Vatican



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Pope Francis has appointed the first layperson to head Rome's Pontifical Lateran University.

The pope named Vincenzo Buonomo, 57, rector of the university, a Vatican press release announced June 2. As of July 1, he will succeed 67-year-old Bishop Enrico dal Covolo, a Salesian who was appointed rector in 2010.

Born April 17, 1961, in Gaeta, Buonomo specialized in international law and received his doctorate from the Lateran in 1983. He began teaching civil law at the university in 1984 and became a full professor in 2001.

He also assisted the Holy See's permanent observer at the U.N. food and agriculture agencies based in Rome — the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Program — in 1983 and became its office manager in 2007.

Pope Francis named him an adviser of the Vatican City State in 2014.

He is the first layperson to be named rector of the Lateran University, whose former rectors include: Cardinal Angelo Scola (1995-2002), patriarch of Venice; and Archbishop Rino Fisichella (2002-2010), president of the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization. The Congregation for Catholic Education named the first woman

rector of pontifical university in Rome in 2014 when it appointed then-49-year-old Angeline Franciscan Sr. Mary Melone as rector of Rome's Pontifical Antonianum University.

Colloquially known as the "pope's university" because it is the university of the Bishop of Rome, the Lateran traces its roots to 1773 when Pope Clement XIV merged Rome's seminary with the college of theology.

Today about 3,000 seminarians, priests, women and men religious and lay students from 100 countries study at the university for degrees in theology, philosophy, civil and canon law.

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