

Pope names 22 new cardinals, including two Americans

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VATICAN CITY(RNS) New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan and former Baltimore Archbishop Edwin O'Brien are among the 22 new cardinals announced by Pope Benedict XVI on Friday (Jan. 6).

The new "princes of the church" -- 18 of whom are under 80, and thus eligible to vote in the election of the next pope -- will receive their traditional red hats during a ceremony on Feb. 18.

Dolan's elevation to cardinal, one year after he was elected president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, cements his role as a dominant force in American Catholicism.

"As a kid, I just wanted to be a parish priest," Dolan said at a news conference in New York on Friday. "And to think that now the pope has named me a cardinal -- that's awesome."

Among the other newly designated cardinal are the bishops of Toronto, Berlin, Prague and Hong Kong.

With the new round of appointments, the fourth of his papacy, Benedict has appointed more than half of the cardinals who will likely elect his successor. At the date of the next consistory, there will be 63 voting-age cardinals nominated by

Benedict, one more than those chosen by the late Pope John Paul II.

The newly expanded College of Cardinals will include 214 men, including 125 under age 80. There will be 19 American cardinals, including 12 of voting age.

Most of the new voting cardinals come from the Roman curia, the church's central administrative body; among them, six are Italians. Overall, 30 cardinals -- nearly a quarter of all voting-age cardinals -- are Italian.

Of the other new cardinals, nine come from Europe -- including two from Germany -- and one each from Canada, Brazil, India and China. None are from the Middle East, or Africa, where the faith is growing.

Archbishops of New York are traditionally named cardinals, but Dolan's elevation was slightly delayed by an unwritten Vatican rule that prevents one archdiocese from having two cardinals of voting age. Cardinal Edward Egan, whom Dolan succeeded in New York in 2009, turns 80 in April.

O'Brien was archbishop of Baltimore until last August, when he was appointed head the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem, a Vatican role that usually entails a promotion to cardinal. Though now mostly honorific, the order traces its roots to the knights who fought in the Holy Land at the time of the crusades.