Vatican
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Pope Leo XIV waves as he arrives in St. Peter's Square on the occasion of the last Jubilee audience, at the Vatican Dec. 20. (AP/Gregorio Borgia)

by Associated Press

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Pope Leo XIV has summoned the world's cardinals for two days of meetings to help him govern the church, the Vatican said Dec. 20, in the clearest sign yet that the new year will signal the unofficial start of his pontificate.

The consistory, as such gatherings are called, will be held Jan. 7-8, immediately following the Jan. 6 conclusion of the 2025 Holy Year, a once-every-quarter century celebration of Christianity.

Leo's first few months as pope have been dominated by fulfilling the weekly Holy Year obligations of meeting with pilgrimage groups and celebrating special Jubilee audiences and Masses. Additionally, much of his time has been spent wrapping up the outstanding matters of Pope Francis' pontificate.

As a result, the January consistory in many ways will mark the first time that Leo can look ahead to his own agenda following his May 8 election as the first American pope. It is significant that he has summoned all the world's cardinals to Rome.

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Francis had largely eschewed the consistory tradition as a means of governance. He had instead relied on a small group of eight or nine hand-picked cardinal advisers to help him govern and make key decisions.

The Vatican said Dec. 20 that Leo's first consistory "will be oriented toward fostering common discernment and offering support and advice to the Holy Father in the exercise of his high and grave responsibility in the government of the universal Church."

Other types of consistories include the formal installation of new cardinals. But no new cardinals will be made at this meeting, which is purely consultative.