

Praedicate Evangelium

The Task Accomplished and Ahead

by Merlin Rengith Ambrose

Zusammenfassung: Am 19. März 2022 wurde von Papst Franziskus die Apostolische Konstitution *Praedicate Evangelium* zur Reform der römischen Kurie veröffentlicht, welche am 05. Juni 2022 in Kraft trat. Die neue Konstitution bringt die Kurienreform, welche bereits schrittweise durch zahlreiche Umstrukturierungen in den letzten Jahren vorangetrieben wurde, zu einem Abschluss. Der folgende Artikel bietet einen kurzen Abriss zur Entstehung des Dokuments und möchte wichtige Änderungen, welche sich durch die Reform ergeben, herausgreifen und erläutern. So werden die Reform des Finanzbereichs, die Neustrukturierung der Dikasterien, die Beteiligung von Laien und der missionarische Charakter der Reform hervorgehoben. (Diego Lopez Jansa)

1 Introduction

On 19 March 2022, the feast of St. Joseph, as he began the 10th year of his pontificate, Pope Francis released the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* (Preach the Gospel), the long-awaited document implementing the reform of the organization and structure of the Roman Curia with the missionary spirit. The new Apostolic Constitution for the Roman Curia represents a landmark in his pontificate. It offers a strong missionary direction for the Roman Curia¹ and introduces significant and notable changes from the Apostolic Constitution "*Pastor bonus*" (The Good Shepherd) promulgated by Pope John Paul II on 28 June 1988. *Praedicate Evangelium* (PE) abrogated *Pastor bonus* (PB) when the former came into force on 5 June 2022.² This Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* is the special law that governs the constitution and the competence of the Roman Curia which acts in the name and authority of the Roman Pontiff for the good and the service of the Churches (cf. can. 360).

¹ The Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* states that the Roman Curia "is the institution which the Roman Pontiff ordinarily makes use of in the exercise of his supreme pastoral office and his universal mission in the world." It emphasizes that "the Roman Curia is not placed between the pope and the bishops, rather it is at the service of both according to the modalities that are proper to each (*Praedicate Evangelium*, General Norms, art. 1).

² *Praedicate Evangelium*, art. 250 §3.

The new Apostolic Constitution puts the preaching of the Gospel and the missionary nature of the Church as the top priority of the Roman Curia. It represents a tectonic shift in the functioning of the Roman curia aimed at bringing the Church's mission to evangelize to the centre of its governing and administrative structures. Significantly, it calls for the involvement of lay men and women also in the role of government and responsibility in the Church and it allots the protection of minors a central place in the curia's structure. It emphasizes the significance of synodality for the life of the Church, fostering decentralization in Church governance by vehemently affirming the significant role of episcopal conferences. Almost a decade in the making, much of it has already been implemented along the way. The final document does make some significant changes and provides the vision of a Curia that is evangelical, service-oriented and shorn of careerism and highly professional.

While aiming at elucidating some of the significant features of the afore-mentioned new Apostolic Constitution, highlighting the mind of Pope Francis in the reform effected in the Roman Curia, this article gives also a clarion call to all the baptized, including the officials of the Roman Curia to imbibe the Franciscan spirit in their ecclesiastical functioning.

2 A Brief Sketch on the *Iter of Praedicate Evangelium*

Upon Pope Francis' election in 2013, the reform of the Roman Curia was intently requested by the cardinals in the pre-conclave meetings in March 2013, and he began to toil on this enormous task immediately after taking office. Among the first acts of his pontificate, the Pope established the Council of Cardinals, popularly known as C9³ Cardinals when it was constituted, with the mandate to study a project for the revision of the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor bonus* which governed the Roman Curia. As it is aptly noted by him in the preamble to the new constitution, it is only the fifth time in 500 years that such a task has been undertaken.⁴

³ It was called C9 due to the fact it contained 9 cardinal members for some time from the time of its institution. The council was formally established on 28 September 2013. The council currently has seven members, following the decision by Pope Francis to remove three of its members in late 2018 and the appointment of another in 2020.

⁴ 1) Pope Sixtus V reformed the Roman Curia in 1588; cf. *Sixtus V*, Apostolic Constitution *Immensa aeterni Dei* (22 January 1588), in: *Bullarium Romanum*, Vol. 8, Augustae Taurinorum 1863, 985–999. 2) Pope Pius X reformed the Roman Curia in 1908; cf. *Pius X*, Apostolic Constitution *Sapienti consilio* (29 June 1908), in: AAS 1 (1909) 7-19. 3) Pope Paul VI reformed it after the Second Vatican Council in 1967; cf. *Paul VI*, Apostolic Constitution *Regimini ecclesiae universae* (15 August 1967), in: AAS 59 (1967) 885-928. 4) Pope John Paul II introduced the previous reform in 1988; cf. *John Paul II*, Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* (28 June 1988), in: AAS 80 (1988) 841-930.

