

HIS EMINENCE
CARDINAL VINCENT NICHOLS
ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER
PRESIDENT OF THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND & WALES

Vincent Gerard Nichols (born 8 November 1945) is an English cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church, Archbishop of Westminster and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. He previously served as Archbishop of Birmingham from 2000 to 2009. On 22 February 2014, Pope Francis admitted Archbishop Nichols to the Sacred College of Cardinals at a general consistory.

Nichols wrote to Pope Francis offering his resignation as archbishop as of his 75th birthday on 8 November 2020, as is customary; the pope asked him to stay on as cardinal.

Vincent Gerard Nichols was born in 1945 in Crosby, Lancashire to Henry Joseph and Mary (née Russell) Nichols, both teachers. He said that he felt a calling to the priesthood as a teenager.

He attended St Peter and Paul's Junior School on Liverpool Road, Crosby before joining St Mary's College, Crosby, from 1956 to 1963. From St. Mary's he entered the Venerable English College, Rome. He was ordained for the Archdiocese of Liverpool on 21 December 1969 by Archbishop Paul Marcinkus. He obtained an STL in Theology & Philosophy from the Pontifical Gregorian University in 1970.

Upon his return to Britain, Nichols studied at the University of Manchester for a year and earned an MA degree in Theology in 1971, specialising in the theology of St. John Fisher. He then served as assistant pastor at St Mary's Church, Wigan, as well as chaplain to St John Rigby College, Wigan, and St Peter's Catholic High School, Wigan.

He received a MEd degree from Loyola University Chicago in 1974 and was assigned to St. Anne's Church in Edge Hill in 1975. Father Nichols spent a total of 14 years in the Liverpool archdiocese. In 1980, he was appointed director of the Upholland Northern Institute. He also sat on the archiepiscopal council.

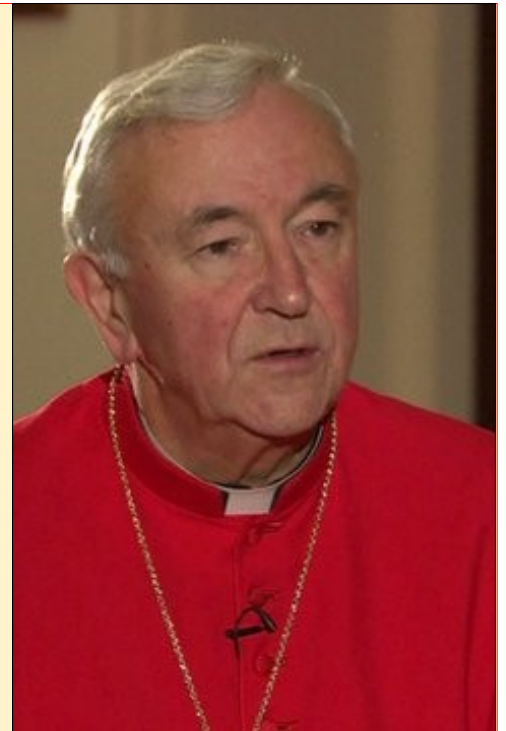
Nichols served as General Secretary of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (CBCEW) from 1984 to 1993. In addition to his role within the CBCEW, he was moderator of the Steering Committee of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland from 1989 to 1996. He was chairman of the Catholic Education Service from 1998.

Auxiliary bishop of Westminster

On 5 November 1991, Nichols was appointed Auxiliary bishop of Westminster and Titular bishop of *Othona* by Pope John Paul II. He received his episcopal consecration on 24 January 1992 from Cardinal Basil Hume, OSB, with Archbishop Derek Worlock and Bishop Alan Clark serving as co-consecrators, at Westminster Cathedral.

At the age of 46, he was the youngest Catholic bishop in the United Kingdom. He selected as his episcopal motto: *Fortis Ut Mors Dilectio*, meaning, "Love Is Strong As Death" Song of Solomon 8:6.

As an auxiliary, Nichols served as vicar for North London. He was appointed to the finance advisory



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*Cardinal Vincent Nichols'
Coat of Arms*

committee of the National Catholic Fund in 1994 and to the CBCEW's Committee for the Roman Colleges in 1995, and became Episcopal Liaison of the CBCEW for the National Conference of Diocesan Financial Secretaries in 1996.

