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Report: Pope abolishes monsignor honor for most priests

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Pope Francis has reportedly abolished the practice of granting priests the honorary title of "monsignor" and has communicated the decision through Vatican ambassadors around the world.

From now on, only diocesan priests over the age of 65 will be eligible to receive the title, according to a report Saturday at the Italian newspaper *La Stampa's* website Vatican Insider.

The title monsignor is an honorific of sorts normally granted to priests as a reward for service to the church or as a sign of some special function they serve in church governance. The title had usually been granted by the pope on the recommendation of the priest's local bishop.

Some have criticized the practice, saying it leads to an air of careerism in the church.

The subject of abolishing the monsignor title had been on the pope's mind since at least October, when sources had told *NCR* it had come up at the first meeting of the Council of Cardinals, the eight member group of cardinals from around the world who are advising the pope on reforming the Vatican bureaucracy.

According to Vatican Insider, the Vatican's ambassador to Great Britain, Archbishop Antonio Mennini, wrote to all the bishops there to inform them of the pope's decision and to say that those who have already been given the monsignor title can keep it.

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