It was a nine year journey to publication which came to fruition. The Council of Cardinals⁵ completed the first draft of the new constitution in 2018.⁶ It was then widely circulated among the presidents of episcopal conferences, dicasteries of the Roman Curia, synods of the Eastern Churches, conferences of major superiors, and certain pontifical universities for comments and feedback in 2019.⁷ The council of cardinals was convened again in February 2020 for an in-depth re-reading and the subsequent revision of the document.⁸ Already in 2014, considerable progress had been made in the pope's reform of the Roman Curia, particularly concerning Vatican finances, pointing to the creation of the Council for the Economy, the Secretariat for the Economy, and the Office of the Revisor/Auditor General.⁹ The new Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* on 19 March 2022 merged the Congregation of the Evangelization of Peoples with the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization¹⁰ and the Congregation for Catholic Education with the Pontifical Council for Culture¹¹. This Constitution rendered a homogeneity to all the reforms which have already been made.

3 Precursory Activities Shaping *Praedicate Evangelium*

Much of the reform outlined by the new Apostolic Constitution has been announced piecemeal over the first eight and a half years of Pope Francis' pontificate since 2013, with the merger of some offices and various changes made to the financial institutions of the Holy See. Pope Francis issued decrees changing Vatican law and structures, which are incorporated in the text of the new constitution. Therefore, before studying the changes in *PE* as such it is worth exploring those modifications effected by Pope Francis until the release of *Praedicate Evangelium*.

⁵ Seven cardinals are part of the Council of Cardinals, helped by secretary Most Rev. Bishop Marco Mellino. The seven cardinals are: 1) His Eminence Cardinal Óscar Andrés RODRÍGUEZ MARADIAGA, S.D.B., (Honduras), who acts as the coordinator of this council; 2) His Eminence Cardinal Pietro PAROLIN, Secretary of State, Vatican (Italy); 3) His Eminence Cardinal Bertello GIUSEPPE, President of the Pontifical Commission for the Vatican City State (Italy); 4) His Eminence Cardinal Oswald GRACIAS of Bombay (India); 5) His Eminence Cardinal Reinhard MARX of Munich and Freising (Germany); 6) His Eminence Cardinal Seán Patrick O'MALLEY, O.F.M., of Boston (United States of America); 7) His Eminence Cardinal Fridolin AMBONGO BESUNGU O.F.M., Cap. of Kinshasa (The Democratic Republic of the Congo).

⁶ At: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/38627/papal-advisors-finish-first-draft-of-new-constitution-on-the-roman-curia>.

⁷ At: <https://www.ncronline.org/vatican/pope-council-cardinals-meet-online-discuss-curia-reform>.

⁸ At: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-02/council-of-cardinals-revising-new-apostolic-constitution.html>.

⁹ *Francis*, *Motu proprio Fidelis dispensator et prudens* (24 Februar 2014), in: AAS 106 (2014) 164-165.

¹⁰ *Praedicate Evangelium*, art. 53-68.

¹¹ *Praedicate Evangelium*, art. 153-162.

3.1 Economic Reforms

The reforms began with the economic and financial institutions of the Holy See. In 2014, Pope Francis established the Council for the Economy, which has the task of overseeing the economic management and supervising the administrative and financial structures and activities of the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia. At the same time, the Pope established the Secretariat for the Economy in charge of coordinating the economic and administrative affairs of the Holy See and the Vatican City State.

3.2 Communication, Family, Development

With the Motu proprio "The current context of communications" for the establishment of the secretariat for communication, a second step took place on 27 June 2015, with the creation of the Secretariat for Communication, which later became the Dicastery for Communication, which brought together 9 different entities.¹² The new Dicastery has been entrusted to the leadership of a lay prefect since 2018.¹³

On 15 August 2016, the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life was established with the Motu proprio *Sedula mater*,¹⁴ which unified different competences and functions that had belonged to the Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Pontifical Council for the Family. The Dicastery is competent for the promotion of life and apostolate of the lay faithful, the pastoral care of youth, the family and its mission, and the protection and support of human life.

Also on 17 August 2016, the Pope established the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development with the motu proprio *Humanam progressionem*.¹⁵ The powers of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, and the Pontifical Council for Healthcare Workers (for the Pastoral Care of Health),¹⁶ converged into it. The Dicastery is also responsible for *Caritas Internationalis*.

A further step took place on 11 February 2022. Pope Francis modified the internal structure of the then Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith with a Motu proprio *Fidem servare*, which distinctly separated, with the establishment of two distinct sections, the doctrinal and disciplinary competencies, and assigning to each a secretary. Presently, the Prefect of the Dicastery would therefore have two deputies. The reform intends to give due importance also to the doctrinal section and its fundamental role in the promotion of the faith, without

¹² The nine entities involved include the following: 1) Vatican Television Centre, 2) Vatican Publishing House, 3) *L'Osservatore Romano*, 4) Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 5) Vatican Radio, 6) Holy See Press Office, 7) Photographic Service, 8) Vatican Internet Service and 9) Vatican Printing Press.

¹³ At: <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2018/12/18/181218c.html>.

¹⁴ Francis, Motu proprio *Sedula mater* (15 August 2016), in: AAS 108 (2016) 963-967.

¹⁵ Francis, Motu proprio *Humanam progressionem* (17 August 2016), in: AAS 108 (2016) 968-972.

¹⁶ Ibid.

letting disciplinary activity take a back seat, after decades in which many efforts and human resources have been spent to examine cases of abuse.

