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Pasolini wears friar's habit, pictured speaking.

A screen capture from TV2000, the television network owned by the Italian bishops' conference, shows Capuchin Father Roberto Pasolini in an interview from Dec. 6, 2020. The priest was appointed by Pope Francis Nov. 9, 2024, to be the preacher of the papal household. (CNS/TV2000, YouTube)

Carol Glatz

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Pope Francis appointed a new preacher of the papal household: a 53-year-old Italian Capuchin priest who studied computer science and mathematics and discovered his vocation while reading a free copy of St. Matthew's Gospel on the subway.

Capuchin Father Roberto Pasolini succeeds Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa, also an Italian Capuchin priest, who turned 90 in July and had been the papal preacher since 1980 when St. John Paul II appointed him. Pope Benedict XVI and Francis respectively confirmed his position, and Francis elevated him to the College of Cardinals in 2020.

The Vatican made the announcement Nov. 9.

The papal preacher is tasked with preparing the traditional series of Lenten and Advent reflections each year for the pope and top Vatican officials and is charged with preaching at the pope's public celebration of the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday.

Born Nov. 5, 1971, Pasolini received his degree in computer science with a transdisciplinary exploration of artificial intelligence, mathematics, philosophy and psychology, he said in an interview in 2020 with TV2000, the television network owned by the Italian bishops' conference.

He became active in parish life, especially in its outreach to the poor, after using his commuting time to read a copy of the Gospel according to St. Matthew he got free with a copy of L'Unità, an Italian newspaper founded by the Italian Communist Party and later supported by the Democratic Party of the Left.

He said in the TV interview he had been politically active, wanting to change the world, but that he then changed his approach when he was struck by a line in J.D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye": "The mark of the immature man is that he wants to die nobly for a cause, while the mark of the mature man is that he wants to live humbly for one."

He said he also admired St. Francis of Assisi who believed, "You change the world by repairing it not by overturning it."

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Pasolini made his perpetual vows in the Orders of Friars Minor Capuchin in 2002 and was ordained a priest in 2006.

He studied at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, earning a doctorate in biblical theology, and he served as a professor of biblical languages and sacred Scripture at the Laurentianum Interprovincial Theological Institute of the Capuchins in Milan and Venice.

He is a professor of biblical exegesis at the theological faculty of northern Italy in Milan, preaches at spiritual retreats and is an author of several books on biblical spirituality.

He "embraces new technology to spread the Gospel, including podcasts and artificial intelligence," according to Vatican News Nov. 9.

The Capuchin priest is also "heavily involved in working with the poor, people living on the streets, people with disabilities, and ministry in prisons," Vatican News said.

Cantalamessa will continue his life of "study, reading and prayer" at the Hermitage of Merciful Love in Cittaducale, Italy, alongside a community of Poor Clare nuns, while occasionally serving as their chaplain, Vatican News reported.