



Boundary representations are not necessarily authoritative.

BACKGROUND

Land and Climate

Vatican City, the world's smallest independent nation, is the residence of the pope, the elected head of the Roman Catholic Church, and of the church's central administration. The Vatican, as the nation is popularly known, is a walled enclave surrounded completely by the Italian capital, Rome. The name derives from Vatican Hill, an area associated with the martyrdom of Saint Peter, an apostle of Jesus who is considered by Catholics to be the first of a line of more than 260 popes.

The main entrance to Vatican City opens onto Saint Peter's Square, a circular plaza dominated by the dome and façade of Saint Peter's Basilica, one of the world's largest religious buildings. An ancient Egyptian obelisk stands in the middle of the square. The Vatican is also renowned for the Apostolic Palace (which contains a series of reception rooms and the traditional papal apartments, though Pope Francis currently resides in the more modest Saint Martha's House), the Sistine Chapel (where papal elections are held), the Vatican Museums complex, and an extensive library and archives. Also within the grounds are 57 acres (23 hectares) of gardens, two historic colleges, the Nicholas V Tower, the gate and church of Saint Anne, a post office, a clinic, and the Vatican Radio Station. These are interspersed by numerous fountains

and gardens. In addition, special extraterritorial privileges are granted to more than 10 buildings in Rome and to the pope's summer residence, Castel Gandolfo, in the Alban Hills.

Vatican City has a Mediterranean climate, with hot, dry summers and mild, rainy winters. July and August are the hottest months, when the average high temperature is 88°F (31°C). Temperatures are coldest from December to February, with highs around 55°F (13°C).

History

Saint Peter's Tomb and Saint Peter's Basilica

Because of its association with the death and burial of Saint Peter, the vicinity of the Vatican has long been sacred for Christians. Shortly after Peter's crucifixion (ca. AD 64), devotees erected a small chapel over his tomb. After the Roman emperor Constantine granted legal status to Christianity in 313, he began an ambitious plan in 324 to replace the chapel with a basilica. The altar of this structure was situated directly above the tomb of Peter. Almost immediately following its completion, Constantine's basilica became a key place of worship for visitors and pilgrims to Rome. The trend continued throughout the Middle Ages. Over the centuries, the construction of protective walls, houses, and other structures completely removed some of the area's first-century architecture; however, part of the necropolis containing Saint Peter's tomb has been preserved.

The principal residence of the papacy was at Rome's

Lateran Palace from the fourth century until 1309, when it was moved to Avignon, France, because of political disputes with the Holy Roman Emperor. In 1377, the papacy returned to Rome and began to be based at the Vatican buildings. By this time, the basilica had seriously deteriorated. In the early 16th century, Pope Julius II chose to have it rebuilt and commissioned architect Donato Bramante to create the design for the Saint Peter's Basilica that stands today. Many subsequent architects, including Michelangelo, worked on the church before its dedication in 1626.

Italian Unification and the Lateran Treaty

From the mid-19th century, the Italian unification movement began to take control of the Papal States, territories spread throughout central Italy over which the popes had presided since 756. The increasing momentum of the unification movement culminated in the capture of Rome in 1870. Pope Pius IX responded to the seizure by refusing formal recognition of the Italian government.

Relations between Italy and the Holy See (the government of the Catholic Church) remained at an impasse until Pius XI negotiated the Lateran Treaty in 1929 during the rule of Benito Mussolini. The terms of the treaty guaranteed that Vatican City would be a sovereign nation headed by the pope. In return, the Vatican agreed to recognize the legitimacy of the Kingdom of Italy. The agreement allowed Vatican City to become the political entity from which the Holy See operates, though it is the Holy See that maintains diplomatic relations with other nations on the Vatican's behalf. Compensation to Vatican City for the loss of the Papal States was provided by a subsequent agreement, which also declared Catholicism to be the official religion of Italy. In 1984, a revised agreement was signed, which abolished Catholicism as Italy's official religion.

Second Vatican Council and Pope John Paul II

During the second half of the 20th century, the Vatican (via the Holy See) formed diplomatic relations with over 170 countries and sought to establish its vision of modern Catholicism. For instance, from 1962 to 1965, the church's bishops assembled for the Second Vatican Council (also called Vatican II), which advocated greater cooperation with secular society; more openness to other Christian denominations, non-Christian religious traditions, and non-believers; and greater attentiveness to the challenges posed by science and technology.

In 1978, the Vatican's cardinals elected Pope John Paul II (Polish-born Karol Wojtyła) as the first non-Italian pope since 1523. During his 27-year tenure, John Paul II was a leading figure on the world stage. He was an outspoken critic of abortion, euthanasia, and other practices contrary to the position of the church and garnered widespread respect for his advocacy of human rights and for his role in helping to end communist rule in Eastern Europe. After John Paul II died in April 2005, he was succeeded by Pope Benedict XVI of Germany, a staunchly conservative inheritor of John Paul II's legacy.

