

VATICAN

Vatican Communications: Pope Leo begins the revolution

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From 1 November, Maria Montserrat Alvarado, President of EWTN News, will succeed Paolo Ruffini as Prefect of the Dicastery for Communication. While Ruffini's term is coming to an end, this change marks a clear break with the past, given that Pope Francis had previously criticised EWTN for plotting against him.

There are just five months to go until Paolo Ruffini steps down from his post. Pope Leo XIV has been preparing for the succession of the Prefect of the Dicastery for Communication for some time. Yesterday, it was officially announced that, from 1 November, the new Prefect will be Maria Montserrat Alvarado, who is currently President and Chief Operating Officer of the multimedia giant *EWTN* News.

Founded by Mother Angelica, it has been repeatedly accused of plotting against the Pope during the twelve years of Bergoglio's pontificate. Recently, in his book *Noi siamo i tempi*, which argues for continuity between Francis and Leo XIV, Marco Damilano has once again criticised *EWTN*. The appointment of the *EWTN* president in place of the devout Catholic Ruffini will therefore not have been well received in the world of ecclesiastical media. This is a sign of just how difficult it still is in those circles to understand Prevost's decisions.

Leone would probably have made this change regardless, but Ruffini's impending retirement in October made it easier. Knowing this, he preferred to wait until now to avoid one of the shock dismissals to which his predecessor had accustomed us.

As we have written several times on these pages, discontent with the management of Vatican communications was extremely high in the Apostolic Palace. For a mathematician like Prevost, accustomed to overseeing accounts since his days as superior of his order, the staggering communication expenditure figure could not have failed to catch his eye: 45.50% of the Holy See's expenditure, as published in the consolidated budget of the Secretariat for the Economy (SPE, 2024). The results are almost universally recognised as unsatisfactory.

Following the publication of *Magnifica Humanitas*, Leone feels an even greater need to communicate effectively. The choice therefore fell on a female communications specialist and laywoman whose CV includes advising the US bishops through their Committee on Religious Freedom.

Having gained extensive experience at the non-profit Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, where she worked extensively during the Obama administration, Alvarado has become a familiar face on the leading US Catholic television channel, presenting the programme *EWTN News in Depth*.

The appointment of the EWTN News president to the most important office in the Dicastery for Communication undoubtedly marks a break with previous eras under Ruffini and Monsignor Dario Edoardo Viganò, who stepped down in 2018 following the [controversy surrounding Benedict XVI's letters](#).

It remains to be seen whether the highly influential editorial director of Vatican media, Andrea Tornielli, will remain in his post much longer after November.