



# #overcomingsilence

Uniting global voices to promote gender equality in the Catholic Church

[www.overcomingsilence.com](http://www.overcomingsilence.com)

## **CAMPAIGN GOAL: WOMEN BEGIN ASSUMING VATICAN LEADERSHIP ROLES\_**



This document aims to give our readers an overview of the current leadership and decision making structures at the Vatican as well as a brief history of women in leadership. It will outline three concrete areas of change needed to make gender equality a priority in the Catholic Church.

A governance reform process for the Vatican led by Pope Francis is underway and a new Apostolic Constitution is destined to replace the current 'Pastor Bonus' set by Pope John Paul II in 1988. Pastor Bonus laid out in detail the organisation of the Roman Curia and opened membership in dicasteries to priests, deacons, religious, and lay persons. Pastor Bonus opened the central government of the church by allowing representatives of all the faithful to have roles and responsibilities.

Pope Francis will make history this year when he announces a new Apostolic Constitution which we hope will further open leadership and decision making roles to diverse and faithful women of the Church.

## LEADERSHIP ROLES INSIDE THE VATICAN

The Vatican (more specifically, Roman Curia) is the global administrative center of the Catholic Church. Its official role is to help the Pope to exercise his supreme leadership, and it is where decisions for the global Church are made. The most decisive part of the Roman Curia consists of the Secretariat of State, which has a structure on its own, and of offices called dicasteries, congregations or councils. Within each office of this type there are 3 levels of top leadership roles:

### 1 Prefect / President

The head of the dicastery and so responsible for running, directing and supervising all its activities and representing this office. This role reports directly to the Pope.

### 2 Secretary

The Secretary, with the collaboration of the Undersecretary, assists the head of the department in directing the personnel and in dealing with the matters of the dicastery. They participate in all ordinary and plenary sessions with the right to vote. The Secretary is the substitute of the head of the department when they are absent and signs the acts of the dicastery together with the head of the dicastery.

### 3 One or more Undersecretaries

Undersecretaries assist the Superior Prelate, along with the Secretary, in directing personnel and in dealing with the matters of the dicastery, taking care of its everyday functioning.



The Pope appoints these three leadership roles, while other officials are chosen by their superior. Prefects and presidents have up to recently always been cardinals or at least archbishops. The secretaries are usually in the rank of archbishop for congregations, or bishop for councils, while the undersecretaries are usually priests.

Canon lawyers agree that according to applicable law there could be more lay men and women included in the different entities of the Roman Curia today. As the Church opens roles to more lay people, we have seen a slow movement of women into the third rank of leadership, but not fast enough. Since 1967, over 52 years, only 7 women have ever been appointed as an Undersecretary, the Vatican's third level of leadership. In 2018, Pope Francis appointed the first layman to lead a dicastery, the Dicastery for Communication.

According to the 2018 Vatican Directory, only 6 women were employed at the level of Capo Ufficio (the highest pay level below direct papal appointments).