Scandals

In recent years, the church has been engulfed by a child sexual-abuse scandal, which has spread to dioceses in nations throughout the world. Widespread allegations of abuse by

Catholic clergy, as well as the church's decades-long pattern of covering up reports of abuse and protecting accused priests, have sparked international outrage.

The Vatican has also faced criticism over its banking practices, including allegations of money laundering, corruption, and fraud. In 2010, following international demands for financial transparency, the Vatican enacted laws that brought the nation in line with international banking standards. Documents revealing the behind-the-scenes power struggles and corruption related to these reforms were leaked to the press beginning in January 2012. By May, the scandal widened to include the pope's own butler, who was sentenced to 18 months in prison for leaking confidential documents to a journalist.

Recent Reforms

Citing his frailty and old age, Pope Benedict XVI retired from the papacy in February 2013, the first resignation of a pope since 1415. In March 2013, Pope Francis of Argentina became the first pope from the Americas and the first Jesuit pope. He has made many political changes and reforms, including emphasizing the importance of fighting corruption in the Vatican, helping the poor, and creating a more international church leadership. In 2013, Pope Francis created a panel of eight cardinals and one bishop to act as an advisory body on governance and reform. During the following year, Pope Francis promoted more diversity in the church by appointing his first new group of cardinals, a majority of them from outside Europe. He furthered global connections when he became the first pope to visit the Middle East on a trip to the United Arab Emirates, where he spoke in support of interfaith dialogue. Pope Francis has also forcefully called for worldwide efforts to protect the environment from climate change.

Additionally, Pope Francis has tried to address the issue of sexual abuse by Catholic clergy. After a United Nations (UN) report in 2014 criticized the Vatican for its handling of clergy who had sexually abused children, Pope Francis set up a commission to investigate sex-abuse crimes. He has declared a zero-tolerance policy for abusive clergy, met with and publicly apologized to some victims of sexual abuse by clergy members, demoted high-ranking clergy who had been linked to sexual-abuse allegations, and issued a letter acknowledging and condemning abuse within the church. However, some critics feel that the Catholic Church has not done enough to prevent future abuses.

THE PEOPLE

Population

About a thousand people reside in Vatican City, including a few hundred lay people. The remainder are primarily clergy and nuns. Vatican City has an ethnically varied population.

Vatican citizenship is neither inherited nor acquired by birth but is conferred exclusively on those who hold specific positions within the Holy See (the government of the Catholic Church) and terminates when one's employment ceases. Vatican citizenship is given to the pope, the cardinals who live in the Vatican, some of the directors of offices and

services of the Vatican, and the active members of the Vatican's diplomatic missions. Dual citizenship is permitted; for example, an Italian cardinal residing in Vatican City may have citizenship there and in Italy. The pope may also give honorary citizenship to someone who does not reside in Vatican City. Of the Vatican's citizens, some are cardinals and clergy in special assignments, while several hundred live abroad as clergy affiliated with pontifical or diplomatic missions.

The Pontifical Swiss Guard is a small security force of more than one hundred Catholic Swiss men who have completed special military training in Switzerland. While Italy is responsible for Vatican City's defense, the Swiss Guards serve as security guards for the pope and the Apostolic Palace. The Swiss Guard is often called the "world's smallest army" and the "army of the pope." The soldiers reside in barracks inside the Vatican, in some cases with their families, and they are Vatican citizens. The Gendarmerie Corps of Vatican City State serves as the country's police force and maintains security within the Vatican. The Corps consists of unmarried Catholic men.

The Vatican employs many nonresidents—including priests and lay persons—who work for departments of the Roman Curia, the administrative body of the Holy See. Employees of the Vatican (such as police, librarians, etc.) help run and maintain the city-state and its properties. As with Vatican residents, the nonresident employees come from many nationalities and ethnicities; however, given the Vatican's location in Italy, the majority are Italian citizens.

Language

While Vatican City's official documents are issued in Latin, numerous languages are heard in everyday conversation and are used in broadcasts and various publications. Italian prevails as the common language of the workplace, but English, Spanish, and French are often used as well. The Vatican's website is published in nine languages: Italian, English, French, German, Spanish, Latin, Chinese, Portuguese, and Arabic. On special occasions such as Christmas and Easter, it is common for the pope to greet the faithful in 25 languages or more.

Religion

The residents of Vatican City are primarily Roman Catholic, largely because the majority are clergy, *female* and *male religious* (also called "sisters" or "brothers," these are women or men who have made vows to serve the church and live in celibacy, poverty, and chastity but do not live cloistered as nuns and monks), or laity who have been selected for their positions partly on the basis of their faith commitment and professional training. For people who are not residents but are employed at the Vatican, being Catholic is not a requirement, but employees are expected to refrain from activities that are counter to Catholic teachings.

