inserted to turn the smoke either white or black. The chemical make up of the cartridge is safe, but it is unknown what the Vatican uses.



Above: Black smoke means no decision.



Above: White smoke. We have a Pope!



Images of Conclave



The Pope Francis appears on the balcony after his election.



The crowd below cheers as Pope Francis appears for the first time.

Eligio in Summum Pontifiem

"Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Good Shepherd. Guide me as I cast my vote. May the man chosen as Pope be a faithful servant of Your Church. Amen."

Write your Choice on the line and then fold the ballot in half.

Eligio in Summum Pontifiem

"Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Good Shepherd. Guide me as I cast my vote. May the man chosen as Pope be a faithful servant of Your Church. Amen."

Write your Choice on the line and then fold the ballot in half.

Eligio in Summum Pontifiem

"Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Good Shepherd. Guide me as I cast my vote. May the man chosen as Pope be a faithful servant of Your Church. Amen."

Write your Choice on the line and then fold the ballot in half.

Eligio in Summum Pontifiem

"Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Good Shepherd. Guide me as I cast my vote. May the man chosen as Pope be a faithful servant of Your Church. Amen."

Write your Choice on the line and then fold the ballot in half.

Conclave Skit **(Grades 3-5 Version)**

Skit Roles:

Camerlengo (Leader of the conclave)

Cardinals (Majority of students)

New Pope (Secretly chosen by the teacher)

Vatican Crowd (Students outside waiting for the announcement and will be the audience for the play too)

Skit Steps:

1. Cardinals enter the "Sistine Chapel" (classroom corner).
2. Each cardinal receives a ballot and writes a name.
3. One by one, students approach the ballot box and recite this prayer before voting:

"Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Good Shepherd. Guide me as I cast my vote. May the man chosen as Pope be a faithful servant of Your Church. Amen."

4. The Camerlengo collects the ballots and counts them.
5. If no Pope is chosen, black smoke (paper or fabric) is displayed, and the voting continues.
6. Once a Pope is chosen, white smoke is displayed.
7. The New Pope chooses a Saint name and is announced! 🎉

The Camerlengo says: *"Habemus Papam!"*

The new Pope steps onto the "balcony" (a chair) and gives a short greeting.

Lesson Plan

Grade: Middle to High School

Subject:

Date:

Topic: The Death of a Pope: What Happens Next?

Lesson # Three








Learning Objectives:

SWBAT Role-play the process electing a new Pope.

SWBAT describe the significance of the Conclave.



SWBAT explore the role of the Holy Spirit as it guides the Church in choosing a new Pope.

Materials Needed:

-  Handout: "How Is a New Pope Elected?" Page 12
-  How the Pope is Elected - Click Here: [Conclave: The Making of a Pope](#)
-  Optional photos for a PowerPoint or Presentation pages 13-15
-  Printable Voting Ballots with Prayer p. 16
-  Conclave Skit Script p.17
-  Ballot Box (Any small box or container)
-  Black & White Smoke Materials (Black & white paper or cotton balls)

Structure / Activity:

1. Introduction – Why Does the Church Have a Conclave? (15 min)

 Distribute the handout or make a PowerPoint on page 14 and read aloud, and or watch the video.  How the Pope is Elected - Click Here: [Conclave: The Making of a Pope](#)

2. Activity – Advanced Conclave Skit (25 min)

 Students will act out a realistic papal election.

3. Conclusion - Reflection & Prayer (10 min)

Discussion Questions:

What surprised you about the conclave process?

Why do you think the Cardinals take so much time and prayer before voting?

What qualities should a Pope have?

Closing Prayer:

"Holy Spirit, guide Your Church and give wisdom to those who lead it. Help us to trust in Your plan. Amen."



How the New Pope is Elected



1. The Cardinals are Sealed in the Sistine Chapel
 - The doors are locked, and the Cardinals cannot communicate with the outside world.



2. The Voting Process
 - The cardinals writes a name on a secret ballot.
 - A candidate must receive two-thirds of the votes to be elected.



3. Smoke Signlas Announce the Result of Each Vote.
 - Black Smoke = No Decision Yet. The Cardinals keep voting.



- White Smoke = A New Pope has been Chosen.



4. The New Pope's First Words

- The new Pope chooses a name of a mentor, previous Pope, or Saint. The name he chooses may tell us how he wishes to lead. For example Jorge Bergoglio chose Francis for Saint Francis of Assisi which reflects care for the poor, the earth, and humility. Here is a link to four minute video that explains the history of Pope's choosing their names: Click the link [How Pope's Choose Their Name](#)



5. The Annoucement

- The new Pope steps onto Saint Peter's Balcony and is intorudced with the words: "*Habemus Papam!* (We have a new Pope!)"
- The public will hear his new name.



