

Is Pope Francis Preparing to Resign?

Catholics all over the world are closely watching some unusual activity at the Vatican as rumors persist that Pope Francis is preparing to resign.

Francis has sparked speculation among church watchers after postponing a trip to Africa and announcing an unusual meeting of cardinals set for later this summer, according to The Daily Mail.

The 85-year-old pontiff, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church with its more than 1.2 billion followers, has been confined to a wheelchair due to nerve pain in his knee. He recently decided to delay trips scheduled for next month to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South of the meeting of the cardinals known as a “consistory” is unusual.

Robert Mickens, the editor of the English edition of *La Croix*, a Catholic daily newspaper, has stated: “It’s very odd to have a consistory in August. There’s no reason that he needs to call this event three months in advance and then go to L’Aquila in the middle of it.”

The consistory will be held on Aug. 27 and will create 21 new cardinals. Sixteen of those cardinals will be under the age of 80 and will be eligible to elect Francis’ successor when a future conclave is called, according to The Mail.

A “conclave” in the Roman Catholic Church is an assembly of cardinals to elect a new pope.

Francis, who formerly served as Argentine Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, was elected pope in 2013 after Pope Benedict XVI resigned due to health reasons.

The pope's appointment of 83 new cardinals has some Vatican watchers wondering if this move is to ensure that his reforms will "modernize" the church.

Francis recently complained that traditionalist Catholics, particularly in the United States, are "gagging" the church's modernizing reforms and insisted that there was no turning back.

Traditionalists have become some of Francis' fiercest critics, accusing him of heresy for his opening to divorced and civilly remarried Catholics, outreach to gay Catholics, and other reforms. Francis has taken an increasingly hard line against them, reimposing restrictions on celebrating the old Latin Mass and taking specific action in dioceses and religious orders where traditionalists have resisted his reforms.

Among the reforms to the overall church's administration, Francis supports allowing women to lead Vatican offices.

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