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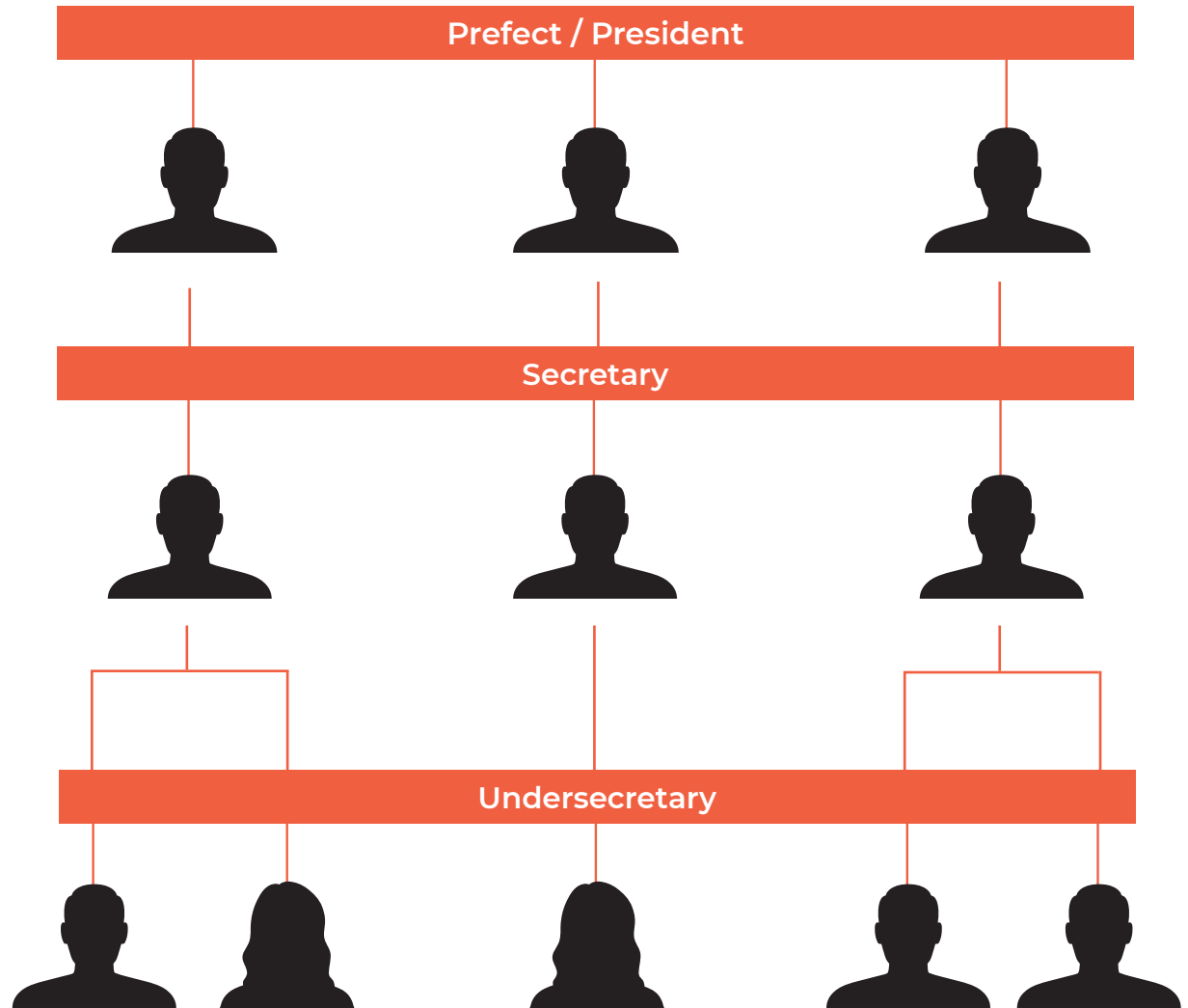
**A WOMAN COULD BECOME SECRETARY OF STATE, IN THE SENSE THAT THE ROLE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE IS EVIDENTLY NOT BOUND TO THE SACRAMENTS OR THE PRIESTHOOD.**

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State  
(Crux, May 4, 2016)



## TOP 3 LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP AT THE VATICAN

Since 1967, over 52 years ago, only 7 women have ever been appointed as an Undersecretary, the Vatican's third level of leadership.



## HUMAN RESOURCES AT THE VATICAN\_

Vacancies at the Roman Curia  
seem never to be advertised.

In order to contrast the phenomenon of nepotism in the Vatican, in 2012 Pope Benedict XVI founded a commission inside of the Secretariat of State: the CIVA (“Commissione indipendente di Valutazione per le Assunzioni di Personale Laico Presso la Sede Apostolica”, Independent Evaluation Commission for the Recruitment of Lay Staff at the Apostolic See). The CIVA is where all applications and CVs are centrally collected and sent to various offices of the Roman Curia for any

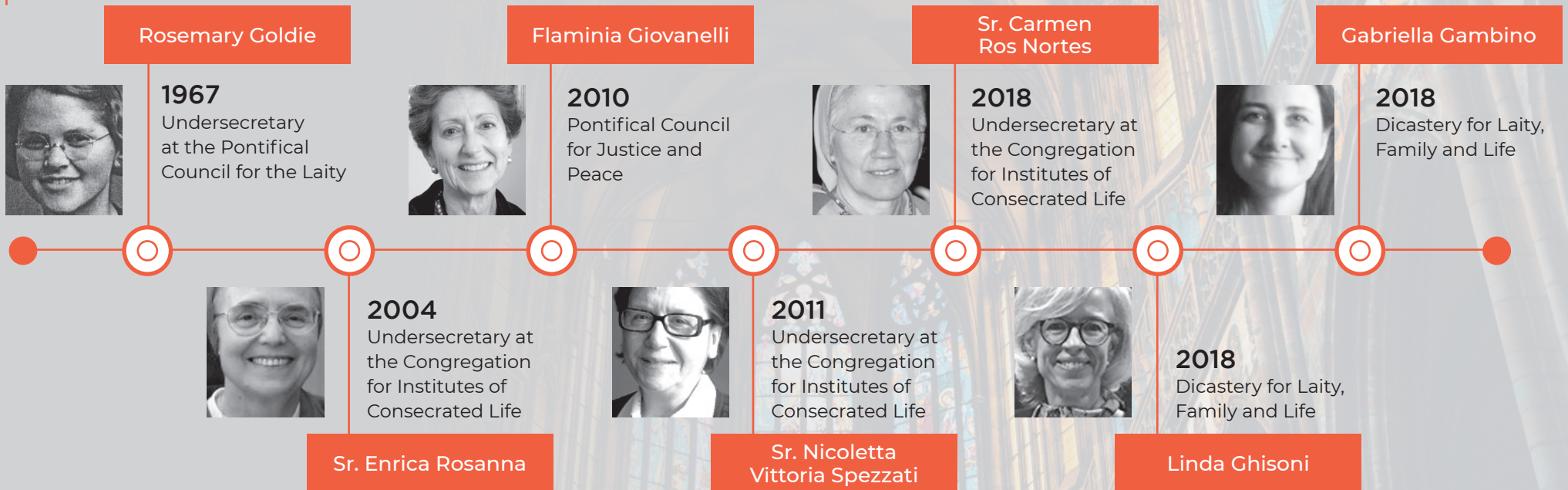
roles below direct papal appointments.