4 The Structural Details of *Praedicate Evangelium*

The following pages delve into the structural aspect of the Apostolic Constitution, principally highlighting the main sections of the document. The document consists of eleven main sections of which the first three elaborate on the Preamble to the document, Principles and Criteria for the Service of the Roman Curia and the General Norms (*PE* artt. 1-43) governing the Roman Curia. The other sections deal with the Secretariat of State, Dicasteries, Institutions of Justice, Institutions of Finance, Offices, Advocates, Institutions associated with the Holy See and Transitional Norms.

4.1 Preamble

The Preamble neatly reveals Pope Francis' purpose, "to better harmonize the present-day exercise of the curia's service with the path of evangelization the Church is living at this time" (*PE* no. 3). It elucidates the significance of the title *Praedicate Evangelium*, borrowed from the biblical passage of Mk 16:15; Mt 10:7-8,¹⁷ which outlines the mission mandate of Jesus to preach the Gospel. This is the task that the Lord Jesus entrusted to his disciples. This mission mandate constitutes the primary service that the Church can render to every individual and all humanity in the modern world. Pope Francis reiterates missionary conversion of the Church which aims at renewing her as a mirror of Christ's own mission of love. The reform of the Roman Curia through the Apostolic Constitution is to be learnt in the context of the Church's missionary nature.

4.2 Principles and Criteria for the Service of the Roman Curia

The goals of the reform in the Roman Curia are set out in the second section of the new constitution called "Principles and Criteria for the Service of the Roman Curia." It enumerates eleven guiding principles: 1) Service to the Pope's mission; 2) Co-responsibility in the communion; 3) Service to the mission of the Bishops; 4) Support for the particular churches and their episcopal conferences and eastern hierarchical structures; 5) The vicarious nature of the Roman Curia, 6) Spirituality;¹⁸ 7) Personal integrity and professionalism; 8) Collaboration between the dicasteries; 9) Interdicasterial and intradicasterial meetings; 10) Expression of catholicity; and 11) Reduction of dicasteries.

¹⁷ "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation."

¹⁸ *Praedicate Evangelium*, no. 6: "The members of the Curia are to carry out their work in the joyful recognition that they are missionary disciples at the service of the entire people of God."

4.3 Highlight of the General Norms (*PE Artt. 1-43*)

The third section, "The General Norms" shed light on the notion of the Roman Curia, its need to be pastoral at the service of the particular churches, its structure, competencies and finally on the *ad limina apostolorum* visit.

4.4 Secretariat of State (*PE Artt. 44-52*)

The fourth section speaks about the Secretariat of State. In November 2017, the Pope modified the Secretariat of State, which until then consisted of two sections, i) The Section for General Affairs and ii) The Section for Relations with States. He established the third section, "The Section for Diplomatic Staff of the Holy See,"¹⁹ strengthening the current office of the Delegate for the Pontifical Representations. This third section wants to depict the Pope's attention and closeness to the diplomatic staff. It concerns exclusively matters relating to people who work or prepare for the diplomatic service of the Holy See. In *Pastor bonus* there were only the first two sections.

4.5 Dicasteries (*PE Artt. 53-188*)

There are altogether sixteen dicasteries: 1) Dicastery for Evangelization (artt. 53-68); 2) Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (artt. 69-78); 3) Dicastery for the Service of Charity (artt. 79-81); 4) Dicastery for the Eastern Churches (artt. 82-87); 5) Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (artt. 88-97); 6) Dicastery for the Causes of Saints (artt. 98-102); 7) Dicastery for Bishops (artt. 103-112); 8) Dicastery for the Clergy (artt. 113-120); 9) Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (artt. 121-127); 10) Dicastery for the Laity, Family, and Life (artt. 128-141); 11) Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity (artt. 142-146); 12) Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue (artt. 147-152); 13) Dicastery for Culture and Education (artt. 153-162); 14) Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (artt. 163-174); 15) Dicastery for Legislative Texts (artt. 175-182); 16) Dicastery for Communication (artt. 183-188).

4.6 Institutions of Justice (*Organismi di Giustizia*) (*PE Artt. 189-204*)

There are three Institutions of Justice (art. 189): 1) Apostolic Penitentiary (artt. 190-193); 2) The Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura (artt. 194-199); 3) The Tribunal of the Roman Rota (artt. 200-204).

4.7 Institutions of Finance (*Organismi Economici*) (*PE Artt. 205-227*)

The Institutions of Finance are five in number: 1) Council for the Economy (artt. 205-211); 2) Secretariat for the Economy (artt. 212-218); 3) Administration of the Patrimony of the

¹⁹ At: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/documents/rc_seg-st_12101998_profile_en.html

Apostolic See (artt. 219-221); 4) Office of the Auditor General (artt. 222-224); 5) Commission for Confidential Matters (artt. 225-226); 6) Committee for Investments (art. 227).

4.8 Offices (*PE* Artt. 228-237)

The offices in the Roman Curia are three in number: 1) Prefecture of the Papal Household (artt. 228-230); 2) Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff (artt. 231-234); 3) Camerlengo of the Holy Roman Church (artt. 235-237).

4.9 Advocates (*PE* Artt. 238-240)

1) Register of Lawyers at the Roman Curia (artt. 238-239); 2) Body of Lawyers of the Holy See (art. 240).

