

All-girls' high school holds own conclave, elects Filoni

Porsia Tunzi | Mar. 13, 2013 NCR Today
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Prior to Tuesday's start of the conclave in Rome, students in the freshmen class at Notre Dame de Sion, an all-girls Catholic high school here, participated in their very own conclave beginning March 6.

The project began at the end of February, when 117 freshmen girls were each assigned a cardinal.

Students researched their cardinals in the library, and some used *NCR* as a resource tool. They used their research to create pagelong profiles of their cardinals, which were then hung in the school's dining hall sorted by country.

Based on the fliers of information, students in groups of four set and finalized cardinal brackets March 5. These brackets predicted who students believed to be the best candidate as the church's future pope.

While discussing which cardinal would be a front-runner, students Richelle Robinson, 14, and Alexis Cucchiara, 14, talked to *NCR* about the classwide project.

"Even if you aren't Catholic, knowing about the pope and this process is important because he is a world leader," said Robinson, who was assigned Canadian Cardinal Marc Ouellet.

Cucchiara, who was assigned Milan Cardinal Angelo Scola, echoed Robinson: "It is an important and unique process to learn about. The pope brings people together -- it makes sense to do a project like this. It is fun."

Freshmen are required to take the religion course Faith Foundations, a broad introductory course to Catholicism and theology.

"You can always talk about the pope, but it becomes a lot more exciting for our students when what they are learning about is happening in real life," said religion teacher Jessica Hull.

The mock conclave began March 6 with a virtual image of the Sistine Chapel projected on a screen. Each freshman filled out a ballot, which was then folded and placed into a golden vessel. The votes were tallied and read aloud.

The top candidates were Cardinal Fernando Filoni, with 19 votes; Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, 16 votes; Cardinal Timothy Dolan, 15 votes; Cardinal Stanislaw Rylko, eight votes; Cardinal Anthony Olubunmi Okogie, six votes; Cardinal Marc Ouellet, five votes; and Cardinal Gabriel Zubeir Wako, five votes. Other cardinals received fewer than five votes and were not considered a top candidate.

Since the first round of voting fell short of the two-thirds majority, voting reconvened Monday. Students were then asked to vote among these top seven candidates. Filoni and Tagle remained the top two candidates.

Finally, on Tuesday, white smoke lifted from the freshman classrooms. On the third vote, the freshmen class

elected Fernando Filoni as the next pope with 74 percent of the vote.

The real conclave elected Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, Argentina, as Pope Francis on Wednesday.

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