News 21 November 2026 | English article

Latest: St Peter's Basilica Choirmaster Pablo Colino Dies at 92 on 400th Anniversary

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"Dean of sacred music"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Monsignor Pablo Colino, the Spanish priest and musician who directed the choir of St Peter's Basilica for 26 years, died in Rome aged 92 on 18 November 2026 - the very day the Vatican marked the 400th anniversary of the dedication of the present basilica. Colino served as director of the Cappella Giulia, the basilica's historic musical chapel, from 1980 until 2006. He also led the choirs of the Roman Philharmonic Academy for more than six decades.

The coincidence was not lost on the Vatican's own newspaper. In his obituary, L'Osservatore Romano called Colino a "dean of sacred music" and a "long-time custodian of the Cappella Giulia", noting that his death came "on the very day of the 400th anniversary of the Dedication of the Vatican Basilica". The present basilica was dedicated by Pope Urban VIII on 18 November 1626, after construction that had begun in 1506 on the site of the earlier basilica built under the Emperor Constantine.

Colino was born in Pamplona on 25 January 1934, the son of Francisco Colino, a musician in the Spanish Civil Guard Band, from whom he inhereted his musical ability. He attended the seminary at Saturrarán before studying philosophy in Vitoria and theology in San Sebastián, where he was ordained a priest at the cathedral. He moved to Rome in 1957, aged 23, having completed his initial ecclesiastical studies in Spain.

His decision to stay in Rome came down to one conversation with his bishop. After he was offered a teaching position in the city, he sought permission from Bishop Lorenzo Bereciartua of San Sebastián.

The bishop considered the request before telling him: "I prefer to have a friend in Rome than an enemy at home." Colino stayed, and Rome kept him for the rest of his life.

He continued his studies at the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music, obtaining qualifications in sacred music in 1960 and in composition and choral conducting in 1963. He later graduated in philosophy and theology from the Lateran University in Rome and pursued further specialisation in music education and pedagogy. His training took him to Paris, Montserrat, Salzburg, Kecskemét and Geneva, where he studied methods associated with Justine Ward, Carl Orff, Zoltán Kodály and Émile Jaques-Dalcroze.

He also specialised in choral conducting under Marin Constantin at the Bucharest Conservatory and studied art, music and performing arts at the University of Bologna. Alongside his work at St Peter's, he directed music education and choir courses at the Roman Philharmonic Academy and the Tiberina Academy, helping to train successive generations of singers.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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