4.10 Institutions Associated with the Holy See (*PE* Artt. 241-249)

Institutions associated with the Holy See are 1) the Vatican Apostolic Archive, 2) the Vatican Apostolic Library, 3) the Fabric of St Peter which deals with matters concerning the Papal Basilica of St. Peter, 4) the Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology, 5) the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, 6) the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences and the Pontifical Academy for Life, 7) the Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of the Quality in Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties. All these aforementioned institutions, linked with the Holy See, are governed by their own laws *vis-à-vis* the constitution and administration.

4.11 Transitional Norms (*PE* Art. 250)

This transitional norm prescribes the need for the application of these general provisions contained in this new Apostolic Constitution only to the Secretariat of State, the Dicasteries, Institutions, Offices, and Institutions that are part of the Roman Curia or are associated with the Holy See. Those that also have proper statutes and laws are to observe them only insofar as they do not conflict with the present Apostolic Constitution.

5 Gradational Moves in *Praedicate Evangelium*

A few significant movements in the ordering of the dicasteries are worth exploring and an understanding of the special missionary intent of the heart of the Pope may be had from a glance at the ordering of the dicasteries in the *Praedicate Evangelium*.

5.1 Mission Stands High - *Natura missionaria Ecclesiae*

The prestigious Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, now known as Dicastery for the Evangelization (then known as *Propaganda fidei*),²⁰ which dates back to 1622 by Pope Gregory XV, and the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, created by Benedict XVI in 2010, will become the Dicastery for Evangelization, presided over directly by the pope. The decision to assign the Dicastery for Evangelization the order of precedence makes explicit the missionary perspective in which the general vision of the curial reform was carried out. This indicates the priority given to evangelization and mission expressed in the document right from the title.²¹ The Church that engages in dialogue to evangelize has been the *leitmotif* of recent pontificates, and now this aspect is strongly emphasized in the reforming of the Roman Curia. *Praedicate Evangelium* returns to the initial vision Pope Francis had for a missionary conversion²² for the entire Church. Indeed, the opening citation of *Praedicate Evangelium* is from Pope John Paul II's Encyclical²³ (Mission of the Redeemer), namely that the "proclamation of the gospel" is the "primary service which the Church offers."

Whereas in the past 500 years the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (now Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith) was the number one ranking dicastery in the Roman Curia, under Pope Francis' reform it is relegated to second place. The first in ranking is the dicastery for Evangelization to emphasize the missionary nature of the Roman Curia and the Church. Significantly, the pope becomes the head of this dicastery, which now has two sections: one for the fundamental questions of evangelization in the world (PE artt. 55-59), the other for the first evangelization and New Particular Churches (PE artt. 61-68), each having a pro-prefect. The symbolism seems to be that, where previous popes considered themselves the supreme teachers of the Church, Pope Francis likes instead to be seen as the evangelizer-in-chief. The pope himself will be the prefect of evangelization, just as until 1968 the pope was the head of "*la Suprema*", the Holy Office, now Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith.

²⁰ Gregory XV, Apostolic Constitution *Inscrutabili Divinae providentiae* (22 June 1622), in: Bullarium Romanum, Vol. 12, Augustae Taurinorum 1867, 690-693; cf. ID, Apostolic Constitution *Inscrutabili Divinae providentiae* (22 June 1622), in: Codicis Iuris Canonici Fontes, Vol. 1, P. Gasparri (ed.), Romae 1926, n. 382; Kowalsky, N. Inventory of the Historical Archives of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples or De propaganda Fide, Rome 1983, 13. By subsequent constitutions "*Romanum Decet*," "*Cum Inter Multiplices*" and "*Cum Nuper*," issued by the same Pontiff, ample provisions were made in order to facilitate and accelerate its mission while providing for its maintenance. On 6 January 1862, by the Apostolic Constitution *Romani Pontifices*, Pope Pius IX divided the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith into two distinct parts: for the affairs of the Latin rite and the affairs of the Eastern rite. Cf. *Collectanea S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide seu Decreta, instructiones, rescripta pro apostolicis missionibus*, Vol. 1, Romae 1907, 668-672.

²¹ In: L'Osservatore Romano (25 March 2022) 12/9.

²² Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (24 November 2013), no. 30, in: AAS 105 (2013) 1032. Pope Francis, taking up an expression contained in no. 30 of Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, sees the Church in a "missionary conversion" that commits her to a renewal "according to the image of Christ's own mission of love."

²³ John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris missio* (7 December 1990), in: AAS 83 (1991) 249-340.

5.2 Need for the Culture of Safeguarding - *Tutela minorum*

The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith has two sections with a secretary for each section and a prefect to oversee them. Significantly, *Praedicate Evangelium* places the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors²⁴ within this dicastery²⁵ which is second in the ranking. For the first time, the Holy Father has made safeguarding and protection of minors (*tutela minorum*) a fundamental and essential part of the structure of the Church's central government. This represents a vital move forward in upgrading the significance and mandate of the commission, which can undoubtedly give rise to a stronger culture of safeguarding in the curia and the entire Church.

