

Mumbai's longtime church leader, Indian Cardinal Pimenta, dies at 93

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Indian Cardinal Simon Pimenta, who led the archdiocese of Bombay for more than 18 years, died Friday at the age of 93.

He was known for trying to keep his sprawling and diverse archdiocese united and active, establishing parishes in the city's slums and trying to counter widespread contraception campaigns by promoting natural family planning.

He served as a papally appointed synod president during the 1990 Synod of Bishops on priestly formation and led the Indian bishops' conference for six years.

Sending his condolences to Catholics in Mumbai, as Bombay is now named, Pope Francis remembered the cardinal's "long years of devoted service to the Catholic community there and his many years of faithful assistance to the successor of Peter as a member of the College of Cardinals."

Pimenta was born in Marol, India, March 1, 1920.

He was ordained a priest of Bombay in 1949. Pope Paul VI named him an auxiliary bishop for the archdiocese in 1971 and coadjutor of Bombay in 1977. He became archbishop in 1978 and was named a cardinal 10 years later by Blessed Pope John Paul II. He retired in 1996 at the age of 76.

His death leaves the College of Cardinals with 203 members, 112 of whom are under the age of 80 and therefore eligible to vote in a conclave.

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