The major tenets of Roman Catholicism are prayer (especially those recited during Mass), faith in one God in three persons (God, the Father; Jesus Christ, the Son; and the Holy Spirit), faith in Jesus's human and divine nature, the death and resurrection of Jesus, and faith in the church as

founded by Jesus and his disciples. In addition, Catholics believe in the holy sacraments, or rites, including baptism, communion (receiving consecrated bread and wine that Catholics believe is Christ's body and blood), confirmation (receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit and confirming one's commitment to the church), reconciliation (repenting of sins, confessing them to a priest, and making penance through prayers or other means), anointing of the sick (receiving a priest's blessing during illness), holy orders (becoming a priest and promising to serve the community in the name of Christ), and marriage.

Religion has always played a fundamental role in Vatican life and culture. Before the Second Vatican Council of the early 1960s, daily life in the Vatican resembled that of medieval Catholic Italy, with very strict rules and social customs. The Second Vatican Council brought many changes to the Catholic Church, including greater openness and tolerance for others, offering Mass in vernacular languages (the native language of a given population), and allowing women to work in the Vatican.

General Attitudes

Because the Vatican includes the papal residence and the church's central administration, attitudes naturally reflect devotion to the pope and Catholicism. For example, residents support attempts to expand interreligious dialogue and international outreach, as long as doing so does not compromise values strongly held by Catholicism: defense of life from conception to its natural end; support of human rights, especially freedom for all faiths; respect for the environment; protection of the poor, weak, and elderly; and advocacy of peaceful methods of dispute resolution. Applying these values in day-to-day situations is a topic of discussion among Vatican residents and employees. Individual perspectives are often expressed with candor, sometimes in heated conversations.

Living and working in Vatican City is considered a great honor. Certain privileges come with citizenship, such as little to no crime and the extremely low cost of living: citizens do not pay taxes, have access to virtually free housing, and enjoy low gasoline prices. There are also high expectations for employees and their families. For example, the hierarchy of the Vatican City government is deeply respected. Employees dutifully obey their superiors, and those at the lower end of the hierarchy do not have much contact with the highest church leaders.

Personal Appearance

Attire often indicates a person's membership in a religious group or organization. The uniform of the Swiss Guards during certain seasons may be Renaissance-style blue, yellow, and red baggy trousers with matching tops and leggings. Each religious order (community of priests or nuns that shares specific goals and practices) can be identified by unique attire and colors. For example, Franciscan men wear a brown robe with a hood to represent the dress of their founder; the clothing also allows Franciscans, who are known to work with the poor, to move freely and stay warm. Diocesan priests, who work in the local parishes ministering to their

congregants and providing the sacraments, dress in black clerical clothing (a jacket and pants). Dominicans wear a white cassock (long robe) and black cape, while Benedictine nuns wear black habits (long tunics with veils or other head coverings).

A person's place within the church hierarchy is also distinguishable by attire. The pope wears a white cassock and skull cap (called a *zucchetto*). Being a bishop, he also wears a cross and ring. His chief advisors, the cardinals, wear red (symbolizing a willingness to shed their blood for Christ and the church). Bishops formally don purple (a color associated with royalty in medieval Europe). These items are considered ordinary wear and do not constitute liturgical vestment (the clothing that the clergy wears during religious services); they simply act as a way to identify the wearer as a member of the clergy or a religious order.

Clergy participating in formal ceremonies are required to don ceremonial garb over their ordinary clothes; this clothing includes the *alb* (a white or off-white mantel reaching the ankles), the *chasuble* (a shorter mantle that is often decorated), and the *stole* (a long, narrow strip of cloth draped around the neck). The color of the *chasuble* and the *stole* corresponds to the time of year in the liturgical calendar (the calendar of religious feast days that includes celebrations of saints and scriptures to be read): red for Easter and Christmas, purple for Advent and Lent, and green for other time periods.

Non-ordained *male religious* and *female religious* (men or women who have made vows to serve the church and live in celibacy, poverty, and chastity but do not live cloistered as monks and nuns) have no obligations for ceremonial dress and usually don the attire of their order. *Female religious* typically wear a veil. Lay persons employed in Vatican City have no obligations concerning their garments, though they are required to dress decorously at all times. Men avoid wearing shorts, T-shirts, or short sleeves. In the past, women were required to wear skirts; however, today they may wear pants or knee-length skirts. Shoulders must be covered. When government officials meet the pope during a state visit, it is traditional to wear black. Men wear a suit or tuxedo and women cover their hair with a veil.

CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

Greetings

When two people cross paths in the Vatican, they usually greet each other. If two people are friends, they often kiss each other lightly on both cheeks or simply shake hands. Italian greetings are typical, after which lively conversation often follows. Friends greet each other with a pleasant *Buongiorno* (Good day), *Buonasera* ("Good afternoon" or "Good evening"), or *Buonanotte* (Good night). Sometimes when hurriedly passing, they smile and say *Ciao* ("Hi" or "Good-bye").

Titles are also prevalent. When addressing a priest, one might call him *Padre* (Father), while a *female religious* (a woman who has made vows to serve the church and live in celibacy, poverty, and chastity but does not live cloistered as a nun) would be addressed as *Suora* (Sister). One would

address a bishop as *Eccellenza* (Your Excellency), a cardinal as *Eminenza* (Your Eminence), and the pope as *Sua Santità* (Your Holiness). These titles do not denote rigid social distancing or subservience but are considered a means of showing respect. As in Italy, educational and professional titles often precede one's given or family name.

Gestures

In keeping with protocol, Swiss Guards often offer a welcoming military salute to clerics or visiting dignitaries. Another gesture, for which Catholicism is widely known, is a hand motion known as the sign of the cross because it represents the cross upon which Christ was crucified. To make the gesture upon oneself, one touches the fingers of the right hand to the forehead, sternum, and each shoulder. To symbolize that a solemn blessing is being imparted upon others (as a bishop, a cardinal, or the pope might), one makes the four-point motion outwardly in the air; people may then respond by making the sign of the cross upon themselves. The pope makes the gesture from his balcony at his Wednesday general audience and his Sunday Angelus message. When greeting a cardinal or the pope, people usually kneel and kiss the leader's ring. It is customary to let the pope speak first.

In everyday conversation, some residents use hand gestures from Italian culture. There are many courtesies observed in Vatican City. For example, if wearing a hat, one takes it off before entering a building or during a religious service. Doors are held open for women and for the elderly. Smoking, eating, and drinking are forbidden in the gardens. Loud speaking, profanity, and improper clothing are also frowned upon.

Visiting

Because living quarters in Vatican City are relatively small and close together, privacy is greatly respected. Home visits are rare and virtually never occur unannounced. Being invited into a home is considered an honor that implies a relationship akin to that of an extended family member. Dinner guests bring a simple gift (such as a bottle of wine, a plant, or a cake). Hosts generally offer their guests a drink before dinner. After the meal, the host accompanies guests to the door, where they continue chatting before parting.

More commonly, friends (clergy and laity often socialize together) will meet at a familiar landmark, such as one of the two grand fountains in Saint Peter's Square, and then spend the evening at one of the hundreds of nearby restaurants in the neighborhoods surrounding the city-state. People usually arrive at a restaurant no earlier than 7:30 p.m. It is not uncommon for meals to last three hours. Other places to socialize include gardens and courtyards.

Eating

Italian cuisine is featured at the three cafeterias, which serve Vatican employees and clergy, and at the restaurants in the Vatican Museums and Saint Martha's House (the hotel where Pope Francis lives). However, some restaurants cater to the diverse population's tastes for ethnic foods. Italian dishes also dominate most home-cooked meals, though specialty stores that sell ethnic foods allow people to cook dishes from their

countries of origin.

Breakfast (*colazione*) is usually available any time after 6 a.m. This is often a light meal: a coffee and pastry, possibly garnished by a slice of ham or cheese, for example. One sits down to *pranzo* (lunch) after noon. This consists of a *primo piatto* (first course) of pasta and a second course of meat or fish and vegetables. Fruit, cheese, or *dolce* (dessert) may follow the meal. Vatican employees who live close to their workplace usually eat lunch at home, particularly if they live with their family. People may enjoy a snack or coffee in the afternoon between lunch and dinner. Around 8 p.m., people eat dinner (*cena*). This meal, normally eaten at home, is generally lighter, perhaps consisting of soup, cheese, and cold cuts. On average, Vatican residents eat at restaurants once a week.

LIFESTYLE

Family

With few exceptions, most Vatican residents (like Catholic clergy everywhere) take vows of celibacy, in which they pronounce their complete and total dedication to God. A celibate life is not considered a rejection of marriage and family. Instead, it recognizes that family life requires a full investment of oneself, just as is required of the celibate life. Both lifestyles are regarded as a response to the call of God to love and serve fully and freely.

Many non-resident employees of the Vatican are married, with spouses who are employed (usually outside the Vatican) and children. These employees often have a close relationship to members of their extended family, which is evident when grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins gather for major life-cycle events (e.g., baptisms, engagements, marriages) and for the observance of holidays. Women typically have an equal voice in the home, and the role of mother is valued.

The Catholic Church highly values the traditional family, considering it sacred and worth defending. For this reason, the church does not permit divorce and defines marriage as between one man and one woman. The church also forbids abortion. Although these issues have come under increased scrutiny and discussion since Pope Francis came to power, no changes have been made.

