

# **SPECIALIZED COMMITTEE**

## **1799 PAPAL CONCLAVE**



## ***Letter to the People:***

Distinguished Delegates,

Hello and welcome to the sixth iteration of the Douglas Southall Freeman Model United Nations Conference! Our names are Zach Bender and Krish Patel, and it is our privilege to be your chairs for the 1799 Papal Conclave committee. And we are so excited to be your guides throughout the conference.

Both Zach and Krish are sophomores in the Center for Leadership, Government, and Global Economics at Freeman. Zach started Model UN in middle school, and since then has come to experience conferences all around the state, and has gained key insight into today's society through MUN. Outside of MUN, he swims year-round at NOVA and, for Freeman, serves as an assistant junior swimming coach at Raintree, and participates in several clubs, including DECA, FBLA, and Young Democrats. Krish also started Model UN in middle school and has gone to many different conferences. Outside of MUN, he partakes in many extracurriculars, like playing soccer for Richmond United and playing on his school JV team. Krish is also part of numerous clubs such as FBLA, DECA, FC Freeman, and Equity Ambassadors.

Although this committee took place in the past, the issues you will be debating reflect real questions about the Catholic Church that still persist to this day. Whether it's from the modernization of the Catholic Church, foreign intervention within the church, or restoration of the Italian Papal States, we hope delegates explore these topics with creativity, historical accuracy, and an understanding of the intentions of the Catholic Church at this time. Since this is not only a historical committee, but also a political one, the dais strongly encourages you to ground your positions in your assigned Cardinal's perspective, not your own personal beliefs or bias, in order to truly maintain the historical accuracy.

While we recommend that all delegates write position papers in order to gain a further understanding of their position, it is not required; however, they are necessary to be eligible for awards. Awards will be given based not only on the quality and contents of your position paper, but also on your performance in the committee during moderated and unmoderated caucuses. Delegates who make thoughtful and effective contributions to the whole committee through working papers, debate, and collaboration will be recognized for awards by the chairs.

We are honored to be chairing a committee with historical importance and can't wait to see what the future entails for the Roman Catholic Church. We hope your time at FreeMUN will be just as unforgettable and exhilarating as ours. We wish you all the best of luck with your research and preparation! If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at [1799papalconclavevi@gmail.com](mailto:1799papalconclavevi@gmail.com).

Your chairs,  
Zach Bender and Krish Patel



*Douglas S. Freeman High School Model United Nations Conference*

## **Specialized Agency**

### *1799 Papal Conclave*

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**Topic I:** *Restoration of the Papal States*

**Topic II:** *Influence of Secular Powers on the Papacy*

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#### **Committee Introduction**

A conclave is a completely confidential gathering of the College of Cardinals summoned to appoint the Pope of the Catholic Church. During the conclave, the college votes until a candidate secures a two-thirds majority. In each round of voting, the cardinal will fill in their candidate's name on a card and drop the ballot in an urn. After the ballots have been tallied, they will be burned. Black smoke means a failed vote, white smoke means a new pope. This specific process repeats until the College has reached the two-thirds agreement. Following the French conquest of Rome in 1799, the Pope, Pius VI, refused to succumb to French aggression, was taken prisoner, and died six weeks later on August 29, 1799. As a result of this unremarkable situation, the cardinals will meet for the Papal Conclave beginning November 30, 1799, in Venice. Additionally, there are high tensions across the continent as other countries are influenced by the Pope, including Austria and Spain.

Delegates are tasked with working with one another to navigate the challenges the Catholic Church faces during this dark age of distress, navigating relationships with foreign powers, reclaiming the Papal States, and electing a successor to the Papacy.

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#### **Topic I:** **Restoration of the Papal States**

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##### **Background**

In 1796, troops of the French Republic under Napoleon Bonaparte invaded northern Italy, easily overpowering the Papal forces. They swiftly gained control of significant cities such as Ancona and Loreto.

Having no effective means to resist, Pope Pius VI had to sign the Treaty of Tolentino in early 1797. It was a crushing setback. The agreement took away the Papacy's territories, required a substantial

payment, and compelled the Church to surrender numerous invaluable artworks to France. The formerly powerful Papal States found themselves diminished and humiliated.

However, the worst had yet to arrive. In 1798, troops from France advanced directly into Rome. They not only seized power, but they also abolished the Papal States entirely and announced the establishment of the Roman Republic. Pope Pius VI was detained and escorted out of the city with strict security. He was shifted from location to location, confined in his last years, until he passed away in exile in the French town of Valence on August 29, 1799. He spent his final days powerless, homeless, and uncertain if the Church he guided would endure. His passing left everything in doubt. Rome remained under occupation, preventing the Church from convening a conclave there to elect the new Pope. The Papal States, once a significant aspect of European politics for centuries, were abruptly eliminated.

Now, individuals throughout Europe were posing a significant question: could the Papacy return, not only in a spiritual sense, but as an actual political power globally?

### **Current Influences**

With the Pope absent and the Papal States abolished, the Church found itself abruptly stripped of political influence. France, during the revolution, sought to maintain that situation. In the meantime, Catholic kingdoms such as Austria felt apprehensive. They aimed to counter French influence and aid in restoring the Pope's

authority, not merely as a spiritual leader, but as a political figure as well.

