



Pope Francis is pictured with Claretian Missionary Sister Jolanta Kafka, president of the International Union of Superiors General, during an audience with participants in the plenary assembly of the UISG at the Vatican May 5, 2022. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)



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ROME — Pope Francis intends to appoint two women to the Vatican's Dicastery for Bishops, marking a historic first for the office tasked with advising the pontiff on which Catholic priests to appoint as bishops across the world.

"Two women will be appointed for the first time in the committee to elect bishops in the Congregation for Bishops," Francis told Philip Pullella, the Reuters' Vatican correspondent, in [an interview](#) that took place on July 2 and was published on July 6.

Under the Vatican's [new constitution](#), which took effect on June 5, all Vatican congregations and councils have now been renamed with the newly streamlined title of "dicastery."

The constitution also notes that "any member of the faithful can preside over a dicastery," and in the newly published interview, Francis said that Vatican's office for Education and Culture and the Apostolic Library are among those that could be headed by a lay man or woman in the near future.

The pope did not say when such changes or the new appointments to the Dicastery for Bishops will take effect. The office is currently headed by [Canadian Cardinal Marc Ouellet](#). The 78-year old cardinal is likely facing the end of his mandate in office, having served beyond two five-year terms as head of a curial department.

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U.S. Cardinals Blase Cupich of Chicago and Joseph Tobin of Newark, New Jersey are among the [current members](#) of the dicastery, which is currently made up of all male clerics and regularly meets in Rome to discuss episcopal appointments.

Following the publication of the new constitution in March, Cupich [told NCR](#) that the Vatican's constitution now makes clear that "we're not just having clerics involved in the selection of bishops, but we're involving laypeople."

Francis' decision to include women in the membership one of the Vatican's most influential departments comes on the heels of [his appointments](#) of three religious sisters to high-ranking posts inside three prominent Vatican offices and the appointment of lay Argentinian theologian [Emilce Cuda](#) as the co-secretary of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, all within the last year.

"Things are opening up a bit," the pope told Reuters.

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