Housing

The assignment of all housing at the Vatican is determined according to one's official position. Among senior officials and leaders—whose homes are used for meetings and official entertainment—rooms tend to be spacious, with high ceilings, marble floors, and Baroque-style furnishings.

Although most popes have lived in the Apostolic Palace, Pope Francis resides in a simple suite on the third floor of Saint Martha's House, the hotel where visiting clergy members stay while in the Vatican. The change allows Francis to stay more connected with other clergy; it also allows him to live a more modest lifestyle than his predecessors. He has a small living room with a desk, as well as a simple bedroom and bathroom. The pope eats with other guests in the restaurant of the hotel.

Some clergy and *female religious* (women who have made vows to serve the church and live in celibacy, poverty, and chastity but do not live cloistered as nuns) live in community residences. The Swiss Guards live in barracks constructed in the 19th century. The rest of the population lives in small apartments, usually containing one or two bedrooms. Many of these residences have air-conditioning and heating.

Dating and Marriage

Because the Catholic Church views marriage as a sacred institution given by God to benefit human society, it officially opposes divorce. Some marriages may be annulled, meaning that the marriage is deemed invalid. For example, if one spouse was already married or an ordained clergy member at the time of the wedding, the marriage could later be annulled. In order to completely devote themselves to God and their church service, nuns and clergy members take a vow of celibacy (a vow to never marry).

Marriages for lay personnel and their families, as well as for Catholics from around the world, are often performed at Saint Peter's Basilica. A small number of marriages take place in Vatican City annually. Church weddings are recognized by the Italian state. Same-sex marriage is not legal in Vatican City.

On Wednesdays, during the pope's general audience, newly married Catholic couples from throughout the world may receive a special blessing from the pope if they make an advance request, show their marriage certificate, and come dressed in their wedding attire. The pope will then issue a blessing for the success of their future life together.

Life Cycle

Milestones

As with other aspects of life in the Vatican, Catholic practices govern rituals marking birth, coming of age, and death. A baby's baptism is seen as the public naming of the child and an occasion for a festive family gathering.

One's first Holy Communion (at around age seven) and confirmation (during adolescence) likewise combine religious rites and family gatherings. From the church's perspective, confirmation (the "commissioning" of the recipient as a Christian witness) signifies a person's coming of age in the Catholic community. For secular purposes, society confers legal adulthood at the age of 18.

Clergy who live in Vatican City may have the opportunity to advance in position. For example, a priest may become a monsignor and eventually even a cardinal.

Death

There is a growing acceptance of cremation rather than burial. However, the church strongly encourages that there be a Mass of Resurrection, which includes prayers, incense burning, and a homily. The Mass begins with the family entering at the back of the church with the coffin. Prayers are said and incense burned. Holy water is sprinkled on the coffin to symbolize the deceased person's baptism. The coffin proceeds up the main aisle to the front of the church, and the priest begins a homily to eulogize the deceased and console the mourning family. Committal rites (in which the deceased's remains are committed to their final resting place) are then

said at the back of the church or at the gravesite.

Diet

In restaurants and in the homes of Vatican employees, Italian cuisine is typical. Popular appetizers include bruschetta (a piece of fried bread topped with chopped tomato, basil, olive oil, and salt), olives, prosciutto (sliced ham), and eggplant. Common dishes include *salsa di pomodoro* (tomato sauce) and *ragù* (tomato sauce with meat) over various kinds of pasta, in addition to dishes like *spaghetti alle vongole* (spaghetti with clams). Also popular are beef, veal, pork, lamb, and fish dishes. Common vegetables include eggplants, zucchinis, spinach, tomatoes, peas, and mushrooms. The typical Roman salad, *insalata mista*, contains only lettuce and radicchio (a variety of chicory) and is seasoned with oil, salt, and vinegar. Rosemary is often used to season food. Beverages include local varieties of wine.

Vatican employees are served in one of three well-stocked cafeterias and may also shop at a grocery store. Some milk at the store comes from the dairy farm at what is traditionally the pope's summer residence at Castel Gandolfo (although Pope Francis does not spend his summers there). Prices are lower than in Italian grocery stores found just outside the Vatican, and quality is high.

Catholicism has certain norms related to food and drink. For example, when Catholics desire to receive Holy Communion during the Eucharist (the rite of eating consecrated bread and wine), they should refrain from all food and beverages (except water) for an hour before the Eucharistic rite begins to prepare the body for the reception of the consecrated bread and wine. Catholics also abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent (40-day season before Easter) and eat sparingly on Good Friday (the day commemorating Jesus's death on the cross). There is an exception for the elderly, very young (those who have not yet received their First Communion), pregnant women, and the infirm.

