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Egypt's Coptic Christians vote on new pope

Tom Gallagher | Oct. 31, 2012 NCR Today

My colleague John Allen reported in March on Egypt's Coptic Christians' loss of their pope:

> Now they also face a vacuum in leadership with the March 17 death of Pope Shenouda III, [1] who for more than 40 years was the face and voice of Egypt?s 10 million Coptic Christians, representing 10 percent of the national population.

The Huffington Post updates this important story [2]:

> A council of Egypt's Coptic Christians voted on Monday in a process that will lead to the selection of a new pope for the ancient church, as the community struggles to assert its identity and rights in a rising tide of Islamism that has left many Copts fearful for their future.
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> The succession follows the March death of the charismatic Pope Shenouda III at the age of 88, after 40 years as the leader of the Coptic Orthodox Church. The congregation represents the majority of Egypt's Christians, who make up about 10 percent of the country's 83 million people.
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> About 2,400 clergymen, community leaders and Egyptian Coptic notables gathered in the main Coptic cathedral in Cairo for the voting. They were choosing a short list of three candidates from a field of five monks and auxiliary bishops.
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> By late Monday, acting Pope Pachomios said more than 93 percent of the council voted, and selected Bishop Raphael, 54, once an aide to Shenouda; Bishop Tawadros, 59, an aide to the acting pope, and Father Raphael Ava Mina, the oldest among them at 70, a monk in a monastery near Alexandria and a student of the pope who preceded Shenouda.
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> The final selection of the new pope will take place in a ceremony Sunday, when the three names are put in a box and a blindfolded child picks one out, a step believed to reflect God's will in the choice. The acting pope asked Copts to fast for three days to aid the selection of the Church's 118th pope.

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Links:
[1] http://ncronline.org/news/global/coptic-pope-dies-reigned-1971
[2] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/huff-wires/20121029/ml-egypt-pope/