Every leader in the Vatican has to apply to this commission if they have a position to fill. The CIVA prepares a list with three names, from which the Prefect/President selects a candidate.

Yet, observers warn that a traditional “who you know” system is able to bypass the official procedures.



## WHERE ARE THE WOMEN? \_



Timeline through history of 7 women appointed to leadership positions

**THE CHURCH  
HAS A CHOICE.  
ADMIT WOMEN TO  
DECISION MAKING  
AND GOVERNANCE  
ROLES OR DISCOVER  
THEIR SILENCE  
IS NOT JUST  
BECAUSE THEY  
ARE DELIBERATELY  
EXCLUDED BUT  
BECAUSE THEY  
HAVE GONE AWAY  
IN RIGHTEOUS  
DESPAIR\_**

MARY MCALEESE  
8TH PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

How can we influence the leaders in our catholic community to support changes to the structures of the global head office of the Catholic Church?







## THREE SOLUTIONS TOWARDS CHANGE FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1** **Open, merit-based and transparent hiring process at the Vatican.**

The Vatican could publicly announce vacancies, openly list required qualifications for these positions and implement transparent selection and hiring policies.
- 2** **An overarching gender equality policy.**

Design and implement policies that safeguard equal opportunities and remove barriers for women employed at the Vatican.
- 3** **Monitoring and evaluation processes throughout each office of the Roman Curia.**

Measure progress towards a more inclusive Roman Curia through a regular evaluation of key indicators and report results publicly.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS\_

**WE NEED TO  
TALK OPENLY  
AND HONESTLY  
ABOUT WOMEN IN  
LEADERSHIP AND  
DECISION MAKING  
ROLES IN THE  
CATHOLIC CHURCH\_**

MUKTI BOSCO (INDIA)



# 1 Open, merit based and transparent hiring process at the Vatican

- Why it is important to have lay people, including women in Vatican offices? What do we risk losing if we don't have representation from these women?
- List all that could be gained by opening offices to expert and faithful women and men from all over the world.
- From the information given in this presentation, how do you feel about the hiring process at the Vatican?
- What is your reaction to what you have learned today about women at the Vatican?
- How could open, merit based hiring practices that you know from other organisations help the Vatican?
- What could the Vatican learn from Catholic organisations you know:
  - Are there female decision makers and leaders in your diocese or other Catholic institutions?
  - What are the structures in place at your country's Catholic Church to help elevate female decision makers?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS\_

**MY QUESTION IS  
HOW WE – AS A  
CHURCH – CAN BE  
AUTHENTICALLY  
CHRISTIAN WHILE  
REJECTING  
THE INCLUSIVE  
PRACTICES OF  
OUR ANCESTORS  
AND EVEN JESUS  
HIMSELF\_**

RUSSELL PETRUS (USA)

## 2 An overarching gender equality policy

- Is there an understanding at your Catholic community of the need for female leaders?
- What organisations do you admire that really showcase diversity at the top?
- Search for the best person to speak to in your diocese about whether they have a policy or have processes in place for elevating more women into leadership roles - why/ why not.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS\_

**EN CUANTO JOVEN  
MUJER DE FE, DEBERÍA  
PODER TENER EL  
MISMO ACCESO  
QUE LOS HOMBRES  
A POSICIONES DE  
LIDERAZGO EN LA  
IGLESIA CATÓLICA\_**

MARIA COSTANZA ALVAREZ  
DE CASTRO (LATIN AMERICA)

### 3 Monitoring and evaluation processes throughout each office of the Roman Curia

- There are no official statistics about women at the Vatican, why is this a problem?
- None of the official statistics of the Catholic Church, including statistics on people entering or leaving the Catholic Church have information on the proportion of women and men, how could such information help us?



According to the 2018 Vatican directory there were 4 female Undersecretaries.

THERE'S ONLY EVER BEEN

**7** FEMALE  
UNDERSECRETARIES

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IN A CHURCH OF

**1.2bn people**

MORE THAN

**50%**

ARE WOMEN

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We need you to share your message to current leaders of why bringing more women into leadership and decision making is crucial for the longevity of the Catholic Church.



LESS THAN

**3%**

OF VATICAN  
LEADERS ARE  
WOMEN

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THE TIME FOR  
CHANGE IS **NOW**

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**ADD YOUR VOICE**  
**WWW.OVERCOMINGSILENCE.COM**

#overcomingsilence

Please add your voice to the **#overcomingsilence** movement and help us send a message to the Roman Curia and Pope Francis about women in leadership and decision making roles in the Catholic Church.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact –  
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