Recreation

Vatican personnel may choose to spend their free time in a variety of ways. The Vatican's museums are among the finest in the world, boasting the Museum of Sacred Art, the Chiaramonti, and the Museum of Secular Art, plus those exhibiting Egyptian antiquities, Renaissance-era tapestries, and Etruscan artifacts, among others. In the adjacent city of Rome, there are many superb restaurants and *trattorias* (cafés or casual restaurants), as well as abundant concerts, musicals, operas, theaters, parks, and cinemas. Teams of priests and seminarians studying in Rome compete in the popular Clericus Cup soccer matches.

Vacation time in Vatican City is closely linked to religious holidays. For example, vacation days are typically given around Christmas, Easter, and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin (in August). People may spend their vacation time traveling back to their hometowns.

The Arts

Patron of the Arts

The Vatican is home to the art collections owned by the Catholic Church. Vatican City was given World Heritage

status in 1984 by UNESCO for its highly regarded art collections; it is the only state in the world to have this status.

Most of the exquisite works of art and architecture found in the Vatican were acquired or commissioned over the centuries by the Holy See to worship God or celebrate famous saints and popes. More recent acquisitions are often the donations of wealthy families and heads of state. The variety of the Vatican's collections reflects the Holy See's centuries-old reputation as a patron of the arts.

Great works include the frescoes of Fra Angelico and Pietro da Cortona, the decorations of Peruzzi and Lorenzo Lotto, and sculptures such as *Saint Peter Enthroned*, attributed to Arnolfo di Cambio, at Saint Peter's Basilica. The *Stanze* (Rooms) of Raphael in the Apostolic Palace feature the frescoes *The Parnassus* and *The School of Athens*. The Vatican Museums contain a large collection of art, ranging from works of ancient civilizations to an extensive collection of more modern art featuring works by Auguste Rodin, Marc Chagall, Henri Matisse, and others.

Sistine Chapel

Among the most famous works at the Vatican are the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel, which date back to the 15th and 16th centuries. The Chapel is a tall, rectangular brick building, divided inside into three levels. The upper two levels were frescoed by a number of skilled Florentine Renaissance artists. The ceiling and back wall feature works by Michelangelo and include the frescoes *The Creation of Adam* and *The Last Judgment*. The Chapel's lowest level features tapestries designed for the chapel by Raphael that depict events from the lives of Saint Peter and Saint Paul.

Saint Peter's Basilica

Saint Peter's Basilica is considered one of the greatest examples of Renaissance architecture. From the laying of the foundation to the construction's completion, the basilica took more than a hundred years to build, from 1506 to 1626. Its final design was drawn by Michelangelo and was finished by later architects after his death in 1564.

The central dome, one of the largest in the world, dominates the skyline of Rome. A bronze *baldachino*, a pavilion-like structure supported by four twisted columns covering the church's main altar, was added by the artist Bernini in the first half of the 17th century. The *baldachino* lies directly over Saint Peter's tomb. Michelangelo's sculpture the *Pietà* is housed in Saint Peter's Basilica. Saint Peter's Square, an oval courtyard surrounded by tall colonnades, leads up to the basilica; it ends in a row of steps flanked by two huge statues of the first-century apostles to Rome, Peter and Paul.

Vatican Library

The Vatican Library is considered one of the oldest libraries in the world, with origins dating back to the beginning of the Catholic Church. It was officially established in 1475. The library contains a significant collection of historical texts, including approximately 75,000 manuscripts, 8,500 early printed books, and one million printed books. In addition, the library houses collections of drawings and engravings, photographs, coins and medals, and more. As a research library, the Vatican Library is open to scholars who can document their qualifications and research needs.

Music

Musical performances abound in Vatican City. Italian opera singers may be heard in Saint Peter's Basilica and at the pope's Wednesday audiences. The Paul VI Audience Hall and the Auditorium Conciliazione frequently host visiting orchestras, choirs, and individual artists, who offer concerts to the pope.

The Holy See supports the study of the church's music through the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music, an academic institution built with the intention of expanding the repertoire of the Roman Catholic Church's hymns and music. The Sistine Chapel Choir, which can trace its history to the end of the sixth century, performs at almost all the significant religious celebrations.

Holidays

Official holidays follow the calendar of Catholic feasts. These include the Solemnity of the Mother of God (1 January), Holy Week (Palm Sunday to Easter), Feast of Saint Joseph the Worker (1 May), Feast of Saints Peter and Paul (29 June), Assumption of the Blessed Virgin (15 August), Feast of the Immaculate Conception (8 December), and Christmas (25 December).

The date of the pope's election (13 March for Francis) is observed annually, as is the anniversary of the signing of the Lateran Pacts in 1929 (11 February). Vatican City also recognizes most Italian state holidays but does not observe the Feast of the Republic (2 June) or Liberation Day (25 April). Holidays are usually marked with religious functions, such as Mass and processions, that may be followed by get-togethers at home.

