The Phyllis Schlafly Report

Time to Elect a Conservative Pope

By John and Andy Schlafly

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The 20-day clock began running on Easter Monday for a conclave to convene to select a successor to Pope Francis. Liberals around the world are intensely focused on this process, and conservatives should be too.

Fortunately, the conclave meets, discusses, and votes entirely in secret, just as our Constitutional Convention was in 1787 to write our U.S. Constitution. This denies the liberal media the exaggerated influence that it has over nearly everything else.

The convening cardinals take an oath of confidentiality and seclusion in the Sistine Chapel, below the depiction by Michelangelo of God's creation of Adam on the ceiling. None of our Founding Fathers breached their oath of secrecy during our Constitutional Convention, and none of the cardinals in a modern conclave has, despite leakers in every government today.

The deliberations are face-to-face and the casting of ballots is in-person, not by proxy or mail-in voting that have recently undermined American elections.

Only twice in this century has there been a conclave, which is comprised of cardinals who are less than 80 years old. They total 120 now, most of whom were appointed by Pope Francis himself.

The rules of the conclave are to cast one ballot the first evening to gauge initial preferences, without expecting anyone to prevail immediately. Then balloting is done multiple times each day, with a new pope typically announced within a few days.

Ballots are burned with only their smoke emanating for public view from the rickety chimney: black smoke means no winner has yet prevailed, while white smoke announces to the world that a new pope has been chosen.

A two-thirds majority is required to elect a new pope. The cardinals are housed in the same spartan quarters where the ascetic Pope Francis lived, which has been compared to a mere three-star hotel with modest meals to prevent them from getting too comfy.

President Trump announced that he and First Lady Melania will attend the funeral of Pope Francis at the Vatican, which is scheduled for Saturday. In further exercise of his

leadership, President Trump has also ordered flags to be flown at half-mast in respect for the leader of 1.4 billion Catholics worldwide.

President Emmanuel Macron of France announced that he too will attend, as will the Chancellor of Germany. Prince William will represent the King of England, along with the U.K. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer.

The conclave follows within two weeks of this funeral, and could be a make-or-break moment for the traditional dominance by Italians who had been selected as pope for 450 years until Pope John Paul II, who was surprisingly picked as the first Polish pope in 1978. Pope Francis was an Argentinian of Italian descent.

Pope John Paul II was a shining example that the conclave should follow today. Picked for his strong values and immense charisma, he then became instrumental in overcoming communism in all of Eastern Europe and was an invaluable ally of President Ronald Reagan.

Today's crises of transgender activism, rampant immorality, and an imploding birth rate threaten the entire world, including the Catholic Church. Atheism and other rivals to Christianity are growing faster in some communities, and religion has all but disappeared in many aspects of the Western world.

Pundits expect a more conservative successor to Pope Francis to be chosen. The Catholic Church is booming throughout Africa, where the cardinals are so conservative that some openly criticized liberal statements by Pope Francis at the risk of being disciplined by him, which he declined to do in light of their tremendous success in evangelizing there.

The Latin Mass, a favorite of many conservative Catholics, was marginalized under Pope Francis but could find a resurgence under his successor. The word "conclave" itself comes from the Latin for "with a key."

Africa has surpassed North America in its number of cardinals who will participate in this conclave, and it is unlikely that an American will be chosen as the next pope. Conservative Cardinal Raymond Burke, once the archbishop of St. Louis, would be an excellent choice.

The presiding cardinal will be the Italian Pietro Parolin, having an optimal age of 70, who was sharply critical of same-sex marriage in Italy. But African cardinals, such as Robert Sarah (age 79) from Guinea, are more conservative and could be a bolder choice as Pope John Paul II successfully was.

Cardinal Sarah vocally opposed blessings on same-sex couples, in defiance of Pope Francis. The 76-year-old African Cardinal Peter Turkson of Ghana, is also a leading contender.

A sentiment in the last conclave was to pick a pope from South America, which resulted in the election of Pope Francis. This time, it might be Africa's turn and that would result in a turn to the right, too.

John and Andy Schlafly are sons of Phyllis Schlafly (1924-2016) and lead the continuing Phyllis Schlafly Eagles organizations with writing and policy work.