

Five things to know about the newest cardinals

John L. Allen Jr. | Jan. 6, 2012



Archbishop Edwin O'Brien, left, and Archbishop Timothy Dolan.

Naming new cardinals is among the more important acts of any papacy, because the cardinals form the "electoral college" that will pick the next pope. That's arguably even more significant this time around, given that Benedict XVI will turn 85 in April -- and although there's no sign of any health crisis, at that age it's natural to begin thinking about what might come next.

Here are five quick observations about the 22 new cardinals named today by Benedict XVI, including 18 who are under 80 and therefore eligible to participate in a future conclave.

[Read John Allen's analysis here.](#) [1]

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