5.3 The Poor as Priority - *Ministerio caritatis*

All through his pontificate, Pope Francis has given a central place to the poor in the life of the Church, and, in his reform, he reaffirmed this by upgrading the office of papal almoner to that of "The Dicastery for the Service of Charity," being listed third after Evangelization and Doctrine of Faith on the list of dicasteries. The transformation of the simple Office of Papal Charities (*Elemosineria Apostolica*) into the third Dicastery for the Service of Charity is noteworthy. This is one of the most compelling changes Pope Francis made by revitalizing the spectrum for charity. Previously, the Papal Almoner had been merely an honorary title conferred on a long-serving prelate as a kind of retirement gift. Now with the change effected by *Praedicate Evangelium*, the almoner will serve as prefect taking on enormous precedence. Just as the missionary impulse is a continuation of Pope John Paul's teaching on mission, the upgrading of charity is a direct echo and extension of Pope Benedict XVI's *magisterium* in his first Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est*²⁶ which elucidates that the Church's deepest nature has a triplex dimension: the proclamation of the gospel (*kerygma*), the worship of God (*leiturgia*) and the service of charity (*diakonia*),²⁷ of which the last is now well echoed and incorporated in the Roman Curia by Pope Francis.

Moreover, during the vacancy of the Apostolic See (*sede apostolica vacante*), i.e., by death or resignation of the pope, all prefects lose their office. The sole exception until now was the prefect of the Apostolic Penitentiary, the cardinal in charge of the internal forum for *miser cordia Dei* is never to be interrupted. *Praedicate Evangelium* adds the papal almoner

²⁴ Francis, Chirograph *Minorum tutela actuosa* (22 March 2014), in: AAS 107 (2015) 562-563. It was instituted by Pope Francis on 22 March 2014. The statutes for the same were issued by Cardinal Pietro Parolin on 21 April 2015; cf. Parolin, Pietro, *The Statutes Statuta pontificiae commissionis pro pupillis tuendis* (21 April 2015), in: AAS 107 (2015) 564-568.

²⁵ *Praedicate Evangelium*, art. 78.

²⁶ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est* (25 December 2005), in: AAS 98 (2006) 217-252.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 25, 236: "Intima Ecclesiae natura triplici exprimitur munere: praedicatione Verbi Dei (*kerygma-martyria*), celebratione Sacramentorum (*leiturgia*), ministerio caritatis (*diakonia*). Munia sunt quae vicissim se praesupponunt et invicem seiungi nequeunt. Caritas non est pro Ecclesia veluti species operis assistentiae socialis quae aliis etiam relinqui posset, sed pertinet ad eius naturam, est irrenuntiabilis expressio propriae ipsius essentiae."

to that privilege since the service of charity is never to be interrupted and therefore, *sede apostolica vacante* the prefect of the Dicastery for the Service of Charity will remain in the office (*in munera*).²⁸ With all these three significant changes Pope Francis has imposed his own personal imprint on the Roman Curia.

6 Structural Changes - *Ecclesia semper reformanda*

6.1 Secretariat of State (Papal Secretariat)

When pope Francis began his pontificate in 2013, the Roman Curia was composed of two sections of the Secretariat of State, nine Congregations, twelve Pontifical Councils, three Tribunals as well as a few other offices. Under the new Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, there are sixteen Dicasteries, seemingly with equal juridical status. Now, Pope Francis has not only made structural changes, by incorporating several offices into one but also established a third section of the Secretariat of State to care for the diplomatic personnel of the Holy See,²⁹ in addition to the existing two 1) Section for the General Affairs of the Church (*PE* artt. 46-48) and 2) Section for Relations with States and International Organizations (*PE* artt. 49-51). Furthermore, he also refers to the Secretariat of State as “the papal secretariat,”³⁰ reviving an earlier title.

6.2 Vatican Finances

The new Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* incorporates all the significant reforms made by Pope Francis in 2014³¹ by way of the establishment of a Council for the Economy³² (*PE* artt. 205-211) and the Secretariat of the Economy (*PE* artt. 212-218).³³ The former is formed by eight Cardinals or Bishops, representing the universality of the Church, and seven lay people, chosen from experts of various nationalities. The fifteen members are appointed by the Holy Father for a five-year term (*PE* art. 206). The Council for the Economy is competent for supervising the administrative and financial structures and activities of curial institutions and offices and of institutions associated with the Holy See or that relate to it, as indicated in the list attached to the Council’s statutes (*PE* art. 25). The Secretariat for the Economy carries out the function of the Papal Secretariat for economic and financial

²⁸ *Praedicate Evangelium*, art. 18 §1: “When the Apostolic See is vacant, all heads of curial institutions and members cease from their office. Those exempt from this rule are the Major Penitentiary, who continues to carry out the ordinary business within his competence and refers all matters to the College of Cardinals which otherwise would have been referred to the Roman Pontiff, and the Almoner of His Holiness, who continues to exercise the works of charity, according to the same criteria followed during the Pontificate and remains at the service of the College of the Cardinals until the election of the new Roman Pontiff.”

²⁹ *Praedicate Evangelium*, art. 52.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, art. 44.

³¹ Francis, *Motu proprio Fidelis dispensator et prudens* (24 February 2014), in: AAS 106 (2014) 164-165.

³² *Ibid.*, 164.

