



Research Unit
Press Information Bureau
Government of India

George J. Koovakad's Cardinal Appointment by Pope Francis

A Historic Moment of Joy and Pride

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In the heart of Vatican City, one of the most sacred places in Christendom, the world witnessed a profound moment of joy and pride. George Jacob Koovakad, an Archbishop from Kerala, was elevated to the esteemed position of Cardinal by Pope Francis, the Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church. This momentous occasion, held at the grand St. Peter's Basilica, honoured Koovakad's lifelong dedication to the service of the Church and symbolised the deep connection between India and the global Catholic community.



Vatican City, the smallest independent state in the world, stands as the spiritual heart of Catholicism and a powerful symbol of faith. The beauty of St. Peter's Basilica, with its iconic double colonnades and the grand piazza in front of it, tells the story of the Church's rich historical and artistic legacy. The basilica, built atop the

tomb of Saint Peter, the apostle considered the first pope, is the largest religious building in the world. It is not only an architectural masterpiece but also a place where millions of Catholics from around the world come to connect with their faith and heritage.

The Pope is at the heart of this sacred space, the spiritual leader of over a billion Catholics worldwide. The Pope's authority, known as Papal Authority, is grounded in the belief that he is the successor to Saint Peter, who was given the responsibility of guiding the early Christian Church. The Pope's role is both spiritual and administrative, shaping the doctrine, laws, and mission of the Church. This authority is deeply respected, and when the Pope speaks on matters of faith and morals, he is considered infallible, meaning his statements are believed to be free from error. Beyond his theological responsibilities, the Pope also plays a key role in advocating for peace, justice, and human dignity, often using his influence to address the world's most urgent



issues.

In 2013, Pope Francis made history as the first Pope from Latin America, and since then, his leadership has been defined by humility and a strong focus on social justice. Known for his simple way of life—using public transportation, living in a modest apartment, and prioritizing service to others—Pope Francis has transformed the role of the Pope. He has called for a Church that is more compassionate, inclusive and committed to

helping the poor. His papacy, centered on mercy and humility, has inspired millions worldwide, including George Koovakad, whose journey mirrors these values.

Born in Chethipuzha, Kerala, Koovakad's path to becoming a Cardinal is a testament to his unwavering commitment to faith and service. As a member of the Syro-Malabar Church, an Eastern Catholic Church in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church, Koovakad has worked tirelessly to strengthen the ties between Eastern and Western Christian traditions. Ordained as a priest in 2004, he soon entered the diplomatic service of the Holy See, representing the Church in countries like Algeria, South Korea, Iran, Costa Rica, and Venezuela. His role as Organizer of Papal Journeys since 2021 further highlighted his dedication to spreading the message of the Church across the globe.

Pope Francis elevated Koovakad to Cardinal, not just a personal honour but a recognition of his lifelong devotion to the Church's mission of serving humanity. Despite his many accomplishments, Koovakad has remained grounded, always emphasising the values of simplicity, humility, and service. His life embodies Pope Francis' vision of a Church that is a compassionate, inclusive force for good in the world.



With its rich Christian heritage, India watched with immense pride as one of its own was honoured. In his message of congratulations, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi expressed the nation's collective joy, calling it a "matter of great joy and pride for India." The nation's deep connection to the Church's teachings was also reflected in Union Minister Shri George Kurian's remarks, highlighting how India's tradition of tolerance and commitment to equal rights for all religions has made it a safe haven for minorities.

As Pope Francis continues to advocate for peace, human dignity, and the welfare of the poor, figures like Cardinal George Koovakad are essential in realizing his vision. Koovakad's dedication to promoting dialogue

and mutual respect reflects the Pope's call for unity and understanding among diverse communities. His elevation to Cardinal in the sacred space of St. Peter's Basilica not only marks a new chapter in his personal journey but also signifies the broader, global mission of the Church, which aims to bridge divides and bring hope to all corners of the world.

For India, witnessing this significant moment in Vatican City, a place that has long been the spiritual epicenter for Catholics, was a reminder of the country's deep ties with the global Christian community. It was a moment of joy, pride, and spiritual reflection that reaffirmed the importance of faith, unity, and the power of compassionate leadership in shaping a better world for all.

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Santosh Kumar/ Ritu Kataria/ Kamna Lakaria