

Pope appoints Sr. Simona Brambilla as Vatican's first female prefect

Pope Francis appoints **Sr. Simona Brambilla**, an Italian-born religious sister from the Consolata Missionaries, as Prefect of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, along with Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime as Pro-Prefect.

Sister Simona Brambilla, who will turn 60 on March 27, previously served as the Superior General of the Consolata Missionaries. Pope Francis appointed her on Monday, the Solemnity of the Epiphany, as Prefect of the Dicastery for Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. She has served as Secretary of the same Dicastery since October 7, 2023, and becomes the first woman to be appointed Prefect of a Dicastery of the Holy See. Pope Francis also chose **cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime**, 65, whom he created Cardinal in the Consistory on September 30, 2023, as Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery.

Sister Simona Brambilla has a background that includes missionary experience in Mozambique. She was a professional nurse before joining the Consolata Missionary Sisters Institute, which she led from 2011 to 2023. On July 8, 2019, the Pope for the first time appointed seven women as members of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Later, **Sister Brambilla was first chosen as Secretary of the Dicastery and now as Prefect.**

Since the beginning of Pope Francis's pontificate, the presence of women in the Vatican has increased. According to overall data covering both the Holy See and Vatican City State from 2013 to 2023, the percentage of women has risen from 19.2% to 23.4%. A pathway outlined by the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* of 2022, **the Pope has made it possible for laypeople, including women, to lead a Dicastery and become Prefect, a role previously reserved for Cardinals and Archbishops.**

In Vatican City State, Pope Francis has appointed two women to leadership

positions during his pontificate. In 2016, he named **Barbara Jatta** as Director of the Vatican Museums, which has traditionally been led by laypeople. In 2022, he named **Sister Raffaella Petrini** as Secretary General of the Governorate, a role usually held by a bishop.

There are also several female Undersecretaries, such as **Gabriella Gambino** and **Lina Ghisoni** at the Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life, while **Sister Carmen Ros Nortes** of the Sisters of Our Lady of Consolation serves as Undersecretary at the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. **Emilce Cuda** is Secretary of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America; **Nataša Govekar** heads the theological-pastoral department of the Dicastery for Communication; **Cristiane Murray** is Deputy Director of the Holy See Press Office; and **Charlotte Kreuter-Kirchhof** is Deputy Coordinator of the Council for the Economy.

The General Secretariat of the Synod also has a female Undersecretary, French-born **Sister Nathalie Becquart**. On December 13, 2024, the Pope appointed Sister Simona Brambilla and María Lía Zervino, former president of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (WUCWO), as members of the 16th Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat. María Lía Zervino had already been appointed as a member of the Dicastery for Bishops in 2022.

*** Article published by Vatican News. Photo: Vatican News.**