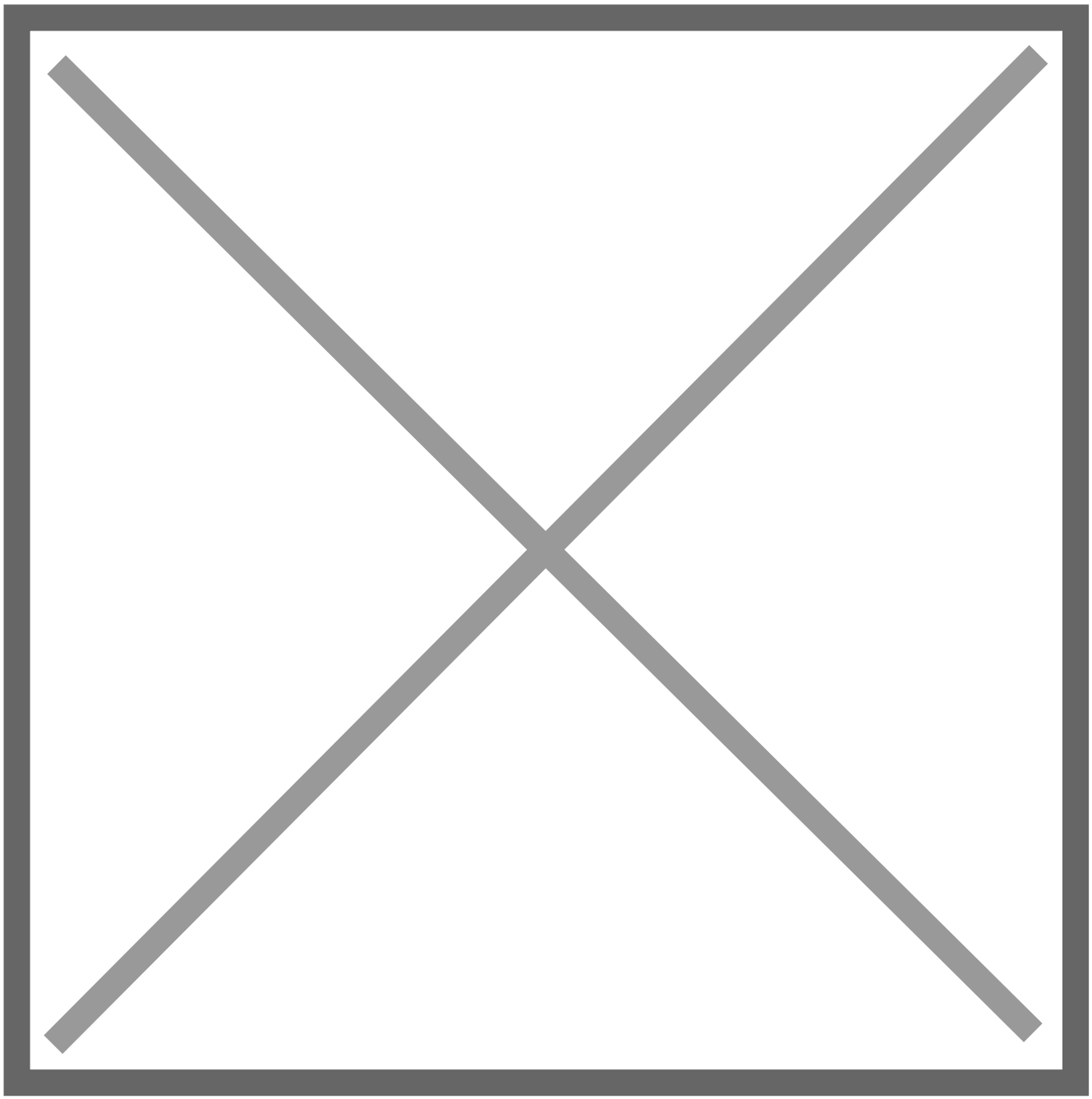
Vatican



Pope Francis talks with Cardinal-designate Silvano Tomasi during a private audience at the Vatican Oct. 30, 2020. The pope has named Tomasi as his special delegate to the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. (CNS/Vatican Media)

Junno Arocho Esteves

View Author Profile



Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Vatican City — November 2, 2020

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

After the surprise resignation of Cardinal Angelo Becciu in October, Pope Francis named Cardinal-designate Silvano Tomasi as his special delegate to the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

In a letter dated Nov. 1, the pope said the cardinal-designate "will possess all the necessary powers to decide the eventual questions that should arise for the implementation of the mandate entrusted to you," and said Tomasi would "receive the oath of the next grand master."

The order is set to elect a new grand master Nov. 8 to succeed Fra' Giacomo Dalla Torre, who died in April.

The special delegate, the pope said, also will work closely with Fra' Ruy Goncalo do Valle, the chivalric order's temporary head, and the next elected grand master to carry out the renewal of the order's constitution.

Francis also said Tomasi will serve as "my exclusive spokesperson in all matters relating to relations between the Apostolic See and the order."

The position of special delegate to the order was created in 2017 following a dramatic series of events that began in November 2016 with the removal and eventual reinstatement of Albrecht Freiherr von Boeselager, the order's grand chancellor.

Weeks of public tension between the order and the Vatican ended when Francis requested that Fra' Matthew Festing resign his post as grand master in January 2017.

Becciu, who the pope had named as the order's special delegate in 2017, was asked to retire Sept. 24 by Francis amid a financial scandal.

Despite having most of his responsibilities transferred to Tomasi, U.S. Cardinal Raymond L. Burke remains the cardinal patron of the order.

Although Burke is often viewed as one of Francis' most vocal critics, in an interview, the pope said he did not regard the American cardinal as an "adversary" and that the decision to appoint "a delegate with a different charism than Burke" was a question of "clearing things up a bit in the order."

"The problem with the Order of Malta was more than he [Burke] was unable to deal with it," the pope said in the 2017 interview with Germany's Die Zeit newspaper. "I have not removed his title of patron. He is still the patron of the Order of Malta."

Advertisement