Austria proposed Venice as a safer, neutral location for the next Conclave, as Rome remained under French control. They wished for the new Pope to be an individual who backed the restoration of the Papal States and opposed revolutionary concepts. The choice wasn't solely about selecting a spiritual leader; it concerned the Church's future role in European politics.

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. What was the significance of the Papal States in European politics in the past, and how did things change after that loss?
2. How far did the French Revolution and Napoleon's conquests reorder the relationship of religion to politics in Europe?
3. Was the Papacy based primarily on spiritual authority, or was control of territory still crucial to the power of the Pope?
4. In what way could the purposes of Austria and other Catholic states in reinstating the Papal States express the nature of their wider political intentions?
5. What are the difficulties of a religious organization that relies on political authority for at least its protection, if not its restoration?
6. What relevance does the exile and death of Pope Pius VI hold for a religious leadership threatened by political change?

7. If restoration of the Papal States were to occur, could they be configured to ensure independence amidst increasingly nationalist/republican trends?

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## **Topic II:**

### **Influence of Secular Powers on the Papacy**

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#### **Background**

On February 20, 1798, Pope Pius VI, who had been removed from the position of ruler of the Papal States, was forced to leave the City of Rome by French forces. Plans to rescue the Pope sparked the French authorities to deport Pius to France. The French had declared war on Tuscany, and their army entered Florence on March 25, 1799. Along with the Pope, his protector, Ferdinand III of Tuscany, was deposed and expelled. On March 28, the Pope was transported by order of the French authorities, first to Parma, then to Turin, and then to Briançon, and finally to Valence, where no cardinals were allowed to attend to him. He died in Valence on August 29, a prisoner of the Directory.

While he was living in Florence, the Pope had considered the dilemma of electing a successor while Rome was in the hands of the French, as it had become the historical site of the conclave since 1431. When the Pope passed, there was no Camerlengo in

office to organize or finance a conclave. Cardinal Carlo Rezzonico, the incumbent under the Pope, died on January 26, 1799, without a successor.

Luckily, Pius VI had made plans in February 1797, as Napoleon and his troops advanced upon Rome, he prepared a brief suspension of the time between the death of the Pope and the beginning of the Conclave. After Rome was conquered, he issued the bill, "*Christi Ecclesiae Regendi*", authorizing the Cardinals who were present at his death to put off the Conclave if foreign powers threatened the integrity of the Catholic Church, and to proceed with an immediate election if absolutely necessary.

After the loss of the Vatican to French troops, the cardinals have all been expelled from the city of Rome by occupying French authorities. Venice, the chosen site for the Conclave, was picked in order for the event to take place under Austrian rule and to protect against French military aggression that had ensued in years past.

#### **Current Influences**

In 1797, under Napoleon Bonaparte's reign, France invaded Italy and the Papal States, and took control of Rome by 1798, where French Military General Louis Alexandre Berthier declared the establishment of the Roman Republic, and demanded that Pope Pius renounce his power. Pius was later kidnapped due to his resistance and public opposition to the French and died a prisoner six weeks later.

As a result of the French conquest, the Papal states were abolished, and a French puppet state was formed under the name of the Roman Republic. Because of

the utter chaos occurring within the Catholic Church following the Pope's death and conquest of Rome, Italian cardinals either fled to Austrian-controlled territories or remained in Italy under supervision by the French. For the Conclave, Austrian-controlled Venice was selected in order to serve as a "neutral" site for the event, as the Cardinals were exiled from the Vatican, where the Conclaves were historically conducted.

### Potential Solutions

In an attempt to heighten their own influence over the continent, both Austria and France are actively pressuring the Conclave in order to expand their religious influence. Historically, France had used *jus exclusivae*, which vetoes a Papal candidate from the Conclave (which is banned according to Catholic law). Meanwhile, Austria is safeguarding many relocated Cardinals from the French, catalyzing a potential bias amongst them.

In order to protect the utmost secrecy of the upcoming conclave in accordance with the guidelines set in place by the apostolic constitution, the consideration of reinstating capitulations into the 1799 Conclave has been brought up, and is encouraged to be contemplated during the election. Capitulations, by definition in the Church, are oaths taken by each member of the College of Cardinals prior to the Conclave, effectively sealing them from the outside world and preventing any foreign intervention within the election. Once he is selected, the Cardinal worthy of inheriting authority over the Catholic church will become Pope and gain an immense power

over a Europe characterized by rampant revolutions, rapidly expanding empires, and anti-clerical nations.

### Questions to Consider:

1. How can the College of Cardinals and Conclave prevent Austria or France from controlling the outcome of the election?
2. Should *jus exclusivae* be honored or denied?
3. Should the College of Cardinals take on Capitulations before the Conclave?
4. What measures should be taken to promote a fair election despite a non-neutral site?
5. How can the College of Cardinals prevent a French or Austrian endorsed candidate from infiltrating into the election, compromising the conclave's "fair" nature?
6. What should the new Papacy's first moves be in relation to dealing with revolutionary governments (like France?)
7. Should peace or spiritual defense of the Papacy be prioritized when dealing with competing foreign powers?

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