

Pope Francis adds cardinals, continues efforts at reform

by [David Gibson](#) in the [March 18, 2015](#) issue

Pope Francis added 20 new members to the College of Cardinals in mid-February, urging them not to see themselves as a priestly elite but to be models of love and humility.

“The greater our responsibility in serving the church, the more our hearts must expand according to the measure of the heart of Christ,” Francis said.

In the week before the installation, Francis held meetings with senior cardinals from around the world who advise him, as well as with the entire College of Cardinals, in an attempt to push ahead with his efforts to overhaul the Roman Curia. Yet there was a sense at the meetings that the momentum for change may be slowing—in part due to resistance from doctrinal conservatives and the Vatican’s old guard—and could use a jump-start.

The new cardinals hail from countries as far away as New Zealand and from an Italian diocese in Sicily that has been at the front lines of the refugee crisis. Francis also picked cardinals for the first time from Myanmar, Cape Verde, Panama, and the Pacific archipelago of Tonga, which has 15,000 Catholics out of a population of 100,000 spread across 176 islands.

They were joined in St. Peter’s Basilica by bishops, priests, and thousands of pilgrims who had traveled from countries like Thailand and Vietnam, each of which was given a new cardinal.

At a mass February 15 to mark his appointment of the cardinals, Francis in his sermon warned the hierarchy not to be “a closed caste” but to lead in reaching out to all who are rejected by society and the church. He said the Roman Catholic Church must be open and welcoming, whatever the costs.

“There are two ways of thinking and of having faith: we can fear to lose the saved and we can want to save the lost,” Francis said. “We stand at the crossroads of these two ways of thinking.”

The pope outlined the current debate in the church between those seen as doctrinal legalists and those, like Francis, who want a more pastoral approach. Francis has convened a series of high-level summits at the Vatican to discuss overhauling the Vatican bureaucracy and changing church practices, for example, to enable divorced and remarried Catholics to receive communion.

Thomas Rosica, a Canadian priest who works with the Vatican communications office, tweeted that “more than anything I’ve heard from [the pope] today’s homily is his mission statement.” —Religion News Service