

When to look for smoke?

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All eyes will turn to the smokestack on top of the Sistine Chapel after the cardinals process into conclave Tuesday at 4:30 p.m. If you don't want to watch all day, when should you check for smoke?

Until a pope is elected, twice a day there will be black smoke around noon and 7 p.m. Rome time. White smoke could appear at these times or earlier, around 10:30 a.m. or 5:30 p.m. if a pope is elected on the first ballot of the morning or afternoon.

If the smoke is anything like last time, it will come out gray, much to the confusion of journalists and other watchers. If the smoke comes at 10:30 a.m. or 5:30 p.m., you can be sure it is white. But you may scratch your head at noon and 7 p.m.

The Vatican has a backup plan for gray smoke. St. Peter's largest bell will also ring when a pope is elected. Last time, however, it took a while for the bell ringer to get the message.

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