Election Day

Election Day commemorates the election of the current pope. For Pope Francis, the holiday is celebrated on 13 March. Many buildings will fly the Vatican City flag, and all offices are closed. Citizens are free to enjoy the Vatican gardens and participate in a Mass with the pope.

Easter

Holy Week is a significant time for the Catholic faith. Catholics fast and prepare for this event during the 40 days of Lent, when Catholics generally abstain from eating meat on Fridays and devote part of their time to prayer and acts of penance, including confession of their sins. At Mass during Lent, a somber hymn of praise is sung in place of the Alleluia, a joyful hymn.

Palm Sunday celebrates Jesus's entrance into Jerusalem and the beginning of Holy Week. During the celebration of Mass on Palm Sunday, people wave olive branches when the processional carrying the cross enters the piazza. During the celebration, all buildings in Vatican City display the national flag. The front of Saint Peter's Basilica is transformed into a huge garden featuring olive trees and flowers from around the world. The cardinals and lay persons, especially children, carry palm leaves in their hands as they walk from the obelisk to the altars in Saint Peter's. Then, while they are gathered around the altar, the pope blesses them. All officiants wear red to commemorate the passion and death of Jesus Christ.

The festivities of Holy Week proceed through Holy Thursday, which commemorates Jesus's Last Supper with his

disciples and the institution of the Eucharist (the rite of eating consecrated bread and wine), and Good Friday, which commemorates the death of Jesus on the cross. On Easter Sunday, when Jesus's resurrection is celebrated, the Alleluia is sung three times during Mass. Traditional foods on Easter Sunday include a breakfast of cheese and boiled egg and a lunch of roast lamb.

Christmas

Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus, who is believed to be the Son of God. During the four weeks before Christmas, Catholics celebrate Advent, which is derived from the Latin word for "coming." Generally, people in the Vatican prepare small Christmas nativity scenes in their homes and offices. The baby Jesus is not added to the nativity scene until Christmas Day. A large nativity scene is set up in Saint Peter's Square, in front of the basilica. Every year, a different country donates a Christmas tree, which is erected beside the nativity scene in Saint Peter's Square and decorated. The donated trees are never cut down specifically for the Vatican; their cutting always results from ordinary thinning procedures. After Christmas, the wood from the tree is used by the Vatican carpenters and given to the poor of Rome.

SOCIETY**Government****Structure**

Vatican City is an ecclesiastical elective monarchy. The pope, who is head of state and head of the Catholic Church, holds the Vatican's foremost legislative, executive, and judicial authority. In this sense, the Vatican is comparable to an absolute monarchy, with the pope as king. The College of Cardinals (the body of all cardinals in the Catholic Church) elects the pope for life. The pope does not manage Vatican City's day-to-day affairs—that is the job of different administrative offices. The pope appoints Vatican City's president, who serves as head of government for the city-state.

Vatican City is a unique state because it exists primarily to help the Holy See govern the Catholic Church around the world. The Holy See is the central governing body of the Catholic Church and has existed since the early days of the church, predating Vatican City (which was established as such in 1929). The Holy See acts on behalf of the entire Catholic Church and is treated internationally as a sovereign entity headed by the pope. The Roman Curia—the administration of the Holy See—is led by a secretary of state, who is the Holy See's head of government and is appointed by the pope.

Vatican City's diplomacy is managed by the Holy See, which has diplomatic relations with most sovereign nations and is represented in many international organizations (for example, it is a permanent observer at the United Nations). Ambassadors (known as Papal Nuncios) are officially recognized as representing the Holy See and not Vatican City.

Political Landscape

Since political power rests with the pope, no political parties exist in Vatican City. However, ideological disagreements

over religious issues have long existed between members of the Catholic Church. Some traditional, conservative Catholics find themselves at odds with reform-minded Catholics over the direction of the church under Pope Francis. Questions remain over whether the church will change its stance on homosexuality, divorce, and the role of women in the church.

In recent decades, the Vatican's financial activities have been plagued by scandals that included money laundering through the Vatican Bank and receiving large donations from individuals seeking to influence the canonization of saints. Since becoming pope, Francis has reformed the bank to fight corruption. Pope Francis has also worked to address the sexual-abuse scandals that have engulfed the Catholic Church. However, corruption within the church and sexual misconduct by the clergy remain concerns for Vatican City.

Government and the People

Since the pope holds absolute power, there are no elections in Vatican City. Residents and citizens of Vatican City do not have voting rights within the city-state. However, the pope himself is elected for life by the Holy See's College of Cardinals, a group of 115 cardinals (appointed by the pope) who are all men under the age of 80.