³³ *Ibid.*, 165.

matters. It exercises control and supervision in administrative, economic and financial matters over the various dicasteries,³⁴ offices and institutions connected with the Holy See (*PE* art. 212). It is headed by a Prefect, assisted by a Secretary. *PE* describes the role of the Auditor General (*PE* art. 222)³⁵ and the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See (*PE* art. 219).³⁶

6.3 Merging of Culture and Education

The new constitution lists a new dicastery, the Dicastery for Culture and Education. It comes about through the incorporation of the Pontifical Council for Culture with the Congregation for Catholic Education. Similar to the dicasteries for evangelization and the doctrine of the faith, this new dicastery will also have two sections: one for culture and one for education, each with a secretary as its head, under a prefect for the whole dicastery.

6.4 Change of Competence for the Personal Prelature *Opus Dei*

Transferring the responsibility for *Opus Dei*, the Church's only personal prelature, from the Dicastery for Bishops to the Dicastery for the Clergy is noteworthy.³⁷ However, the change affects only its communication with the Holy See and it in no way modifies or diminishes the essential nature of the personal prelature as enumerated by the prelate of *Opus Dei*.³⁸

6.5 No More Councils, Only Dicasteries

Pope Francis has devoted much of his pontificate to working for the unity of Christians and dialogue with other religions, and it is, therefore, interesting to note that he has designated the two former "councils" for the Promotion of Christian Unity and interreligious dialogue as separate "dicasteries" and upgraded their heads from 'presidents' to "prefects."

³⁴ Francis, Motu proprio, *Statuto dell'Ufficio della Segreteria per l'Economia* (22 November 2015), in *Communicationes* 47 (2015) 32-39; Arrieta, J.I. "The Juridical System of the Vatican City State," in *Studia Canonica* 55 (2021) 74.

³⁵ *Praedicate Evangelium*, art. 22: "The Auditor General's Office is charged with auditing the consolidated financial statements of the Holy See."

³⁶ Francis, Motu proprio, *Statuto dell'ufficio del revisore generale* (21 January 2019), in *Communicationes* 51 (2019) 40-46; *Praedicate Evangelium*, art. 219 §1: "The Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See is the entity responsible for the administration and management of the real estate and movable assets of the Holy See which are meant to provide the resources necessary for the Roman Curia properly to carry out its work for the good of, and in service to, the particular Churches."

³⁷ *Praedicate Evangelium*, art. 117: "The Dicastery for the Clergy has competence for all matters that pertain to the Holy See with regard to Personal Prelatures."

³⁸ Monsignor Fernando Ocariz, Prelate of *Opus Dei* states in its official Newsletter that this changes the ordinary department for communication with the Holy See, but in no way modifies the essential nature of the Prelature of *Opus Dei*, made up of laity and priests, women and men, as established in the Statutes that the Apostolic See gave to the Work. Cf. at: <https://opusdei.org/en-uk/article/praedicate-evangelium-opus-dei/>

6.6 New Lingo: From “Congregations” to “Dicasteries”

We have to learn a new lingo. For generations, there were two types of departments. “Congregations” exercised jurisdiction on behalf of the pope. “Councils” promoted various pastoral initiatives. All that is now gone. Everything is to be called a “dicastery.”

6.7 The Stipulated Tenure for the Officials

In the new constitution, Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of the international recruitment of clergy, religious and laity to work in the Roman Curia, as an expression of Catholicity. For this reason, it emphasizes the need “to devote careful attention to the selection and training of personnel” and insists that recruitment be for a five-year term, which could be renewed once. It restates that the retirement age is 75 and underscores that all positions are to be abandoned at the age of 80 (*PE* art. 17). As a rule, after five years of their service, clerical officials and members of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life who have served in curial institutions and offices are to return to their Diocese or Eparchy, or to the Institute or Society to which they belong to continue their pastoral work. If the Superiors of the Roman Curia deem it appropriate, their service can be extended for another five-year period (*PE* art. 17 §4).

6.8 The Role of the Laity in the Leadership Positions

Another significant change is the development of an ardent desire manifested in the conciliar texts concerning the role of the laity. Pope Francis recalls in the Preamble that “The Pope, the bishops and other ordained ministers are not the only evangelizers in the Church, rather every Christian by virtue of baptism, is a missionary.³⁹ Hence, the involvement of laymen and women in the roles of governance and responsibility is of paramount importance. If any member of the faithful can preside over a dicastery or a curial body, given their particular competence, power of governance, and particular function, it is because every institution of the Curia acts in virtue of the power entrusted to it by the Pope.⁴⁰

This passage, which is already being acted upon, is rooted in the conciliar theology of the laity. The affirmation contained in the new Apostolic Constitution makes it clear that a prefect or a secretary of a Dicastery who happens to be a bishop does not have authority as such, but only in so far as he exercises the authority conferred on him by the Bishop of Rome. And this authority, within the Roman Curia, is the same whether it is received by a bishop, a priest, a religious, a layman or a laywoman. This removes the specification contained in art. 7 of the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor bonus*, which prescribes that “matter requiring the exercise of the power of governance be reserved to those in holy order.” In this way, what was established by the Council is fully realized and has already been incorporated into canon law, which recognizes that, by virtue of baptism among all the faithful, there is “a true

³⁹ *Praedicate Evangelium*, no. 10: “Ogni cristiano, in virtù del Battesimo, è un discepolo-missionario”.

