

Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church

By Thomas J. Reese S.J.

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There are one billion Catholics in the world today, spread over every continent, speaking almost every conceivable language, and all answering to a single authority. The Vatican is a unique international organization, both in terms of its extraordinary power and influence, and in terms of its endurance. Popes come and go, but the elaborate and complex bureaucracy called the Vatican lives on. For centuries, it has served and sometimes undermined popes; it has been praised and blamed for the actions of the pope and for the state of the church. Yet an objective examination of the workings of the Vatican has been unavailable until now.

Drawing on more than a hundred interviews with Vatican officials, this book affords a firsthand look at the people, the politics, and the organization behind the institution. Reese brings remarkable clarity to the almost Byzantine bureaucracy of congregations, agencies, secretariats, tribunals, nunciature, and offices, showing how they serve the pope and, through him, the universal church. He gives a lively account of how popes are elected and bishops appointed, how dissident theologians are disciplined and civil authorities dealt with. Throughout, revealing and colorful anecdotes from church history and the present day bring the unique culture of the Vatican to life.

The Vatican is a fascinating institution, a model of continuity and adaptation, which remains constant while functioning powerfully in a changing world. As never before, this book provides a clear, objective perspective on how the enormously complex institution surrounding the papacy operates on a day-to-day level, how it has adapted and endured for close to two thousand years, and how it is likely to face the challenges of the next millennium.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
In his exhaustive treatment of the world's most complex religious organization, Reese, a Jesuit priest who has written about the U.S. Catholic hierarchy (Archbishop: Inside the Power Structure of the American Catholic Church, Harper San Francisco) approaches his subject from a sympathetic yet critical perspective and manages to accomplish two tasks. He describes what is, based on more than 100 interviews with Vatican insiders, and he prescribes what might be, based on his own sense of the church's place in the contemporary world. Though he avoids discussing personal lives of curial officials, he humanizes a vast bureaucracy with an occasional bit of gossip and a few revealing Vatican jokes. For example, one official offered a careerist's recipe for survival in the Roman curia: "Don't think. If you think, don't speak. If you speak, don't write. If you think and if you speak, don't write. If you think and speak and write, don't sign your name. If you think and speak and write and sign your name, don't be surprised." Reese's detailed account of what goes on inside a papal conclave will greatly simplify the work of journalists and teachers during the election of the next pope.
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From Library Journal
One need not be Catholic or even religious to appreciate this fascinating look into the Vatican, an institution with worldwide influence. Reese, a Jesuit priest and political scientist, provides detailed information, much of which is not available elsewhere, on the internal workings of the Vatican both as city-state and the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church. That information ranges from how popes are elected and how each of the Vatican offices operates to how the Vatican bank functions and what sort of fire department the Vatican has. Reese also offers insights, e.g., that Cardinals tend to elect an older pope to avoid a long reign, and notes procedures for deposing an insane or otherwise incapacitated pope. With its wealth of information, historical background, and analysis, Reese's work should be an important addition for a variety of libraries. [For another view on this subject, see Carl Bernstein's recently released His Holiness John Paul II and the Hidden History of Our Time, which was unavailable for review.]?John Moryl, Yeshiva Univ. Lib., New Yor. -*?John Moryl, Yeshiva Univ. Lib., New York*
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From Booklist
Given the size, longevity, and worldwide impact of the Roman Catholic Church, a study of its politics and organization is certainly justified; and Reese, a Jesuit trained in political science, is eminently qualified to write it. Although the proliferation of detail may prove daunting to general readers, Reese communicates it in an engaging style that moves easily between gossip (in the best sense of the word) and academic formality. Readers who persevere through the detail will find the account entertaining as well as informative--with much to offer toward understanding not only the Roman Catholic Church but also other global, transnational organizations that play increasingly significant roles in contemporary politics, both global and local. *Steve Schroeder*

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This Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church book is not really ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you get by reading this book is information inside this reserve incredible fresh, you will get information which is getting deeper you read a lot of information you will get. This specific Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church without we recognize teach the one who reading through it become critical in thinking and analyzing. Don't be worry Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church can bring any time you are and not make your bag space or bookshelves' grow to be full because you can have it with your lovely laptop even telephone. This Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church having very good arrangement in word and also layout, so you will not truly feel uninterested in reading.

Owen Ray:

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