In 1998, he was made chairman of the CBCEW Department for Catholic Education and Formation, as well as chairman of the Catholic Education Service. Nichols represented the European bishops at the November 1998 Synod of Bishops from Oceania, and was a special secretary at the Synod of Bishops for Europe in September 1999. He was celebrant of the Requiem Mass for Cardinal Hume in 1999.

Archbishop of Birmingham

On 15 February 2000, Nichols was appointed the eighth Archbishop of Birmingham by Pope John Paul II, succeeding the French-born Maurice Couve de Murville. He was installed as archbishop on the following 29 March. He received the pallium from Pope John Paul II in Rome on 29 June 2000, the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, at the same time as Cormac Murphy-O'Connor received his as Metropolitan of Westminster. Prior to his appointment to Birmingham, he had been considered a leading contender to replace the late Cardinal Hume as Archbishop of Westminster; the position went to Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, although Nichols would later succeed him.

In 2001, Nichols became chairman of the management board of the Catholic Office for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults. He is also a patron of the International Young Leaders Network based at Blackfriars, Oxford. In 2008, he was named President of the Commission for Schools, Universities, and Catechesis in the Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe. He is lead episcopal trustee of the three English seminaries outside the United Kingdom – The Royal English College, Valladolid, as well as the Beda College and the Venerable English Colleges in Rome. He is assisted in this role by two further episcopal trustees – Archbishop Arthur Roche, Secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, and Mark Jabalé, Bishop Emeritus of Menevia. He undertakes at least one "visitation" to each of these seminaries in each academic year.

He provided the commentary for the BBC's coverage of the funeral of Pope John Paul II in 2005.

By virtue of his status as ordinary of the Birmingham diocese, Nichols was Chairman of the Governing Body of Newman University College (now Newman University). Nichols has been an advocate of the cause of canonisation for Cardinal John Henry Newman. Nichols oversaw the attempted removal of Newman's remains from his grave in Worcestershire to the Birmingham Oratory in 2008, however on the opening of the grave no human remains were recoverable.

Nichols wrote two books: *Promise of Future Glory* and *Missioners*; and had the inspiration for the "Walk with Me" programme, which sought to bring people together in spiritual accompaniment through the seasons of the Church's year. The initiative later spread to other dioceses.

Archbishop of Westminster

Nichols was appointed the eleventh Archbishop of Westminster by Pope Benedict XVI on 3 April 2009, and solemnly installed on 21 May 2009. The diocese, the principal see of the Church in England and Wales, serves 472,600 Catholics. It was reported that Benedict XVI personally selected Nichols for the post after the Congregation for Bishops failed to reach a consensus.

In the time leading up to the appointment, Nichols' name had been repeatedly mentioned as a possible successor to Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, and his name was the only one to be on both *ternas*, or shortlist of candidates submitted to the Congregation for Bishops. A group of English Catholic bishops, as well as a member of parliament, had even expressed their concerns of promoting Nichols to Westminster to the Apostolic Nuncio, Faustino Sainz Muñoz, citing the archbishop's ambition.

In his decision to accept the "daunting" role of Archbishop of Westminster, Nichols said he "just swallowed hard and said 'yes.'"

He succeeded Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor, who reached the mandatory retirement age of 75 in 2007. Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor described his successor as "competent, compassionate, and experienced."

As expected, Nichols was elected President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and

Wales by unanimous acclamation on 30 April 2009.

He received his second pallium from Pope Benedict XVI in Rome on 29 June 2009, the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

He was appointed a member of the Congregation for Bishops on 16 December 2013 by Pope Francis. On 19 February 2014, he was appointed a member of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches.

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Appointment to the College of Cardinals

On 12 January 2014 Pope Francis announced that Nichols would be created a cardinal at the consistory of the Church held on 22 February 2014. Cardinal Nichols was formally elevated to the Sacred College of Cardinals by Pope Francis on 22 February 2014, receiving the traditional red biretta and gold ring during a ceremony in Saint Peter's Basilica. He was created Cardinal-Priest of Santissimo Redentore e Sant'Alfonso in Via Merulana.

His coat of arms includes a blue wavy band on a silver shield to represent the River Mersey, scallop shells to represent the Venerable English College in Rome, the red rose of Lancashire and anchors representing Liverpool: surmounted by the customary red galero (ecclesiastical hat) with thirty red cords and tassels (for a cardinal).



Cardinal Vincent Nichols with Pope Francis in 2014