

Luis Antonio Tagle appointed to head of Vatican evangelization office

by [Claire Giangravé](#) in the [January 15, 2020](#) issue



(RNS photo)

In a surprise move, Pope Francis on December 8 appointed Filipino Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila as the head of Propaganda Fide, the major Vatican department for evangelization. It's a move that emphasizes this pontificate's efforts to highlight the global dimension of the church and taps the cardinal as a possible successor.

At 62, Cardinal Tagle will oversee all of the Catholic missions in the world, a natural transition from his current appointment as president of the global Catholic charity Caritas Internationalis.

Tagle is the second person from Asia to occupy this important position in the Vatican, following Indian cardinal Ivan Dias, now deceased, who headed the

department from 2006 to 2011. Tagle's appointment as head of the Vatican's evangelization efforts embodies Pope Francis's repeated appeals to "reach out toward the peripheries" and the developing world.

Born in Manila into a Catholic family of Chinese descent, Tagle became a priest in 1982 and studied theology in the United States and in Rome. In 1997 he became a member of the International Theological Commission, which advises the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

He became bishop of Imus, Philippines, in 2001, and archbishop of Manila ten years later. Tagle was named a cardinal by Pope Benedict XVI in 2012.

The head of Propaganda Fide is often referred to as "the red pope" due to the tremendous influence he exercises over Catholic missions around the world, mainly in Asia and Africa. The appointment of Tagle has been interpreted as a powerful endorsement by Pope Francis as his possible successor. —Religion News Service