

VATICAN

Gambetti removed from St. Peter's Basilica; speculation begins over his successor

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Cardinal Mauro Gambetti is the new Archbishop of Chieti-Vasto. Above all, he will no longer be the archpriest of St Peter's Basilica or president of the Fabbrica of the same name. Despite being considered, ever since the post-conclave period, to be at the top of

the list of potential candidates for removal, Leo XIV handled the matter with kid gloves, replacing him only several months after the expiry of his five-year term. The same cannot be said of his new posting, which is unlikely to thrill the ambitious 60-year-old cardinal, fresh from his experience at St Peter's. He will replace Monsignor Bruno Forte, the theologian initially favoured by Bergoglio, but who fell out of favour after revealing the Argentine Pope's plans for the Synod on the Family ('If we speak explicitly of communion for remarried divorcees, you have no idea what a mess they'll cause').

By sending a cardinal to a minor archdiocese such as Chieti-Vasto, Pope Leo almost seems to be seeking to remedy the anomaly created by his predecessor in 2020–21 when he elevated this young Franciscan from the Sacred Convent of Assisi to cardinal and head of the world's most important basilica. Following the gradual sidelining of Father Enzo Fortunato, this move confirms Leone's desire to draw a line under the most high-profile figures of the Bergoglian era. The theory of absolute continuity between the two popes, championed by those who are inconsolable in their devotion to Bergoglio, is faltering in the face of Prévost's prudent yet decisive reshuffles.

Gambetti's five years at St Peter's have not been uneventful. He has been criticised for his managerial approach and his choice of team to revolutionise the Basilica. The greatest discontent has arisen among the canons, who now hope for a revision of the 2024 statute. Moreover, we should not forget that the Franciscan arrived at the Vatican in the wake of the Fabbrica di San Pietro being placed under special administration, a move which cast a shadow over the previous management under Cardinal Angelo Comastri. This was yet another ill-advised act by Francis, the futility of which was later revealed by Nuncio Mario Giordana's investigation. As on so many other occasions, the 'monster' had once again been splashed across the front pages, complete with a *motu proprio* titled 'Transparency'.

Now that Gambetti's transfer to Chieti-Vasto on 29 November has been confirmed, the question remains as to who will succeed him. At this very moment, speculation is rife within the sacred walls. While rumours surrounding Cardinals Pietro Parolin and Rolandas Makrickas are dying down, the name of the former Master of Papal Ceremonies, Guido Marini, remains in the background. Marini's successor, Monsignor Diego Ravelli, is considered to have a slightly better chance. However, the two names most frequently mentioned in Vatican corridors are those of Monsignor Rino Fisichella, the pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelisation, who recently turned seventy-five, and Monsignor Corrado Sanguineti, Bishop of Pavia, whom Prévost met at the Basilica of St Peter in Ciel d'Oro, where the remains of St Augustine are kept. The

former is regarded as an administrator capable of restoring order to the situation in the basilica, while the latter is seen as an outsider with a similar profile to Prevost's.

Ravelli, Fisichella, Sanguinetti: 'The future archpriest? He'll probably be from Lombardy," jokes a monsignor, rattling off the trio of candidates thought to be the most likely for the role. We shall see. Since Leo XIV took office, leaks have been kept to a minimum, and the possibility of a 'Mr X' for St Peter's cannot be entirely ruled out either.