⁴⁰ In: *L'osservatore Romano* (25 March 2022), 12/9.

equality regarding dignity and action.”⁴¹ The constitution says the role of the Catholic laity in taking part in the governing of the Roman Curia is “essential” due to their familiarity with family life and “social reality.”⁴²

PE prescribes the possibility “for the involvement of laywomen and laymen, even in roles of government and responsibility” and that “any member of the faithful can preside over” an office of the Curia (*PE* no. 5). There is already a layman, Mr. Paolo Ruffini as head of the Dicastery for Communications, and a priest (Fr. Luigi Mistò) as prefect for the Secretariat for the Economy, but *Praedicate Evangelium* goes much further, allowing for the possibility for the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith or Dicastery for Bishops to be headed by a lay person.

While lay people can, according to the Church, cooperate in the exercise of the power of governance (cf. can. 129 §2), the theoretical limits of this cooperation have been hotly contested among canonists for years. While *Praedicate Evangelium* might seem to open that power up, the actual text suggests that it remains both limited and yet imprecisely defined. Lay people can lead any department, depending on the power of governance and the specific competence and function of the Dicastery or Office in question (*PE* no. 5). In other words, while it is possible for a layperson (including men and women religious) to lead at least some departments, others may require the exercise of the power of governance in such a particular way as to still require the power of orders. Pope Francis ensures this across the Church. On 18 May 2022, i.e., a couple of months after the new Apostolic Constitution, the pope made a special concession in *rescriptum ex audientia ss.mi*,⁴³ allowing brothers, i.e., non-clerics to be appointed superiors of religious communities made up of priests and brothers and even the global head of an entire order. This concession derogated the provision enshrined in can. 588 §2. The extent to which lay people should not expect to be in the running for every curial job is further underlined in the constitution, which reserves some roles, such as the head of the Council for the Economy (*PE* art. 206), the Camerlengo of the Holy Roman Church (*PE* art. 235) and the Supreme Tribunal of Apostolic Signatura (*PE* art. 195) to a cardinal.

7 Salient Features of *Praedicate Evangelium*

7.1 Roman Curia – Not A Hierarchical Administrative Apparatus

Praedicate Evangelium defines the Roman Curia as the institution that the Roman Pontiff ordinarily makes use of in the exercise of his supreme pastoral office and his universal mission in the world (*PE* art. 1).⁴⁴ It also states that the Roman Curia does not stand between the pope and the bishops, but precisely places itself at the service of both according to the

⁴¹ Ibid., 12/9.

⁴² *Praedicate Evangelium*, no. 10.

⁴³ At: <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2022/05/18/0371/00782.html>.

⁴⁴ Cf. Can. 360 *CIC* 1983.

modalities that are proper to each (*PE* no. 8). The constitution shows that the *raison d'être* of the Curia is not to be an administrative apparatus but to contribute to active evangelization with its pastoral and missionary intent.

7.2 Dicastery for Evangelization (*PE* Artt. 53-68)

The first Vatican dicastery listed in the text of the Apostolic Constitution is the Dicastery for Evangelization, indicating its centrality in the new structure of the Roman Curia. The Dicastery for Evangelization will be presided over by the Pope. It combines together the former the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. The dicastery will have two sections, each governed in the Pope's name by a "pro-prefect." One section will focus on the "fundamental questions of evangelization in the world" (*PE* artt. 55-59) and the other on supporting the initial proclamation of the Gospel in mission territories (*PE* artt. 61-68), including the work of the Pontifical Mission Societies (*PE* art. 67).

7.3 Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (*PE* Artt. 69-78)

Praedicate Evangelium confirms the changes that Pope Francis already made to the former Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith with the motu proprio *Fidem servare* on 11 February 2022.⁴⁵ The Pope reorganized the internal structure of the Vatican's powerful doctrine office into two sections: a doctrinal section and a disciplinary section. Issues pertaining to matrimony come under doctrinal session. Setting out the doctrinal section's responsibilities, the new constitution says that it works in close contact with Church leaders around the world in the exercise of their mission as authentic teachers and teachers of the faith, for which they are bound to safeguard and promote the integrity of that faith.⁴⁶ The resolution to assign the Dicastery for Evangelization the order of precedence over the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith does not intend to place the activity of evangelization before faith in Christ itself. This decision is well understood in the light of the epochal change which is historically taking place and which inevitably requires the Church to face new challenges, projecting herself towards new frontiers and peripheries both in the first mission *ad gentes* and in the new evangelization of people who have already received Christ

7.4 Dicastery for the Service of Charity (*PE* Artt. 79-81)

Historically, this dicastery was an office headed by a bishop who served as the "charitable arm" of the pope in Rome. What was formerly known as the Office of Papal Charities (*Apostolica elemosineria*), run by the papal almoner Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, will become the Dicastery for the Service of Charity. According to the constitution, the dicastery will serve

⁴⁵ At: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/20220211-motu-proprio-fidem-servare.html.

⁴⁶ *Praedicate Evangelium*, art. 69.

as a special expression of God's mercy by providing charitable assistance to the poor, vulnerable, and the excluded in the name of the Pope, who arranges for aid to be given wherever in the world there is need or on the occasion of grave calamities. As a dicastery, the reach of this office will no longer be the pope's backyard but rather the universal Church, exercising in any part of the world the work of assistance and help for the poor and the needy in the name of the pope.