Economy

The Roman Curia (the Holy See's bureaucracy, diplomatic missions, and media outlets) is supported by a variety of financial sources, including investments, real estate income, and donations from Catholic individuals and dioceses. Among Vatican City's sources of income is Peter's Pence, the volunteer contributions to the Holy See from Catholics worldwide, which the pope uses for charity, disaster relief, and aid to churches in the developing world. Tens of thousands of tourists visit the Vatican every day, so income is generated by the sale of coins, stamps, mosaics, and tourist memorabilia, as well as by admission fees to the museum complex and the proceeds from the sale of publications.

Most of the Holy See's public expenditures go to the wages and personnel costs of its workers; both wages and living standards are comparable to those in Rome, though the Vatican does not tax income or many goods and services, making the cost of living lower. In response to a large budget deficit and growing concern over economic problems in the rest of Europe, the Vatican initiated a campaign in 2012 to reform the Holy See's finances and find any wasteful expenditures. Two years later, the Vatican created a secretariat of the economy to oversee the Holy See's financial and economic activities. The Vatican's currency is the euro.

Transportation and Communications

Vatican City has neither highways, harbor ports, nor an airport. There is one heliport and a 0.53-mile-long (0.86-kilometer-long) railway line that links to the Italian system at Rome's Saint Peter's Station. Although the intent of the railway was to transport pilgrims, it has seldom been used for that purpose. Instead, the line carries freight. A brief 10-minute walk north of Vatican City allows for connection with Rome's Metro Line A. Only citizens, residents, or those with a special permit are allowed to enter the city by car. Although Pope Francis currently uses a modest vehicle, the

pope traditionally travels in a vehicle with an open top for appearances in Saint Peter's Square or in a specially made car, truck, or bus with a bullet-proof glass enclosure for foreign visits. These vehicles are often informally called "popemobiles."

The Vatican has a modern and independent telephone system, a television station, and radio broadcast stations. A semi-official newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, is published daily in Italian, weekly in five languages (English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and German), and monthly in Polish. Official church information is published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, in Latin. The pope's efforts to expand the Catholic Church's presence on social media has garnered him millions of followers. Nearly all residents of Vatican City access the internet, and cellular telephones are widely used.

Education

Children who live in the Vatican attend schools located in Rome. Likewise, many young adults from foreign countries attend church-run universities in Rome. A majority of these students live at national colleges or in student hostels that various countries have established to provide accommodation for their students studying in Rome. Though most of the students attend courses to prepare for religious vocations as *male or female religious* (men or women who have made vows to serve the church and live in celibacy, poverty, and chastity but do not live cloistered as monks and nuns), there are a number of lay students enrolled to deepen their religious knowledge or to work in parishes or schools.

Traditional religious studies include philosophy, theology (including theology from early Christianity through Saint Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages and up to recent theological thought), scripture (the study of the Bible and analyses of the Bible by ancient and modern fathers of Church doctrine), canon law (the set of rules and laws applicable to Christian religious life), and liturgy (the rich and complex symbology connected to liturgical celebrations). Officials of both Vatican City and the Roman Curia are expected to obtain a doctorate in one of the ecclesiastical sciences (canon law, theology, or philosophy). Many are adjunct faculty for universities, colleges, and seminaries in Rome sponsored by the church. These tend to be specialized colleges that are associated with religious orders and communities.

Many officials hold credentials in the social and empirical sciences. Educational institutions such as the Libera Università Maria SS Assunta (LUMSA) offer specializations in communication, journalism, and medicine, among others. Some universities, such as the Pontifical Urbaniana University, are known for foreign students from Africa and Asia. Otherwise, the majority of students come from Europe, North America, and South America.

Well-known and established educational institutions that collaborate with the Holy See include the Pontifical Gregorian University (Jesuit), the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Dominican), the Pontifical Atheneum of Saint Anselm (Benedictine), and the Pontifical Biblical Institute (Jesuit), among many others. These institutions are in Rome but are under the sovereignty of the Holy See.

Health

Health care is available to Vatican City and Roman Curia employees through the city-state's clinic. Physicians' offices and other facilities perform lab tests, x-rays, and dental procedures; a pharmacy is also available. The state subsidizes healthcare costs for employees and residents. When more extensive treatment or surgery is necessary, patients are seen in one of Rome's hospitals, which have arrangements with the Vatican's FAS (*Fondo Assistenza Sanitaria*, similar to a department of health).

AT A GLANCE

Contact Information

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Country and Development Data

Capital	Vatican City
Population	1,000 (rank=197)
Area (sq. mi.)	0.27 (rank=197)
Area (sq. km.)	0.44
Human Development Index	NA
Gender Inequality Index	NA
GDP (PPP) per capita	NA
Adult Literacy	NA
Infant Mortality	NA
Life Expectancy	NA
Currency	Euro

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