

Ghana Archbishop: African Pope Would Be “Quite Some Miracle”

A black African pope to succeed **Pope Benedict** would be “quite some miracle”, a leading **archbishop** from Ghana said, adding that a developing world candidate might have to overcome negative perceptions within the **Catholic** hierarchy.

“If the church chooses a Third World person or a black pope it will have to come to terms with itself,” Matthias Kobena Nketsiah, archbishop of Cape Coast, told Reuters.

“I am not saying the church is racist, but there are overtones and perceptions that maybe add up to that.”

Speaking in an interview with Reuters TV recorded on Tuesday, Nketsiah said he supported Ghanaian **Cardinal** Peter Turkson, his predecessor in the Cape Coast archbishopric, for the job of leading the world’s 1.2 billion Catholics.

“I am all for it but I have to have my feet on the ground. It will be quite some miracle given the perception of an **African** of the Third World,” he said at his residence in Cape Coast.

Benedict stunned Catholics across the globe on Monday by saying he would step down on February 28.

Some 117 cardinals will enter a closed-door **conclave** at the Vatican in mid-March to elect a successor.

Two-thirds of today’s Catholics live in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Ghana’s Cardinal Turkson and Cardinal Odilo Scherer of Brazil are among those mentioned as candidates.

Nketsiah said he believed Turkson, who is 64 and currently head of the **Vatican** justice and peace bureau, would tend towards being conservative on moral issues if he were elected.

“We in Ghana, and I think in the **Third World**, we are loyal children of the church, if I may say so, so he will stick to the teaching of the church,” he said.

“If the church says there is no way for same sex (relations), that is what he’s going to pursue ... He would be somebody who would stick to it and teach how the church teaches,” Nketsiah added, saying he had trained to be a **priest** with Turkson.

Another African Cardinal, Laurent Mosengwo, archbishop of Kinshasa in Democratic Republic of Congo, is seen as another potential candidate from Africa.

There are no open campaigns or declared candidates for the post and cardinals are forbidden by Church law from revealing who they voted for. Many cardinals choose their favorite after a series of discreet contacts in the days before the election.

*Writing by Pascal Fletcher; editing by Alison Williams.
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