7.5 Dicastery for Culture and Education (*PE Artt. 153-162*)

The new Dicastery for Culture and Education merges the Pontifical Council for Culture and the Congregation for Catholic Education. Divided into two sections, the dicastery will work "for the development of human values in people within the horizon of Christian anthropology, contributing to the full realization of Christian discipleship."⁴⁷ The dicastery will also coordinate the activities of some of the pontifical academies.⁴⁸

7.6 Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (*PE Artt. 88-97*)

Following the Motu proprio *Magnum principium*, issued on 3 September 2017, PE artt. 88 and 89 make the necessary changes. Accordingly, the new Apostolic Constitution observes that the newly named Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments is responsible for arranging the drafting or revision and updating of the typical (original Latin) editions of liturgical books. The same dicastery confirms the translations of liturgical books into current languages and gives *recognitio* (formal recognition) to their appropriate adaptations to local cultures, legitimately approved by the bishops' conferences.

7.7 Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (*PE Artt. 163-174*)

Pope Francis already established this dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development⁴⁹ as part of his reform of the Roman Curia that came into effect on 1 January 2017. The Pope entrusted the dicastery with responsibility for issues regarding migrants, those in need, the sick, the excluded and marginalized, the imprisoned and the unemployed, as well as victims of armed conflict, natural disasters, and all forms of slavery and torture. Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*, Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People were suppressed and this new dicastery was created.

⁴⁷ Ibid., art. 153.

⁴⁸ The Pontifical academies are the Pontifical Academy of Fine Arts and Letters of the Virtuosi at the Pantheon, the Pontifical Roman Academy of Archaeology, the Pontifical Academy of Theology, the Pontifical Academy of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the Pontifical International Marian Academy, the Pontifical Academy *Cultorum Martyrum* and the Pontifical Academy for Latin (*Praedicate Evangelium*, art. 162).

⁴⁹ Francis, Apostolic Letter *Humanam progressionem* (17 August 2016), in: AAS 108 (2016) 968-972.

7.8 Dicastery for the Laity, Family, and Life (*PE* Artt. 128-141)

Already as part of his previous reform efforts, Pope Francis announced the creation of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life on 15 August 2016, which took effect on 1 January 2017. It took over the functions and responsibilities of the Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Pontifical Council for the Family. The new constitution emphasizes that the dicastery collaborates with the Pontifical Academy for Life on the issues of the protection and promotion of human life and with the Pontifical John Paul II Theological Institute for the Sciences of Marriage and the Family, to promote a common direction in studies on marriage, family and life (*PE* art. 141).

7.9 General Secretariat of the Synod

Also important to point out in the Constitution is the definition with which an organism that is not part of the Roman Curia is mentioned: what until now was called "General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, now becomes simply "General Secretariat of the Synod."

7.10 Other departments

The new Apostolic Constitution also sets out the role of other Vatican institutions, including judicial bodies and the Prefecture of the Papal Household. It lists the duties of the Camerlengo of the Holy Roman Church, who oversees the functioning of the Vatican during a papal *interregnum*. It also defines the qualities expected of lawyers working for the Holy See, who are expected to lead an integral and exemplary Christian life and to carry out the duties entrusted to them with the utmost conscience and for the good of the Church.

8 Conclusion

The task is accomplished. But what is the task ahead? The real test of Pope Francis' reforms, however, will be in their implementation. The Apostolic Constitution "*Praedicate Evangelium*" represents the realization of one of the chief goals of Pope Francis' pontificate: the reform of the Roman Curia.⁵⁰ Many of the reforms have already been implemented in recent years, even before the new Constitution was finalized, although all the offices of the Roman Curia will need to assure their current statutes are fully in line with the missionary and evangelizing intent set forth in the Apostolic Constitution. The priority of evangelization and the role of the laity are the primary ideas that connect the new Apostolic Constitution governing the Roman Curia with the Second Vatican Council.⁵¹ While we welcome the changes effected by Pope Francis, it is equally important and necessary that the officials toil to imbibe his spirit behind all these changes to give expression to the intent of the Pope's mind and heart in

⁵⁰ At: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2022-05/parolin-praedicate-evangelium-realizes-a-chief-goal.html>.

⁵¹ In: *L'osservatore Romano* (25 March 2022) 12/9.

their day-to-day life and functioning of the Church. Missionary priority, option for the poor and synodal style in our ecclesial life by involving the laity is of paramount importance and they are our tasks ahead to be fulfilled, failing which the document or any study or discussion on this Apostolic Constitution will remain merely academic fulfilment or intellectual exploration. Hence, it remains to be seen if the new ecclesiological framework for considering the work of the Curia can effect substantive change in the conduct of the Curia in the life of the Church. The reform of structures consists in ensuring that they all become more mission-oriented. Pope Francis, in the core document of his papacy, *Evangelii Gaudium*, published in the year of his election, called all structures of the Church to be channelled towards evangelization. The Church's "missionary conversion" aims to renew her as a mirror of Christ's own mission of love.⁵² As such, no reform of the curia would be possible without an "interior reform." That is the task ahead!

⁵² *Abeyasingha, N.* "Praedicate Evangelium: Pope Francis' Reform of Curia Authority as Service – Communion - Participation - Evangelization," in: *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 86 (2022) 581.