Images of Conclave



Top: Cardinals Gathering in the Sistine Chapel

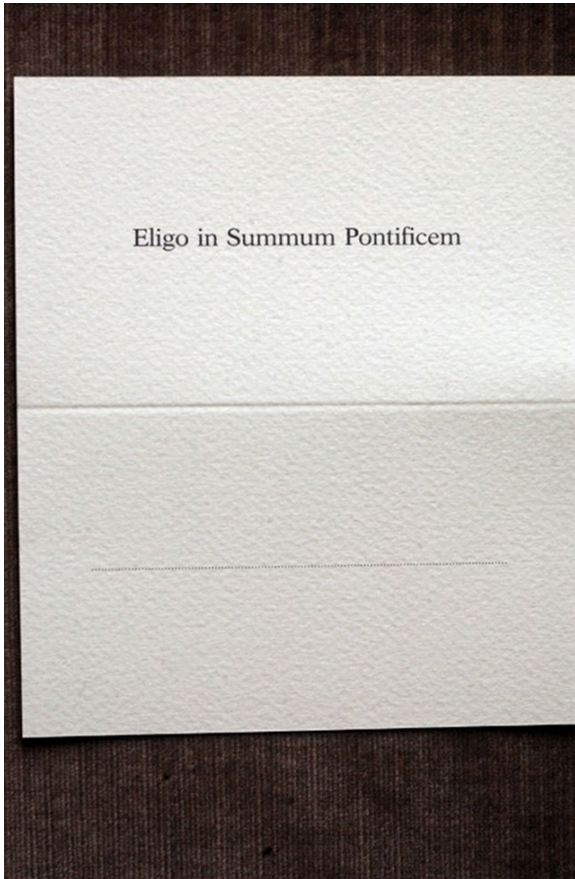
Below: Urns for Ballots: The paten on the top comes off and the ballot is placed on top of the paton and then the Cardinal slides it into the urn,



Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re is the current Dean of the College of Cardinals. One of his important roles is to preside over the next Conclave.



Images of Conclave



Above: A Sample Ballot with a line for the name selected



Above: Used Ballots are placed in the stove and a cartridge is inserted to turn the smoke either white or black. The chemical make up of the cartridge is safe, but it is unknown what the Vatican uses.



Above: Black smoke means no decision.



Above: White smoke. We have a Pope!



Images of Conclave



The Pope Francis appears on the balcony after his election.



The crowd below cheers as Pope Francis appears for the first time.

Eligio in Summum Pontifiem

"Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Good Shepherd. Guide me as I cast my vote. May the man chosen as Pope be a faithful servant of Your Church and lead Your people with wisdom, courage, and love. I entrust this decision to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Write your Choice on the line and then fold the ballot in half.

Eligio in Summum Pontifiem

"Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Good Shepherd. Guide me as I cast my vote. May the man chosen as Pope be a faithful servant of Your Church and lead Your people with wisdom, courage, and love. I entrust this decision to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Write your Choice on the line and then fold the ballot in half.

Eligio in Summum Pontifiem

"Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Good Shepherd. Guide me as I cast my vote. May the man chosen as Pope be a faithful servant of Your Church and lead Your people with wisdom, courage, and love. I entrust this decision to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Write your Choice on the line and then fold the ballot in half.

Eligio in Summum Pontifiem

"Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Good Shepherd. Guide me as I cast my vote. May the man chosen as Pope be a faithful servant of Your Church and lead Your people with wisdom, courage, and love. I entrust this decision to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Write your Choice on the line and then fold the ballot in half.

Conclave Skit

Middle and High School

Skit Roles:

Camerlengo (Leader of the conclave)

Cardinals (Majority of students)

New Pope (Secretly Chosen)

Vatican Crowd (Students outside waiting for the announcement and will be the audience for the play too)

Skit Steps:

1. The Camerlengo announces the start of voting.
2. Each Cardinal receives a ballot and writes a name.
3. One by one, students approach the ballot box and recite this prayer before voting:

"Come Holy Spirit, guide this decision for the good of Your Church. Amen.."

4. The Camerlengo collects the ballots and counts them.
5. If no one wins, the Camerlengo says: "Extra omnes!" Everyone out! and black smoke is shown.
6. If a Pope is chosen, white smoke is displayed. .
7. The New Pope chooses a Saint name and is announced! 🎉

The Camerlengo says: *"Habemus Papam!"*

The new Pope steps onto the "balcony" (a chair) and gives a short greeting.

8. The new Pope gives a short speech and blesses the crowd.